

Ohio Department of Agriculture Division of Meat Inspection Best Practices

Emergency Response Protocol



Ohio Department
of Agriculture

This page offers general information about the Ohio Department of Agriculture's Division of Meat Inspection procedures and protocols to ensure Ohio's food supply is safe. No animals have been condemned due to chemical exposure following the East Palestine train derailment.

Q: What symptoms should meat inspectors look for in live animals that could be associated with chemical exposure caused by the train derailment?

A: Livestock exposed to sudden, high doses of vinyl chloride may show symptoms such as coughing, sneezing, labored breathing, runny nose, or excessive salivation. Runny and reddened eyes may also be noted.

Q: What should meat plant inspectors do to prevent sick animals from being slaughtered?

A: It is normal and standard procedure, by law, that all livestock are inspected before being slaughtered to verify that they are healthy and fit for slaughter. This is called an ante-mortem inspection. Every animal presented to a slaughter plant receives this inspection. Only healthy animals are eligible for slaughter under state and federal laws.

Q: What happens if a meat inspector notices sick livestock during inspection?

A: If an inspector notices sick livestock or symptoms of illness during an inspection, the animals are not permitted to enter the plant for slaughter. A public health veterinarian (PHV) or a state or federal veterinarian, must then be called to assess the animal and officially determine if the animal is fit for slaughter.

If the animal is determined to be fit for slaughter, the veterinarian may choose to perform further detailed inspection of the carcass after the animal is killed. If the animal is determined to be unfit for slaughter, the veterinarian would condemn the animal. The animal would then be euthanized and not permitted into the food supply.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

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Q: What should meat inspectors look for when examining the carcass after slaughter?

A: In addition to inspecting livestock prior to slaughter, meat inspectors must also examine the carcass of animals found fit for slaughter after the animal is killed. Any of the following conditions noted during a post-mortem inspection or carcass processing would merit the carcass to be isolated:

- Excessive foam in the windpipe (trachea) and lower airways, which may be blood tinged
- Fluid in or around lungs the lungs or areas of the lungs that appear abnormal or hemorrhaged
- Lymph nodes of the chest that appear reddened and swollen

Any isolated carcasses must be inspected by a veterinarian. This veterinary inspection is called a disposition. Upon inspection, the veterinarian would either deem the carcass fit or unfit.

Q: What happens if an animal is found to be unfit for slaughter on ante-mortem inspection or during carcass inspection?

A: The veterinarian must record the disposition findings and the outcome of the condemned livestock or carcass. The veterinarian must also ensure that the euthanized animal or carcass is denatured (ex. slashed and dyed in the presence of an inspector) to prevent the animal from entering the food supply.

Q: Have any dispositions been performed at local slaughter plants, since the East Palestine incident, with livestock having symptoms of vinyl chloride exposure?

A: Since the derailment and as of the publication of this document, more than 2,750 animals have been inspected at state inspected meat slaughter facilities in Trumbull, Mahoning, Portage, Stark, and Columbiana counties. Of the more 2,750 inspections, 35 dispositions have been performed. Five animals of the 35 were condemned. Of those five, none were condemned for symptoms of chemical exposure.

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