



THE RED MEAT ABATTOIR ASSOCIATION

MEAT STANDARDS



MEAT STANDARDS

A membership organization for the abattoir industry in South Africa, dedicated to best practice in the interests of consumer safety as well as the profitability of its members

WRITTEN BY: **MARTIN ASHCROFT**
RESEARCH BY: **PAUL BRADLEY**





The conversion of livestock into safe and wholesome meat in South Africa is a complex process that is regulated mainly by the Meat Safety Act, 2000. Anyone who is squeamish can switch off now, because the process is known in the industry as slaughtering and takes place in an abattoir, an industrial facility designed specifically for the purpose of killing animals. The structural requirements of abattoirs in South Africa are addressed in the Act according to their status as high, low or rural throughput facilities.

If you are still with me, there are currently around 500 abattoirs in South Africa slaughtering 2.3 million cattle, 2.4 million pigs and 5.5 million sheep on an annual basis, so it's a major industry, and one that requires careful inspection, monitoring and training to ensure compliance with health, safety and other relevant regulations.

The Red Meat Abattoir Association (RMAA) was established in 1991 as an independent membership-based organization to promote meat safety and to maintain standards in the abattoir industry. Abattoirs are required to undergo independent meat inspection, and this is one of the services offered by the Association, which has over 180 members currently, although it continues to recruit new members among the smaller abattoir sector.

The abattoir industry once comprised mainly large high throughput abattoirs, but the number of smaller operations has risen dramatically since deregulation in 1994.

This led to a need for current up to date price information, so the RMAA introduced an information system containing current and historical data for planning and development purposes, the prime objective being to provide accurate and valid information for the benefit of the South African abattoir industry. To ensure a fair representation of the information the RMAA therefore requires the abattoir owner to commit to submitting its price information on a weekly basis so that a weekly report can be released to all members.

The Association is also an accredited training provider in the industry and during the past year has provided training to 3736 abattoir workers in fields ranging from basic slaughter skills to food safety management programmes.

The RMAA assists abattoirs to increase profits, safety and quality, and minimise losses by evaluation and identification of non-compliances, corrective training and recommendations on operational processes.

The objective of the industry is for animals to be converted into edible products by slaughtering them in a humane manner and by processing the carcass and organs in a hygienic and efficient way. The slaughter process includes de-hiding and evisceration, so with cattle and sheep it involves skinning procedures, and in the case of pigs, de-hairing.

Slaughter technique training is provided to member abattoirs according to a monthly programme. The abattoir's slaughter practices

1991

.....
The Red Meat Abattoir Association established

Member of the Red Meat Abattoir Association

A complete **SOFTWARE SOLUTION** for the Meat, Food & Beverage Industry

- Abattoir Slaughter Control
- Full Meat Stock Control Systems
- Software For Food And Meat Industry
- Full MRP & Traceability Solutions
- Specialists In Meat Systems (Abattoir / Debone / Production)
- Retail Point Of Sales Systems
- Scales, Label Printing And Probes Solution's
- Recipy & Yield Control Systems

www.matrixsoftware.co.za

[e] info@matrixsoftware.co.za
 [t] +27 16 423 5537 • [f] +27 86 605 5406
 P.O Box 24424, Vereeniging, 1941
 Meat Matrix Software (Pty) Ltd
 VAT No: 4470228604 • Registration No: 2005/000495/07

Show the world what your company has to offer with our tailored packages

BE Seen

www.bus-ex.com



By following current best practice, abattoirs can produce high quality safe meat

are evaluated and compared with the standard best practice slaughter procedures, as regularly updated by the Association. Deviations are recorded and corrective training is provided by experienced training teams.

The Association's main aims are to improve hygienic practices, reduce contamination, reduce damage to the carcass, skin and organs, enhance ergonomics and speed of processing, and improve the use of personnel. Training is always conducted by first demonstrating the correct and/or best procedure, then evaluating the operator conducting the procedure and conducting a re-demonstration if necessary. Competency is

recorded for each worker at their respective work station and a routine slaughter training report is forwarded to management after completion of the training.

One of the RMAA's main messages is that continuous washing and sterilising of equipment during the slaughter process is essential to avoid contamination of the meat.

By following current best practice slaughter techniques, abattoirs can produce high quality safe meat, which is the main objective of the Association.

An RMAA audit will examine the effectiveness of line layout, including the time taken at each work station and the workload

3736

Abattoir workers trained last year



Training is always conducted by first demonstrating the correct procedure

of each slaughter operator, to ensure that the workload is spread evenly and that the line runs at an even speed without hold-ups. Bottleneck situations lead to loss of production time, exhaustion of some workers and ineffective use of others. If this is found to be the case, redistribution of functions on the line are suggested to ensure the optimal use of each worker.

Carcass yield is another important factor. Inhumane animal handling can lead to

unnecessary and incorrect trimming, and incorrect slaughter techniques and theft are also reasons for loss of carcass weight. An investigation into the live weight compared to warm weight is made to determine if unnecessary weight is lost. If the investigation indicates that the yield is too low a further evaluation is made to determine where unnecessary weight loss occurs, and corrective actions can then be implemented.

Hides and skins lose value when they are

damaged, too. Often damage occurs due to incorrect slaughter techniques, ineffective equipment, carelessness, etc. An investigation that starts at the hides and skins room indicates the amount of damage as well as the areas where damage mostly occurs. The causes of the damage can then be determined and corrective training can be conducted.

Offal rooms are also a point of concern during audits. The RMAA believes that offal rooms deserve the same attention as the rest of the slaughter floor as these products also reach the consumer market. Operators in these areas are often neglected in terms of training and the condition of the facilities can also compromise hygienic practices. The Association's evaluation and training is aimed at improving the offal handling environment.

The maintenance of equipment is another

focus of audit inspections. Improperly maintained equipment can cause serious health hazards including contamination and pest infestation, but is also a threat to the efficient operation of the abattoir through wastage, unsafe situations, and additional expenditure in cleaning. A thorough evaluation of equipment and structures highlights any problem areas and may save the abattoir future losses due to poor maintenance, as well as ensuring compliance with health and safety regulations.

If you're eating a steak in South Africa today, you know it's going to be good! **BE**

“THE ABATTOIR’S SLAUGHTER PRACTICES ARE EVALUATED AND COMPARED WITH THE STANDARD BEST PRACTICE SLAUGHTER PROCEDURES”

For more information about The Red Meat Abattoir Association visit: www.rvav.co.za



**THE RED MEAT ABATTOIR
ASSOCIATION**

CSIR, Building 4, Room 179
Meiring Naudé Road
BRUMMERIA

T (012) 349 1237/8/9
www.rvav.co.za

Produced by:

ACHIEVING BUSINESS EXCELLENCE ONLINE

BE BusinessExcellence

www.bus-ex.com