AVMA’s “Humane Endings” Efforts: Panel on Depopulation

National Institute for Animal Agriculture
April 6th, 2016

Cia L Johnson, DVM, MS
Director, Animal Welfare

Gail C. Golab, PhD, DVM, MANZCVS, DACAW
Chief Advocacy and Public Policy Officer
Where I’m coming from...
AVMA’s Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals
Widely recognized as the ‘gold standard’
Document has evolved in important ways over time
• Science knowledge and related evaluative criteria for acceptability
• Societal expectations for animal care
• Commitment of resources to convening the Panel and the production of its report

© Copyright 2015. American Veterinary Medical Association. All rights reserved.
History of the AVMA’s Panel on Euthanasia

1963
• Recommendations applicable to dogs, cats, other small mammals
• Oversight by Council on Research, 5 individuals made up the Panel, report 9 pages long

1972 and 1978
• Add laboratory animals and those used for food production, respectively
• Additional information about animals’ physiologic and behavioral responses, effects on observers, and the economic feasibility and environmental impacts of various approaches

1986 added poikilothermic, aquatic and fur-bearing wildlife species

1993 added horses and additional wildlife species
History of Panel on Euthanasia

2000 included discussion about mass euthanasia and acknowledged a need for additional information; 17 people, 24 pages

2007 (interim) incorporates policy on maceration of poultry; oversight transferred to the Animal Welfare Committee

2013
• 14 panel members, 11 working groups (3 techniques groups, 8 species groups), ethicist, 102-page report
• Opportunity for member comment on draft
• Panel continues to exist as a virtual entity to respond to inquiries
• Deliberate separation of euthanasia, humane slaughter, and depopulation → “Humane Endings”
• Commitment to data-based improvements that meet societal needs
Panel on Humane Slaughter

• First iteration of its kind for AVMA in the area of humane slaughter of food animals.
• The guidelines do not debate the use of animals nor do they delve into the morality of killing animals for food or fiber.
• The focus of the document is on what should happen to animals when slaughter is their ultimate fate.
• Guidelines **WILL** assist DVMs who carry out or oversee the slaughter of hoof-stock, poultry, rabbits and fish with professional judgment.
• Guidelines **WILL NOT** address methods and techniques involved in the termination of animals hunted for food (subsistence or otherwise) or animals raised primarily for their fur or fiber.
Scope
General Introduction
History of Regulations, Industry Guidance & Employee Training in the United States
Design of Facilities and Slaughter Process
• Hoof-stock
• Poultry Techniques
• Atmospheric
• Physical
Scope

Unique Species Issues
• Bovine
  – Bulls
  – Cull cows
  – Non-ambulatory cattle
  – Bob veal
  – Fetal effects
• Non-ambulatory swine
• Rabbits
• Food fish
• Ratites
• Alligator

Religious/Ritual Slaughter
Criteria for Assessment of Slaughter Methods

- Induce loss of consciousness and death with minimal pain and distress
- Time required to induce loss of consciousness
- Reliability
- Irreversibility
- Safety of personnel
- Compatibility with intended animal use and purpose
- Documented performance and emotional effects on operators and observers
- Ability to maintain equipment in proper working order
- Legal requirements
- Religious requirements
AVMA Panel on Depopulation

- Depopulation may employ euthanasia techniques, but not all depopulation methods meet the [AVMA] criteria for euthanasia.
- Panel will address depopulation of animals used for food production, but also equids, laboratory animals, companion animals (shelters), and zoo/wildlife.
- Panel convened and operated similarly to Panel on Euthanasia.
- Outcome of the Panel’s deliberations will be the AVMA Guidelines for the Depopulation of Animals.
- Panel’s meeting and publication expenses supported via a Cooperative Agreement with USDA—Thank you!
- AVMA will provide coordination and staff support.
AVMA Panel on Depopulation: Composition

- Chair of the Panel on Euthanasia serving as Chair
- Range of expertise involved (veterinarians and non-veterinarians)
  - Broad call for nominations in 2015
  - Comprehensive review of credentials
- Appointments were made by the Animal Welfare Committee; chairs of working groups will make up the Panel
- 9 Working Groups: poultry, cattle, swine, small ruminants, equids, aquaculture, companion animals, laboratory animals, zoo and wild animals
- Ethicist was also appointed to the Panel
- Additional experts have been added to working groups as needed
- Two non-voting, invited guests from USDA and the National Institutes of Health (Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare)
AVMA Panel on Depopulation: Operations

Panel Meeting One
- Working structure for document
- Deliverables

Working Groups
- Electronic meetings
- Section drafts created

Comment Opportunity
- AVMA member review and comment
- Agency review and comment

Panel Meeting Two
- Section drafts combined into comprehensive draft

Panel Meeting Three
- Reconcile comments
- Prepare recommendation for Board of Directors
Stop-Gap: Ad hoc Group and Statement

• Cooperative work plan for POD is a two-year process
• AVMA thoughts needed in light of 2015 outbreak
• Convened an ad hoc group of experts
  – Avian influenza ○ Animal science ○ Emergency mgmt
  – Disease control ○ Epidemiology
  – Animal welfare ○ Agricultural engineering
• Shared their experiences in managing this and other outbreaks and developed a statement to address the need for thoughtful flexibility in application of depopulation techniques
• Statement reviewed and revised by Panel on Euthanasia
• Approved by the AVMA Board of Directors (May 12, 2015), limited release
AVMA 2015 Statement

Thoughtful Flexibility in the Use of Depopulation Methods for the 2015 HPAI Outbreak

While it is our duty as veterinarians to develop and employ methods of depopulation that minimize animal suffering, the current U.S. outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) is expanding faster than it can be controlled using conventional approaches. Furthermore, the capacity of state and federal regulatory agencies to apply preferred methods in a timely manner has been exceeded. Accordingly, the use of less ideal methods that result in a quick death for birds and support disease containment may become necessary. Decisions to implement non-preferred alternatives must be made on a case-by-case basis, only after taking extreme care to ensure appropriate justification for their use and considering all currently available resources, and as an absolute last resort. In all cases, depopulation efforts must comply with applicable state and federal law.
Needs and Next Steps

So that the use of less-preferred methods do not become standard practice...

- An honest and critical examination of response plans (including rapid diagnosis, decision and communication), biosecurity, depopulation techniques, and facility design
- Active support for technology transfer and innovation
- Solid attention to training, equipping and supporting emergency management personnel

The AVMA POD held their first meeting in December 2015 and will be meeting for the second time later this month.
Thank You for Your Time and Attention

People are very open-minded about new things—as long as they're exactly like the old ones.

—Charles F. Kettering

cjohnson@avma.org