

Workers may be injured if workplace hazards are not managed effectively during the processing of meat. The hazards associated with meat processing operations include:

- Physical hazards
- Biological hazards
- Chemical hazards
- Environmental Hazards

### ***PHYSICAL HAZARDS***

Physical hazards include fall hazards which may result from slippery conditions or trip hazards, unsafe tools and machines and muscular strains from incorrect posture when performing tasks.

### **FALL HAZARDS**

All walkways must be kept free and clear of any substance or material which may cause workers to slip and fall. All drainage traps must be regularly cleaned to ensure that they function effectively. Special attention should be paid to walk in freezers/chillers where the build-up ice may cause employees to slip. The use of slip resistant floors is recommended.

### **MACHINE /TOOL SAFETY**

The use of knives, mechanical saws, packaging equipment, mincers as well as damaged or malfunctioning equipment may result in accidents. To prevent accidents when working with equipment it is important that:

- All equipment be inspected for faults before each use
- All equipment be serviced according to the manufacturer's recommendations and service records kept.
- Workers be trained in the correct use of equipment (including the use of safety devices) and personal protective equipment (PPE) such as metallic gloves (when appropriate) and aprons or coveralls for cutting activities.

### **MANUAL HANDLING**

Activities such as lifting, carrying, repetitive work and bad working postures may result in injury to workers. To minimize the risk of injury it is recommended that workers be trained in proper manual handling techniques for

all activities including the use of sliding rails and manual lifting. The use of mechanical lifting aids should also be utilized if possible.

### ***BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS***

Workers may be exposed to harmful biological agents through contact or accidental ingestion during the handling of carcasses, raw meat, stomach contents, intestine cleaning or waste water management operations. These hazards may be managed through the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that is appropriate for the activity e.g. protective clothing, gloves and masks for workers in the intestine and stomach cleaning operations. Disused meat and offal should be removed from the workplace on a regular basis and workers must maintain good personal hygiene.

### ***CHEMICAL HAZARDS***

Chemicals used during meat processing may include those used during cleaning operations and for disinfecting processing areas. The following precautions should be considered in the context of meat processing:

- Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) should be obtained for all chemicals and employees must be trained to adequately use them.
- All chemicals must be stored and used according to the specifications outlined on the MSDS.
- Chemicals should not be stored or transported with food and should be secured in areas with the appropriate hazard signage.
- If required by the MSDS the requisite PPE must be utilized when using chemicals

### ***ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS***

Hazards which may arise as a result of inadequate lighting, extreme temperature, inadequate ventilation and noise may cause injury to workers.

### **LIGHTING**

Sufficient and suitable lighting must be provided for all areas accessed by employee. This includes freezers/chillers and storage areas.

### **TEMPERATURE**

A reasonable temperature for each workroom must be maintained and adequate measures must be implemented to protect workers who are required to work in excessively high or low temperatures.

- Make sure that workers do not remain in freezers/chillers for longer than 2<sup>1/2</sup> hours. Rotate workers so no one person is in the cold room for a long time.
- Wear warm, protective clothing. The clothing layer closest to the skin should be able to absorb sweat, while the outside layer should be waterproof.
- Workers who are more sensitive to cold should be allocated shorter work periods in freezers/chillers.
- Ensure that the doors of all freezers/chillers are fitted with emergency escape devices to prevent persons from being trapped inside.

#### VENTILATION

Every room in which work is carried out must be adequately ventilated to ensure the circulation of fresh air and to remove any airborne impurities that may be generated during work.

#### NOISE

Research has shown that noise levels above 85 dB (A) over an 8 hour day is likely to cause hearing loss. All steps must be taken to maintain the level of noise below a level that is likely cause injury.

- Conduct noise assessments to assess and identify measures to eliminate or reduce sources of injurious noise.
- Segregate noisy equipment away from other work areas.
- Keep people out of noisy work areas if their jobs do not require them to be there.
- Maintain equipment regularly and replace guards and covers after maintenance.
- If needed, supply personal protective equipment and enforce their use.

*LABOUR DEPARTMENT- OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH SECTION  
Promoting the attainment and maintenance of desirable standards of occupational safety and health practice  
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