SOP No: ATT 072

SUBJECT: Tattooing of pigs.

DATE ISSUED: 16.07.2014

POLICY: Two people are required for this procedure. 
Demonstrator: experience in this procedure
Students: competence in handling animals. Students should practice this technique on an inanimate model before using it on live animals.
Legal requirements: All pigs of 30kg or more (live weight) must bear a registered brand (tattoo) before being sold in Queensland (subject to certain exemptions; see the Queensland Government Business and Industry Portal website for more information).

PRECAUTIONS: Wear sturdy footwear (steel capped boots), overalls and ear muffs, gloves and safety glasses
Animals should be handled quietly before, during and after the procedure
Wash hands and exposed body parts thoroughly with soap and water after handling animal feed and feeding equipment

EQUIPMENT: pens, tattooing equipment (note that the paste must be a type approved by the Queensland DAFF).

PROCEDURE: Tattoos may be placed on the ear or sides of the body. Use only the tattoo brand allocated to the property by the Registrar of Brands.
Pigs coated with mud or manure should be hosed clean.

Make sure the correct pigs are being branded before starting.

Before tattooing, check that needle blocks are the right way up and in the correct order in the holder by pressing it against a scrap of cardboard. Make sure needle blocks are clean and free of dried ink, dirt and pig bristles by scrubbing in water. Keep spares on hand to replace blocks with broken or bent needles; a few missing needles can alter the brand. When tattooing a large number of pigs, clean the tattoo needles occasionally to remove excess dried ink. Use only an approved ink or paste. Don’t dilute the ink as the brand will be faint or illegible. An ink pad (larger than the tattoo head) made from a foam sponge in a shallow container makes the job easier.
Press the needles into the ink-soaked pad before branding each side of the pig. The tattoo ‘striker’ should contact the pig's skin just hard enough to ensure penetration of the inked needles but not cause bruising or injury.

The tattoo pliers, letters and numbers should be disinfected between each use. Be aware that pigs (young and adult) vocalise when they are handled. This does not necessarily indicate that they are distressed or in pain. Learn to distinguish between the calls of pigs. Ask your supervisor for advice if you are uncertain.

Tattooing baby pigs:
1. Before starting each litter check the breed of piglets: at the UQ Gatton piggery, only pure bred and female F1 piglets are tattooed.
2. Catch the piglets by the back legs, identify the sex and mark the males with a crayon stripe down the back before placing them in the trolley.
3. Count the number of males and females and record in the farrowing book, the sow card and the litter card.
4. A second person is required to restrain piglets for tattooing. Restrain the piglet by holding it against your body with left hand and holding its head with your right hand so that the piglet’s left ear is presented for tattooing.
5. Before tattooing each piglet make sure that the correct number is being used.
6. Rub tattoo ink onto the ear; completely pierce the thinner part of the ear, avoiding veins where possible. After piercing the ear, thoroughly rub the ink into the puncture marks. Carry out this procedure as quickly and as painlessly as possible.
7. Piglets are then returned to the sow, and observed for the following few hours for signs of excessive bleeding, and over the following days for signs of infection.
8. After marking, piglets may need to be fostered onto another sow to keep litter number at 10 to 12 per sow and to make sure all piglets in each litter are approximately the same size.

Branding pigs before sale:
To comply with Qld law, only the oldest pigs in the grower shed need to be branded in the week before sale.
1. Put the pig to be tattooed in a pen (when tattooing the sides the tattoo is applied with a slapping motion and there must be enough space around the animal to apply the tattoo).
2. Pigs coated with mud or manure should be hosed clean.
3. Press the brand into the branding ink between each animal and make sure the brand is thoroughly coated in ink.
4. The brand is applied to the midsection between the shoulders and hips with a slapping action, on both sides. The tattoo ‘striker’ should contact the pig’s skin just hard enough to ensure penetration of the inked needles but not cause bruising or injury.
5. Animals should only be struck with the brand twice (once on each side). Do not attempt to re-apply a brand. Care should be taken to avoid the need for repeated striking of individual pigs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

REVISED:

CHAIR OF AEC

REFERENCES