

CFIA Carcass Inspection Procedures and Standards: Impact on Producers

Chester Goetzinger

CFIA Red Meat Program Specialist, Western Area, 6503 - 67 Street, Red Deer, AB T4P 1A3
Email: goetzingerc@inspection.gc.ca

■ Summary

The focus of the CFIA is food safety. When there is a question as to a food or a process being safe or unsafe, the decision is always to err on the side of safety. In the slaughter plants, this means that if there is a question, the part is either sent as animal food or condemned.

There was a directive (or change in procedure) issued in December of 2004 that has changed marking and identifying procedures in slaughter plants. This directive details the responsibilities of the plant personnel and the CFIA personnel. There are now three categories of defects:

Operator Managed Conditions (OMC)

The following are some examples of dressing defects and minor pathologies that plant personnel (OMC) are responsible for marking and removal:

- All defects resulting from processing such as, contamination and over-scalding Plant personnel identify contamination as soon as it occurs. The contamination can be removed at any time.
- Any dry adhesion.

All OMC are identified and removed by plant employees on the main slaughter line or on the plant held rail as appropriate.

The dressing defects, while trimmed and weighed, are not deducted from the producer's cheque.

CFIA/Operator Managed Conditions (CFIA/OMC)

CFIA inspectors are responsible for identifying those carcass defects classified as CFIA/OMC. CFIA/OMC type defects are directed to the plant held rail to be properly trimmed and weighed. A few examples of these conditions are:

- Bruising or fracture without dead tissue.
- Swelling of one or two joints
- Localized swelling
- Tuberculosis-like lesions seen in a single site
- Abscessed head of the animal

Inspectors also mark boars and ridglings in most hog slaughter plants.

The most significant addition to this list is abscessed heads. A single abscess in the head is not a reason for condemnation. Allowing the removal of abscessed heads by plant personnel on the slaughter line or on the plant held rail reduces congestion and cross contamination on the veterinary held rail.

These conditions are identified by CFIA inspectors and are not conditions that are seen by the plant veterinarian. The carcasses are marked in such a way that the plant employee is able to direct the carcass onto the proper rail.

CFIA Managed Condition (CFIA) (on the veterinary held rail)

The CFIA inspectors are also responsible for identifying and marking those carcasses and parts with pathologies that are directed to the veterinary held rail for CFIA (Veterinary disposition).

The directive also officially ended any involvement of CFIA in the recording of carcass trims.

■ Inspection Sequence

CFIA inspection in a slaughter plant begins with ante mortem (or before death) inspection. The plant employees do an ante mortem screening of all animals as they are unloaded. Any animal that they observe with abnormal behaviour, way of travelling, or shape is marked as a suspect or subject. A CFIA inspector will observe all animals and 10% of the animals in motion. The inspector will notify a plant veterinarian of any animal unable to walk or any animal that they think is unfit for slaughter. The plant veterinarian will examine the subjects and make a decision about the fitness of the animal for slaughter.

There are very few animals judged unfit for slaughter and condemned in the barn or on the unloading dock.

The first inspection station is for the head /mandibular lymph node inspection. This station is separated from carcass or viscera inspection stations in the larger plants. There is a station for viscera inspection. The last inspection station is for final carcass inspection. It is in this position where the majority of CFIA/OMC and CFIA defects are seen and marked.

The Veterinary held rail is where the plant veterinarian examines the carcasses railed out by the inspectors for veterinary judgement.

■ CFIA Inspection Standards

There are four items that cause the greatest loss to producers - abscesses, arthritis, adhesions and the deduction for boars and ridglings.

Abscesses

Pigs are very prone to develop abscesses. The most significant reason for loss in both trim and carcass is abscesses. About 40% by weight of all trims is due to abscesses. Of these, about 34% are of the head. Condemns of carcasses due to abscesses is responsible for about 30% of the total condemns.

An abscess develops when an infection occurs, is resolved (healed) and then walled off from the rest of the body.

The primary location where abscess trims occur is in the head and jowl region. This is the finding that produces by far the greatest trim weight. Our inspectors look at the head to see if there is any evidence of abscesses in the jowl, head or lymph nodes. Any abnormal swelling or evidence of pus exposed during the process of exposing the lymph nodes of the head results in the inspector marking the head for trim. This is when any abscess that has been caused from introduction of infection with a needle or other means and the resulting abscess are discovered.

Farm Management can reduce the number of trims that are experienced from abscessed heads by:

- Trying to reduce mixing of stock so fighting is kept to a minimum.
- Reducing and or controlling tail biting.
- Minimizing trauma while clipping of teeth

- Ensure that any injections given in the neck are done in a sanitary manner.

Arthritis

Infectious arthritis is the cause of about 14% of all carcasses being condemned. Arthritis is also the reason for about 50% of trim weight and about 25% of the number of trims.

We know that most enlarged joints are due to Osteochondrosis dissecans (OCD), which is a deformity of the cartilage of the inside of the joint. The difference between an enlarged joint due to infectious arthritis or OCD is not always easy to determine without opening the joint. The decision to have a joint removed due to an enlargement is made by the inspector on the line. CFIA inspectors are trained to detect joint enlargements and have been taught to ignore obvious OCD. Discerning the difference between OCD and infectious arthritis depends on factors such as the condition of lymph nodes, the consistency of the fluid in the joint, the body condition, and the condition of the tissue around the joint. When there are several joints on one carcass that are affected, or if there is a lack of body condition associated with swollen joints the carcass is sent to the veterinary rail for judgement. The plant veterinarian will make a decision to either trim the joints or to condemn the carcass. All carcasses with swollen, inflamed lymph nodes are sent to the veterinary rail. Remember that a carcass is condemned only for infectious arthritis.

CFIA inspectors are trained to detect joint enlargements

There is a seasonal pattern with infectious arthritic condemnments. The incidence is highest in the fall and winter months and lowest in May through September. This year is an exception in that the increase began earlier than usual. Erysipelas is the most frequent bacteria found in joints of carcasses condemned for infectious arthritis.

Adhesions

Only about 6 or 7 % of the trims are due to adhesions. This statistic is misleading in that the majority of adhesions do not involve a trim weight. The adhesion scar is usually small enough that removal of the lining of the chest cavity removes the adhesion. In these cases there is no appreciable weight removed. The only adhesions that the inspection staff marks are the acute ones. These are the adhesions that are active and are inflamed with excess fluid. An adhesion in a carcass never results in a carcass condemnation unless it is associated with acute pneumonia. Chronic dry adhesions are marked by plant Quality Assurance staff. There is a wide range of number of

hogs affected from farm to farm and season to season. There can be between 0% and 60% incidence.

Boars And Ridglings

In most plants the boars and ridglings are marked by CFIA inspection staff. The loss from this is not huge but it is avoidable. Less than 0.5% of hogs we see are found with testicles. With the rare exception of hermaphrodites, the loss from the trims for boars and ridglings is completely avoidable. Boars can be castrated at any age. As long as the castration wound is healed and there is no sign of infection, there will be no loss to the producer due to a castration. When castration is performed two weeks or more before slaughter the wound is normally healed.

When routine castration is done, all piglets that have not had two testicles removed should be marked so that they can have the hidden testicle removed when they are in the light feeder stage.

Sometimes we hear the statement from producers "I never ship ridglings and yet I got docked for a ridgling". This may be true. Hermaphrodites can look like females from the outside. When a hermaphrodite (or intersex) is found with gonads that have characteristics of a testicle, it will be marked as a ridgling.

■ Conclusion

The agenda we at CFIA have is ensuring food safety. Most of the trims and condemnments we do are related to disease processes. You as producers can realize lower trims by taking management steps to reduce risk to the growing pig.

- Prevent or reduce injuries
- Prevent or reduce systemic (generalized) infections
- Prevent or reduce respiratory problem
- Mark all piglets that have not had two testicles removed and have them removed later