



Animal welfare training for abattoir workers

By CARLY TAWHIAO

ALLIANCE Group's South Island abattoirs recently took part in some training to improve animal handling from arrival at the plant through to slaughter.

The two-day workshops were presented by Ross Davies and Jim Edwards of Achieve Enterprises Ltd (AEL) to satisfy competencies recommended in the 2010 Code of Welfare for Commercial Slaughter.

Highlights of the training included practical discussions with participants asked to audit actual meat plant facilities and identify features, problems that may be evident, and ways to make improvements.

Another central component to the programme was to provide an explanation of the requirements outlined in the new Code of Welfare for Commercial Slaughter.

Participants were also exposed to the science and technology that underpins animal welfare in the meat processing environment.

Alliance group development manager Gary McLennan said more than 300 of the company's staff had been through the AEL learning package since 2004.

"A major benefit of the training by AEL has been the development of recognised competencies in our people.

"Alliance considers itself a market led organisation, one that holds the values and wishes of its customers in the highest regard. Good animal welfare practise not only meets our legal obligations but ensures our customers receive the highest quality product."

At the end of the workshop participants were assessed using either a one on one examination mode or the more commonly used approach of an online quiz and short answer test.

AEL managing director Ross Davies said AEL's

sessions target not only animal handlers but supervisory and administrative groups and included comprehensive tutorage from live animal handling to ritual slaughter for Halal and Kosher exports.

An animal's physiology and anatomy has a significant impact on its welfare status in the meat processing industry. It dictated the animal's species-specific behaviour which affected the design and operation of good handling facilities.

In terms of the actual slaughter process, knowledge of physiology and anatomy on the part of operators is of major importance when ensuring humaneness.

"It's pleasing to find participants quite readily achieve the pass mark with many scoring in the high percentages," Mr Davies said. "For many this is their first experience of external assessment and so gaining a pass is extremely empowering, especially when it's understood that the assessments cover a wide range of material."

Although New Zealand's animal welfare system is among the best in the world, in terms of the impact on major export industries the definition and understanding of acceptable and unacceptable animal welfare continues to evolve.

MAF is the process of reviewing the existing legislation to develop a national animal welfare strategy.

Currently international trade rules do not allow discrimination of trade on the basis of animal welfare, however the pressure that is mounting within New Zealand's trading community on the issue of animal welfare good practice makes the formal rule somewhat meaningless.

Restaurant and supermarket chains reflect public concern about animal welfare in the pressure they place on the suppliers of animal products.



There is little doubt that high standards of animal welfare and robust animal welfare legislation will enhance New Zealand's reputation as a producer and exporter.

Downstream meat quality benefits of good welfare practise are of secondary importance but add weight to the drive for

improvement in this area.

For centuries humans have wrestled with the morality and purpose of animals for food and other products. Religious involvement in the process has taken many forms however all recognise it as a deliberate and solemn process.



AEL workshop trainer Dr Jim Edwards, middle, assists Teremoana Ngu, of Alliance Lorneville, with online assessment.



Ross Davies of AEL presents the Code of Welfare "minimum standards".