



Fit to Load

Fit to Load guidelines have been developed by NZPork to assist farmers to assess the suitability of pigs for transportation. The guidelines reflect the Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018 in respect of the transport of pigs and the relevant minimum standards in the 2018 Animal Welfare codes. This document provides background and context for the Fit to Load guidelines.

Please ensure you and your staff read and understand this supporting information to ensure you apply the Fit to Load guidelines appropriately.

A Staff Competency register form has been developed and will assist you to keep a record on-farm to demonstrate that staff who are responsible for selecting pigs for transport have read and understood this guide.

Introduction

The Animal Welfare Act (1999) states that a person commits an offence when, without reasonable excuse, they confine or transport an animal in a manner or position that causes the animal unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress.

The Transport within New Zealand Code of Welfare (dated 1 October 2018) states that "Animals must not be transported if they display any injuries, signs of disease, abnormal behaviour or physical abnormalities that could compromise their welfare during the journey, unless a veterinary declaration of fitness for transport has been completed". Since 1 October 2018, a series of livestock transport regulations have come into force that specify restrictions on the transport of animals with specific conditions.

NZPork has developed **Fit to Load** guidelines to assist piggery staff who load pigs for transport, including loading for slaughter, to comply with the Animal Welfare Act (1999), the Transport within New Zealand Code of Welfare (2018), and the Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations (2018) relating to transport. These guidelines are to be used along with other cues (e.g. demeanour, gait), to decide whether a pig meets the animal welfare criteria to be transported, or if it should be treated on the farm or euthanised.

From 1 October 2018 you need to be familiar and compliant with the Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018. To assess if a pig is “Fit to Load” you must comply with the regulations concerning transport of pigs (regulations 30, 32, 40, 41, 48 and 49).

The transport regulations pertaining to pigs are appended (Appendix 1) to this Supporting Information. They are also contained in the *Transport within New Zealand Code of Welfare* (dated 1 October 2018), and are included on the *Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018: Pigs* poster provided to commercial pork producers by NZPork. You also need to be familiar with the Animal Welfare (Pigs) Code of Welfare (re-issued in October 2018).

Some pigs have conditions that do not necessarily impact their welfare and whether they can travel, but may impact on the quality of carcasses. The Fit to Load guidelines provide guidance on animal welfare specifically. In some instances it also refers to impacts on food safety and quality aspects.

In many cases, whether transport/welfare/carcass quality is affected depends on the degree of abnormality/condition. Remember that the best condition that the pigs will be in is at loading. Any existing conditions will likely be exacerbated by transport. Keep this in mind when evaluating whether animals are fit to load.

In all cases, the welfare of the animal is the most important thing. The welfare of the animal takes priority whether it should be sent for slaughter, treated on farm or humanely destroyed.

A good rule of thumb is that the person in charge should act when disease or defective or abnormal conditions arise, so that they do not get worse.

If pigs have any of the conditions covered in the Fit to Load guidelines that are acceptable to load, make sure you take special care with loading and unloading. Remember that these pigs are more vulnerable to the stress of loading and unloading.

- Consider how steep the ramp is for both loading and unloading. Load these pigs in a position on the vehicle to minimise stress at loading and unloading.
- They should be separated (in separate pens) from other pigs who do not have any issues, and loaded in a way so that their welfare is not compromised during the journey.

If you're not sure about whether a pig is fit to be transported, then **don't load it**. You can ask the herd's veterinarian – who will provide a veterinary certificate if appropriate. If the veterinarian says the pig is not fit to transport (that is a **DO NOT LOAD** result), then it should be treated on-farm according to the farm's treatment policy or be euthanised immediately.

Remember:

- **Farmers and persons in charge of pigs, including transporters, have specific requirements they must meet to comply with the Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018.** Refer to Appendix 1 (pages 6 - 7) for the specific regulations concerning the transport of pigs.
- Farmers and persons in charge of pigs need to make sure only fit and healthy pigs are selected to be transported, and that they are loaded in compliance with the Transport within New Zealand Code of Welfare.
- When deciding if pigs are fit to transport, look at:
 - Body condition
 - Clinical evidence of disease or parasites
 - Injuries or other physical defects including lameness
 - Do they meet all requirements of minimum standard No. 6 of the Transport Code (Selecting and Accepting Animals for Transport)?

The Animal Welfare regulations also place responsibilities on transporters. They share responsibility along the farmer not to transport pigs that are lame or in late pregnancy (definitions given in the box below).

Lame pigs are those which are not weight bearing on 1 or more limbs when moving or standing; or pigs which have a definite limp (shortened stride) that is clearly identifiable to one or more limbs, with weight placed on the limb or limbs significantly reduced. A pig is **not** lame if the limp is caused by a non-painful condition (a healed injury, conformational fault, or gait abnormality) and the animal is able to bear weight, though not necessarily evenly, on all 4 limbs.

Late pregnancy is further clarified in the Transport code (2018) as 'likely to give birth during the journey or be affected by metabolic complications of late pregnancy as a result of the journey'. MPI Verification Services (VS) define late pregnancy as 'where birth is given to viable young during transport or within 24 hours after transport to a saleyard or slaughter premises'. Note for pigs, transport in late pregnancy is very unlikely to be to slaughter, but needs to be complied with for any journey.

In addition transport operators and their drivers must not load or transport pigs in a manner that causes injury or backrub.

Not all drivers will have the experience of the farmer to tell if a pig is unfit to be transported, and so you must take responsibility for careful selection of pigs for transport.

MPI Verification Services (VS) procedures

MPI (VS) apply the following procedures to describe what makes pigs unfit to be transported:

Pre-existing conditions affecting fitness for transport, and other conditions occurring during transport

1. Regulation Offences: Conditions not acceptable for a pig to be transported

- i. Transport of a lame pig to slaughter that is not accompanied by a veterinary certificate. (Regulation 40 – see definition on page 3).
- ii. Transport of a pig in late pregnancy (Regulation 41 – see definition on page 3).

Note 1: Regulation 41 does not apply to transporters.

Note 2: The above conditions apply to the general transport of pigs. This includes transport to slaughter, to sale yards, or between farms. There are some exceptions to this, where animals with certain conditions may be transported, for the purposes of treatment (or euthanasia, but not commercial slaughter), within the property, or to another property no more than 20kms distant.

2. All species: Conditions not generally acceptable for a pig to be transported

The following conditions are likely to preclude a pig to be transported to slaughter. Key considerations are that the animal is not sufficiently fit to transport to slaughter and/or is likely to suffer unnecessary and unreasonable pain or distress as a consequence of being transported. Conditions that are covered under these principles include, but are not limited to:

- i. Acute systemic infection, sick, or showing evidence of an infectious disease. Clinically these pigs may have an elevated temperature, be depressed, have abnormal respiration, there may be signs of discharge, etc.
- ii. Purulent discharge i.e. discharging pus from a wound or orifice.
- iii. Acute external injury, wound or trauma that would, without treatment, compromise its welfare.
- iv. Chronic injury not substantially healed that would compromise the welfare of the animal.
- v. Recumbent and unable to stand.
- vi. Abdominal incidents that cause pain e.g. intussusceptions, twisted bowel, twisted uterus.
- vii. Retained foetal membranes.
- viii. Blindness – blindness in both eyes such that distress and/or injury is likely during yarding and transport.
- ix. Any long-standing infection or condition that would have responded to veterinary treatment but where neglect has caused suffering or unnecessary pain and/or distress. Sending such a pig to slaughter as a form of “treatment” is not acceptable.
- x. Any condition not listed where there is obvious unnecessary or unreasonable pain and/or distress.

xi. Body condition score below those defined as acceptable in the Codes of Welfare.

Note 3: Any pig presented with marked angulations/deformities of a limb as a consequence of a past fracture should be subject to additional scrutiny. That scrutiny should include whether those animals received proper and adequate treatment at the time of the acute injury. Subsequent certification of any animal as being acceptable to transport that did not receive adequate treatment at the time of the injury should not occur.

3. Specific to pigs: Conditions not generally acceptable for a pig to be transported

- Tail bites where the lesion is swollen, discharging, or affects the pig's ability to walk and stand normally.
- Skin lesions – animals with acute severe lesions or chronic lesions with secondary infection.
- Prolapsed uterus, vagina, or rectum.
- Rectal prolapses in grower pigs that are traumatised, infected or necrotic. Grower pigs with minor fresh prolapses may be transported if transported with care to minimise trauma.
- Pot-belly pigs with a rectal stricture.
- Large abdominal hernias that are likely to contact the ground, or that are likely to be – or already are - traumatised. Aural haematomas that are of sufficient size that damage or rupture is likely during transport or in lairage.

The ***Fit to Load*** guidelines provides a range of descriptive guidelines to be applied on-farm to meet the Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018 in respect of the transport of pigs and the relevant minimum standards in the Animal Welfare codes, and so determine what is or is not acceptable for transport of pigs.

If unsure, seek veterinary advice.

APPENDIX 1: **Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018 concerning transport of pigs**

Regulation 30: Prevention of injury

- (1) A person must not transport a cattle beast, deer, sheep, goat, or pig in a manner that causes acute injury to the animal.
- (2) A person who transports a cattle beast, deer, sheep, goat, or pig must not load the animal onto a vehicle, or unload the animal from a vehicle, in a manner that causes acute injury to the animal.

In this regulation, **acute injury**—

- a) means an injury that is more than minor and is bleeding; but
- b) does not include back-rub (as defined in regulation 32(4)); and does not include an injury from horns or antlers to which regulation 31 applies.

Regulation 32: Prevention of back-rub

- (1) A person must not transport a cattle beast, deer, sheep, goat, or pig in a manner that causes back-rub.

In this regulation, **back-rub** means a skin abrasion that—

- a) is bleeding or discharging; and
- b) is located on the head, hips, neck, spine, or high points on the back; and covers a combined area of more than 50 cm².

Regulation 40: Restrictions on transporting lame animals

- (1) The owner of, and every person in charge of, a cattle beast, sheep, deer, pig, or goat that is lame must not transport the animal, or allow the animal to be transported, unless—
 - a) the animal is accompanied by a veterinary certificate that states that the animal is fit for transport; or
 - b) the animal is accompanied by a veterinary certificate that specifies conditions that must be complied with to manage the animal welfare risks associated with the transport and the owner or person in charge complies with all relevant conditions.
- (2) However, the owner of, or person in charge of, the animal may, for the purpose of treatment, transport the animal—
 - a) within the property on which the animal resides; or
 - b) to another property (not being slaughter premises), part or all of which is less than 20 km from the boundary of the property on which the animal resides.

In this regulation,—

- a) a cattle beast, deer, or pig is **lame** if—
 - (i) the animal is not weight bearing on 1 or more limbs when moving or standing; or
 - (ii) the animal has a definite limp (shortened stride) that is clearly identifiable to a limb or limbs, with weight placed on the limb or limbs significantly reduced.
- b) a cattle beast, deer, or pig is not **lame** if the cause of the limp is a nonpainful condition (such as a conformational fault, a gait abnormality, or a healed injury) and the animal is able to bear weight (although not necessarily evenly) on all 4 limbs.

Regulation 41: Restrictions on transporting animals in late pregnancy

- (1) The owner of, and every person in charge of, a cattle beast, sheep, pig, or goat that is in late pregnancy must not transport the animal, or allow the animal to be transported, unless—
 - a) the animal is accompanied by a veterinary certificate that states that the animal is fit for transport; or the animal is accompanied by a veterinary certificate that specifies conditions that must be complied with to manage the animal welfare risks associated with the transport and the owner, or person in charge, complies with all relevant conditions.

APPENDIX 1: **Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018 concerning transport of pigs**

Regulation 48: Use of electric prodders

- (1) A person must not use an electric prodder on any animal, except—
- a) on cattle that weigh over 150 kg; or
 - b) during loading or unloading for transport, on pigs that weigh over 150 kg; or
 - c) during loading of a stunning pen at any slaughter premises, on pigs that weigh over 150 kg; or
 - d) during loading of a stunning pen at any slaughter premises, on deer of any weight.
- (2) If an electric prodder is used on an animal where permitted by subclause (1),—
- a) the prodder may be used only on the muscled areas of the animal's hindquarters or forequarters;
and
 - b) the animal must have sufficient room to move away from the prodder.

In this regulation, **electric prodder**—

- a) means a device that is capable of delivering an electric shock to make an animal move; but
- b) does not include electric stunners used to stun an animal immediately prior to slaughter.
- c) property on which the animal resides; or
- d) to another property (not being slaughter premises), part or all of which is less than 20 km from the boundary of the property on which the animal resides.

Regulation 49: Prodding animals in sensitive areas

- (1) A person must not strike or prod an animal with a goad in the udder, anus, genitals, or eyes.

In this regulation, **goad** means an object used to make an animal move, but does not include an electric prodder as defined in regulation 48(5).