Euthanasia in poultry: Why, when and how

Dr. Jenny Fricke
Dr. Karen Schwean-Lardner
Outline

- What is euthanasia?
- Why cull sick birds?
- When should culling happen?
- How NOT to euthanize!
- How to euthanize
- Approved techniques for euthanasia
- Discussion
- Demonstration
What is euthanasia?

Euthanasia is derived from the Greek terms *eu* meaning good and *thanatos* meaning death. The term is usually used to describe ending the life of an individual animal in a way that minimizes or eliminates pain and distress. A good death is tantamount to the humane termination of an animal’s life.
Why cull sick, untreatedable birds?

- Reduce suffering
Why cull sick, untreated birds?

- Reduce suffering
- Public opinion

http://www.cbc.ca/marketplace/blog/extended-video-turkey-euthanization
Why cull sick, untreatable birds?

- Reduce suffering
- Public opinion
- Remove inefficient birds
  - Reduce feed usage
  - Increase space for healthy birds
Goal for euthanasia

CVMA position statement:

“The animal must be rendered irreversibly unconscious as rapidly as possible with the least possible pain, fear, and anxiety. The preferred methods used to achieve this are those that affect the brain first, followed quickly by cessation of cardiac and respiratory function. The experience, training, sensitivity, and compassion of the individual carrying out the procedure are critical”
Goal for euthanasia

- Goal is for reaching a rapid death
  - Reduces suffering/pain

- Decision should be made swiftly to reduce duration of pain/stress
When should culling happen?

- Questions which you could ask to make this decision include: (National Turkey Federation report “On Farm Euthanasia of Turkeys)
When should culling happen?

- Is the bird experiencing pain?
When should culling happen?

- **Leg defect**
  - Gait Score 3 or more causes pain
  - Bird has an identifiable leg deformity AND cannot sustain motion or standing for more than 15 s
When should culling happen?

- Is the bird able to reach the feeder or waterer?
- Can or should the bird be treated? Is recovery likely?
- Is the bird likely to transmit the disease to other birds?
How NOT to euthanize

- Methods that DO NOT do this
  - Manual wringing of the neck
    - Slow, painful, suffocation

How NOT to euthanize

Methods that DO NOT do this

- Blunt force trauma – improperly performed
How NOT to cull birds

Methods that DO NOT do this
- Burning
- Drowning
- Suffocation
How to euthanize

- **Goal is for reaching a rapid death**
  - Reduces suffering/pain

**Methods that do this:**

- Euthanasia injections – not applicable on farm
- **Blunt force trauma**
  - Manually - Only if performed properly!
  - Equipment – maintenance of equipment
- **Breaking of the spinal cord**
  - Cervical dislocation performed properly
How to euthanize

- Signs of successful euthanasia (insensibility)
  - Feel for broken neck
  - No natural blinking
  - No breathing or vocalization
  - No jaw tone
  - No organized limb movement such as attempting to lift the head

Acceptable euthanasia techniques for on-farm

- Blunt force trauma
  - Weighted – not always an approved method
    
    ![Images of blunt force trauma tools]
Acceptable euthanasia techniques for on-farm

- **Blunt force trauma**
  - Weighted – not always an approved method
  - Zephyr or TED (Turkey Euthanasia Device)

http://www.agannex.com  
http://www.livestockwelfare.com/euthanasia/
Acceptable euthanasia techniques for on-farm

- Cervical dislocation
  - Manual cervical dislocation

Acceptable euthanasia techniques for on-farm

- Cervical dislocation
  - Manual cervical dislocation
  - Cervical dislocation with the assistance of a tool
    - Burdizzo?
    - KED

Image from: A Color Atlas of Avian Anatomy; J. McLelland
Acceptable euthanasia techniques for on-farm

- Cervical dislocation
  - Manual cervical dislocation
  - KED – Koechner Euthanasia Device
Acceptable euthanasia techniques for on-farm

- Cervical dislocation
  - Manual cervical dislocation
  - KED – Koechner Euthanasia Device
Acceptable euthanasia techniques for on-farm

- Cervical dislocation
  - Manual cervical dislocation
  - KED – Koechner Euthanasia Device

Acceptable euthanasia techniques for on-farm

- Cervical dislocation
  - Manual cervical dislocation
  - KED – Koechner Euthanasia Device
Discussion questions

- What makes euthanasia difficult?
- How do you train your staff for euthanasia?
- Who is responsible?
Demonstrations

- Cervical dislocation
- KED