

**From:** [Dave Pyburn](mailto:Dave.Pyburn@pork.org)  
**To:** [snelson@aaasv.org](mailto:snelson@aaasv.org); [Liz Wagstrom](mailto:Liz.Wagstrom@nppc.org); [Paul Sundberg](mailto:Paul.Sundberg@swinehealth.org); [Patrick Webb](mailto:Patrick.Webb@pork.org)  
**Subject:** RE: Depopulation Messaging: Production Facilities and Slaughterhouses  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 21, 2020 2:45:00 PM

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Would also like to discuss this on our upcoming call.

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**Subject:** FW: Depopulation Messaging: Production Facilities and Slaughterhouses

I asked AVMA for some clarification of their opinion on where we stand in their minds with regards to euthanasia or depopulation methodologies as a result of the current COVID situation. Below is their response specifically as pertains to VSD.

Harry

Harry Snelson, DVM  
Executive Director  
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830 26<sup>th</sup> St.  
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**From:** Dr. Cia Johnson <[CJohnson@avma.org](mailto:CJohnson@avma.org)>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 20, 2020 7:49 PM  
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**Subject:** RE: Depopulation Messaging: Production Facilities and Slaughterhouses

Hi Harry,

Based on the AVMA guidance documents, depopulation refers to the rapid destruction of a population of animals in response to urgent circumstances with as much consideration given to the welfare of the animals as practicable and is required when there are urgent circumstances (e.g., animal or human diseases, natural or human-caused disasters) threaten animal populations, human beings, and/or the environment.

We believe the situation with the closing of slaughter plants in the United States may warrant depopulation events. Having said that, the “Preferred” methods of depopulation include our euthanasia and slaughter techniques as those should always be employed first in killing situations. In urgent circumstances we may need to apply other techniques such as VSD plus in swine as mentioned below. For VSD plus in swine, the AVMA Guidelines for the Depopulation of Animals have a recommended performance standard to be considered a “Permitted in constrained circumstances” method (page 45):

*The POD recommends that VSD only be used in facilities with the capability to adequately increase air temperature to a level that causes the generation of latent heat that results in a > 95% death rate in < 1 hour. The goal of any depopulation is 100% mortality, and this remains true for VSD. To achieve this goal, additional heat sources or the addition of CO2 may be needed.*

Methods that are not covered specifically by the AVMA Guidelines for the Depopulation may still be used based on a veterinarian’s professional judgement and sound reasoning covering why methods that are included in the Guidelines would not fit the situation and circumstances. On page 8 of the Guidelines you will see this addressed:

*These Guidelines do not address every contingency. In circumstances that are not clearly covered by these Guidelines, a veterinarian experienced with the species in question should apply professional judgment and knowledge of clinically acceptable techniques in selecting a method of depopulation or euthanasia (if required). Reaching out to colleagues with relevant experience may be necessary. Veterinarians will be working with other members of a crisis management team and in some cases may not have jurisdiction or the capacity to carry out their professional activities. When exercising their professional responsibilities, veterinarians should consider whether 1) the procedure results in the best outcome for the animal; 2) their actions conform to acceptable standards of veterinary practice and are consistent with applicable federal, state, and local regulations; and 3) the choice of depopulation or euthanasia technique is consistent with the veterinarians’ professional obligations and adheres to sound ethical grounding.*

I hope this helps,  
Cia

**Cia L. Johnson, DVM, MS, MSc**  
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**Subject:** RE: Depopulation Messaging: Production Facilities and Slaughterhouses

Cia and Gail,

Just for clarification, from AVMA's standpoint, when does euthanasia become depopulation? Does AVMA concur that this situation constitutes an emergency? The reason I'm asking largely pertains to the use of VSD. If human safety is a concern regarding minimizing exposure to COVID through social distancing VSD is one of the least labor intensive methods of depopulation available and I know we're going to get asked about its use.

Harry

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**Subject:** RE: Depopulation Messaging: Production Facilities and Slaughterhouses

Thank you Fred. I will check in with our staff support related to carcass disposal on that point.

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**From:** [fred@aabp.org](mailto:fred@aabp.org) <[fred@aabp.org](mailto:fred@aabp.org)>

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**Subject:** RE: Depopulation Messaging: Production Facilities and Slaughterhouses

Cia

Thank you for sharing this document. The only suggestion I have for an edit is under the last section bullet point #1:

**What happens to their carcasses after animals are depopulated?**

- No parts of the carcasses of animals that have been depopulated are suitable for further use.

Is the intent of this bullet point to state that the carcass cannot be used for human consumption?

That is certainly true however the carcass has many potential uses through the rendering process which would be a use of the animal that is appropriate and much preferred to landfill, compost, burial, etc. as long as it did not result in a risk of dissemination of disease. For instance, might not be appropriate during an FMD outbreak but is appropriate for a situation where an animal is free of any disease but there is no market for the animal and euthanasia/depopulation has been initiated.

Fred

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**Subject:** Depopulation Messaging: Production Facilities and Slaughterhouses

**Importance:** High

Good afternoon all,

As we discussed last week, we are all aware of concerns surrounding the closure of various slaughter plants throughout the United States and the potential impacts these closures will have on animals intended for slaughter. I think we also all agree that having consistent messaging on this issue will be helpful for everyone, especially regarding the potential for euthanasia or depopulation of healthy animals. To that end we have drafted messaging around this issue utilizing the feedback we received from you last week, as well as content from the AVMA guidance documents on Humane Endings. We would appreciate your quick review and comments on this messaging. We really want to bring forward consistent messaging from the AVMA and our allied veterinary associations.

Additionally, we have been in contact with USDA (FSIS, VS, APHIS) to determine if the agencies will become involved in this situation as it evolves. It appears that APHIS (including VS and FSIS) are still in the planning process at this time. This presents an opportunity for our groups to bring messaging to the agencies prior to finalization of their own plans. There is some support in the agencies to bring forward a formal written comment on this situation at a minimum. We again feel that having a consistent message would be to everyone's benefit.

With this in mind, we would appreciate your comments on the draft messaging as soon as possible—we appreciate the opportunity to collaborate!

Thank you,

Cia

**Cia L. Johnson, DVM, MS, MSc**

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