

Zephyr Gun Shown as Effective Alternative for Euthanizing Piglets

A device developed at the University of Guelph has been shown to be as effective but much less unpleasant than alternative methods for euthanizing compromised piglets. The Zephyr, which uses a non-penetrating captive bolt to cause a traumatic impact with the skull rendering a pig immediately insensible, was developed at the University of Guelph as an alternative to blunt force trauma for euthanasia. In tests conducted by the Prairie Swine Centre at its research barn and in commercial operations on compromised piglets in four weight categories, the device was found to be 100 percent effective. Research scientist in ethology Dr. Jennifer Brown explains the captive bolt gun is applied twice in rapid succession to impact the skull causing rapid loss of sensibility.

Clip-Dr. Jennifer Brown-Prairie Swine Centre: The device is actually a pneumatic air gun with a modified head to cause a traumatic impact with the skull. Certainly with piglets in the farrowing room, young piglets, the most standard method for euthanasia is a blunt force trauma and certainly a lot of barn staff find this procedure, even though we know it's very effective, is not very aesthetically pleasant to do and a lot of people don't really want to do that. People working in a farrowing room, their main goal is to raise piglets and to look after piglets so performing blunt force trauma euthanasia was often distasteful to barn staff so we were looking for a method that was effective and that would be easier to perform by the barn staff. Certainly we find that the barn staff find it to be a much more acceptable method in terms of it's very reliable and more aesthetically pleasant than the previous methods.

Dr. Brown notes the Prairie Swine Centre has retained one of the Zephyr guns and is using it currently for euthanasia.

For Farmscape.Ca, rm Bruce Cochrane.

*Farmscape is a presentation of Sask Pork and Manitoba Pork Council

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