

Iowa Sow Farm: Hormel Supplier Investigation, 2008

Excerpts from the Investigators' Log Notes

Investigator 1

Wednesday, June 11, 2008

I watched as [a worker] killed two runts by slamming their heads into the concrete floor. He grabs the piglet by the back legs and swings him/her high over his head. The piglet is then slammed down, upside-down, so that the top of the head smashes into the concrete floor. He would usually do this just once but occasionally twice. Most of these piglets are still moving afterwards for several minutes before dying. Nothing is done if they are still moving. They are just expected to die eventually, which they do, but their legs are almost always kicking/convulsing until they die.

Thursday, June 12, 2008

The waste pit, beneath the farrowing barn's metal floor grates, is just 5 feet below the floor. The stench of feces, urine, afterbirth material, rot, and ammonia from the waste pit is overwhelming. The sows and piglets breathe in these noxious fumes 24 hours a day, as they never leave the stalls while in the farrowing area. Many of the sows' eyes appear red and irritated. The waste pit is cleaned once a year, according to ... the Unit Manager.

Monday, June 16, 2008

I witnessed a bloodbath today. ... I witnessed at least 30 piglets killed today ... Blood soaked the concrete floors. Generally speaking, piglets are thumped and killed in view of their peers. Many of the piglets were still moving after being thumped just once and are left there to die a slow death. ... I have yet to see anyone confirm thumped piglets' deaths—by confirming that they stopped breathing and that their hearts stopped—before walking away from piglets or tossing them in the dead pile.

Thursday, June 26, 2008

All the tail-docking and castration of piglets on the farm is done without any anesthesia. The piglets cry and screech at the top of their lungs. Their cries are piercing and extremely loud. Without earplugs, the sound is deafening. They appear to be in a great deal of pain. Never do I hear the piglets cry and screech like that at any other time during their stay on the farm. When some piglets are taken from their mothers on the day they are born, for purposes of fostering [by other pigs], they will cry until they are deposited into the new sow's stall, and then, thinking they are back with their mother, they will stop crying. However, the intensity, sheer volume, and duration of these cries pale in comparison to those I hear when piglets' tails are docked and males castrated.

Friday, August 1, 2008 (video)

I witnessed [a worker who trained me] spray blue spray paint ... into the face and nostrils of a ... sow. ... [The worker] sprayed the toxic paint into the sow's nostrils for a good 30 seconds at full blast. She would then spray it on the rest of the sow's face, including on her mouth, nose and around her eyes. Immediately afterwards, the sow slumped to the floor.

Monday, August 11, 2008 (video & photos)

I [saw a new employee] castrating two male piglets and docking their tails, all without anesthesia. The act was performed directly in front of the piglets' mother and littermates. [The worker] absolutely butchers these piglets as he repeatedly fails to locate and remove the piglets' testicles. The piglets can be heard shrieking throughout the entire process, evidently in tremendous pain. [The worker was] seen using an unsanitized metal wrench to rip out the testicles and dock the tails.

Wednesday, August 27, 2008 (video, photos)

I [found] a thumped piglet who [was] ... still alive on the floor of a farrowing room. I believe she was thumped (by [another worker]) because there were pools of blood beneath the skin of her head; her body was also limp and her tongue was hanging out of her mouth. However, the piglet was moving (not convulsing or kicking) her legs, as well as opening and closing her mouth. Also, when I touched her eyeball, she demonstrated a blinking reflex by closing her eyelid each time I touched her eye. ... At one point ... I heard the piglet make a crying sound.

Investigator 2**Friday, July 25, 2008**

There was one sow who was dead in her crate today. ... I asked why she had died, and they said that she has been very lame lately and not moving for a period of a couple of days. ... [A worker] ... said that he hoped she was in a "lot of pain" when she died. He said that he hoped her "insides were causing her lots of pain."

Monday, July 28, 2008

The condition of the sows at the farm appears pretty bad. There are a lot of sows with crate sores, most of which are on their shoulders.

Tuesday, July 29, 2008

There were approximately three pigs who [my supervisor] kicked or hit in the face and/or head. ... There was one time that he took a running start, pulled his leg back, and kicked a pig so hard in her rear that afterwards he had to take off his boot and rub his foot.

Saturday, August 2, 2008

[My supervisor] was extremely abusive today toward a sow who he told me had a broken hip. ... She ended up falling down, and he spent a long time kicking her in the face ... She squeal[ed] in anguish as he d[id] this. He then grabbed the underside of the top half of her snout and tried yanking her up by that. He finally decided to leave her in an aisle that was next to us, but he had to back her up a little bit to get her in there. He did this by continuously kicking her in the face and yanking her by her tail. He also grabbed her by both of her ears and proceeded to try to drag her a few feet into the aisle. He then kicked her in her vagina over and over again to make her move a little bit more.

Tuesday, August 5, 2008

There was one [pig] who would not walk through the hallway ... to the breeding barn. She did not appear to have any form of injury, she was just very scared. [My supervisor and a worker] spent over 20 minutes beating and abusing her. I was [told by my supervisor] ... to “stick your finger in her butt.”

Monday, August 11, 2008

I [witnessed a worker] as he shot a sow today with the bolt gun. She was lying in her crate not moving, and apparently she hasn't been eating. He told me that she has been like this for a few days. He shot her, and she shook very violently for a few minutes. I asked him how many he had shot, and he replied about seven. He then said, “One bitch I had to shoot eight times.” I asked him why he had to shoot her so many times, and his reply was that “she wouldn't die.”

Friday, August 15, 2008

There was one sow who would not get up for a few days due to what seemed to be a broken pelvis or hips and/or legs. ... [My supervisor] kicked her, and then grabbed her by both of her ears and attempted to drag her out of the gestation crate in the breeding barn. She screamed in pain and protest. He then jumped on her back and was kicking her as he stood on her back. ... [He was] riding her like a surfboard with one leg on her back and one on her neck. He then grabbed her by her tail, lifted her body, and forced her to walk out of her crate. As she did this, it was a horrific site. The back half of her body was unable to move, her two back legs were coming out from under the right side of her body. She was supporting her weight with her two front legs and in obvious torture and torment. [My supervisor] was then trying to kick her and push her to keep her still as he shot her. She turned to the sows in crates alongside her as if asking for help. They kissed and sniffed, and then she was shot.

Saturday, August 30, 2008

There was one time that [my supervisor] urinated in the aisle where the head gates of occupied crates are. His urine rolled into the front of the crates, where the sows' food drops, and where their heads are. There were animals who were in these crates that he urinated next to.

Sunday, August 31, 2008

When [a sow] ran past us, we got her into the hallway in between the two barns. [My supervisor] then came over and shoved the end of the cane inside her vagina. ... [I]t appeared as if at least a few inches of the cane went inside of her. He used the straight end of the cane to penetrate her, and this end is the end that would touch the ground as he walked. ... [T]his end had feces and urine on it from other animals. He then hit her on the back with the cane fairly hard approximately six times. ... She then turned down the aisle to the crate she was going to, and he continued to run after her and threw his whole body into swinging the cane. He struck her extremely hard on her back several more times. ... He then took me over to the sow who he had chased and repeatedly hit so hard and pointed out the marks that he had left on her.

Monday, September 8, 2008

While moving the sows, [the farm manager] had a hotshot in his hand the entire time. He was constantly shocking them to get them to move, mostly in their faces. At one point after [he] walked a bunch of animals to the truck by shocking them in their faces, I asked him if it was OK to hotshot them in the face. He told me that it was because they are culls. ... When we got back to the pens ..., there was one sow ... lying in a pen who was not able to get up [The farm manager] pushed her with his foot and then asked us if she wouldn't get up. I said no, and he went over to pick up the [electric shocking prod]. She tried to stand up as he walked over, but both of her back legs were in very bad condition. ... Both of her legs were underneath the left side of her body. [The farm manager] continuously stomped on and kicked her bad legs and shocked her the whole time he was doing this. He was trying to get her up in order to sell her as a cull, instead of just killing her. This went on for a considerable length of time, and finally she was able to stumble to her feet. As she did, she fell across a large distance in the pen and was trying to walk, but her back legs would not support her.

Tuesday, September 9, 2008

The six sows who were unable to get up and therefore weren't culled yesterday were not killed today. ... The sow who [the farm manager] was abusing yesterday ... was lying in the same spot all day today. ... It looked as if her toe had come off somehow. There was a bloody hole in her foot where it appeared as though a toe would go, and there was what appeared to be a toe lying a few feet from her.