Animal welfare at slaughter

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EU introduces captive bolt device for stunning and slaughter of piglets, lambs, and kid goats

Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2026/1734 of 16 July 2026 amending Annex I to Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing as regards the authorisation of non-penetrative captive bolt stunning and nitrogen high expansion foam stunning

Update

The European Union (EU) has introduced the use of a non-penetrative captive bolt under certain conditions for slaughtering piglets up to 5 kg, and for lambs and kid goats up to 4.5 kg. This method is also proposed to be used for simple stunning of these animals up to 10 kg.

Impacted products

Piglets, lambs, kid goats

What is changing?

The European Union has introduced the use of non-penetrative captive bolts for slaughtering:

- piglets up to 5 kg
- lambs and kid goats up to 4.5 kg;

and for stunning before slaughter of:

- piglets between 5 and 10 kg
- lambs and kid goats between 4.5 and 10 kg.

The Regulation sets specific requirements that ensure either death or loss of consciousness of the animal. In particular, it specifies the correct restraining and shooting position of the device on the head of the animal.

(The introduction of nitrogen high expansion foam, also included in this Regulation, is for situations other than slaughter and is not relevant for the food chain.)

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Why?

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has concluded that a pneumatic, non-penetrative captive bolt is an effective method to slaughter or stun piglets (EFSA 2020) and lambs and kid goats (EFSA 2024). If powered to deliver a sufficient kinetic energy and applied in the correct position on the head of the animal, the method ensures a level of animal welfare during killing and slaughter at least equivalent to that of existing methods.

Timeline

The Regulation applies from **6 August 2026**.

What are the major implications for exporting countries?

EU rules on animal welfare at the time of slaughter apply to meat imported into the EU. This proposal offers an additional method, ensuring a high level of animal welfare.

Background

Regulation 1099/2009 sets the EU's requirements on protection of animals at the time of slaughter.

A non-penetrative captive bolt is already listed as a simple stunning method for use in ruminants up to 10 kg.

Resources

Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing

EFSA (2020) Welfare of pigs during killing for purposes other than slaughter. EFSA Journal, 18(7): e06195.

EFSA (2024) Welfare of sheep and goats during killing for purposes other than slaughter. EFSA Journal, 22(6): e8835.

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Sources

Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2026/1734 on the protection of animals at the time of killing as regards the authorisation of non-penetrative captive bolt stunning and nitrogen high expansion foam stunning

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