09/12/2012

Note I was informed of this meeting at 11.00 am that day and took part on my mobile in a layby…

Mostly representatives from Defra but pig industry, Charlie Mason HAS and a representative from a company that supplies the non penetrative captivel bolt devices (NPCBD) – assum=ng that these are the CASH poultry (small animal) devices.

Recent overstocking of pigs (lack of butchers, slaughter men ect) has prompted DEFRA to rush through amended WATOK legislations.

Emergency killing of animals on farm DOES NOT ALLOW – blunt force trauma.

Animal Welfare Committee have recommended use of NPCBD indeed RSPCA I think have included it in their schemes.

PVS are pushing back saying that this needs to be explored further before rushing through changes, because the device does not work on all piglets ( very small piglets lack ossification of the bone). Whatever is recommended needs to be right and there needs to be more consultation. There is a lack of consistency and it is not just the weight of the piglets but other factors, how it fits with in the commercial farm setting.

For lambs A lot of this is based on the paper GRIST, A., LINES, J. A., KNOWLES, T. G., MASON, C. W. & WOTTON, S. B. (2018) The Use of a Mechanical Non-Penetrating Captive Bolt Device for the Euthanasia of Neonate Lambs. Animals (Basel) 8, 49 – but this was undertaken in controlled setting.

Charlie gave a summary on the background

The CASH gun was used in 2001 - Lisa Hunt did a PhD on this where 1 grain and 1.25 grain cartridges were used on a trial in sheep and goats but this has not been published. Then the Grist paper was published. 200 animals were trialled BUT the device requires daily maintenance and in the real world it is likely that there will be many failures due to lack of maintenance and general wear. In addition cartridges need to be stores in dry conditions and there is the problem of accessibility – will the farmer have it in his pocket when needed – this is the same on pig farms…

There is another model called the Blitz Kerner slack poultry gun which is cheaper and available in Holland – but can farmers get it? Also a CO2 compressed air unit. And a sprong loaded tool THAT IS NO USE IN LAMBS/KIDS/PIGS

The general feeling was that this was more about aesthetics than welfare. That the legal ruling that blunt force killing was not allowed was premature – IT is allowed under PATOK (EU directive) but WATOK – UK regulations chose not to include it.

Many felt that there ned to be gathering of evidence that blunt force trauma was as effective as NPCBD and that there were emergency situation where blunt force was a better welfare outcome as it was something that could be done immediately. But for routine culling say of surplus animals then NPCBD may be an accepted option for the defined categories ( size of kids and size of piglets surpuke dairly lambs)

Training was also discussed and HSA have good resources including videos and Pig farmers have training by their PVS as part of Red Tractor assurance schemes.

I also pointed out that if this was rushed through in January just at the start of main lambing period what would sheep farmers expect to do…