



**OIE AD HOC GROUP ON KILLING METHODS FOR FARMED REPTILES
FOR THEIR SKINS, MEAT AND OTHER PRODUCTS
ELECTRONIC REVIEW AND TELECONFERENCE¹**

Paris, August 2018

1. Welcome and introduction

The OIE *ad hoc* Group on Killing methods for farmed reptiles for their skins, meat and other products (the *ad hoc* Group) conducted a review, electronically, of the draft chapter to consider Member Countries' comments and finalised its review via a teleconference on 30th August 2018.

The electronic work was coordinated by the OIE Headquarters.

The members of the *ad hoc* Group and other participants who participated in the review of the working document are listed at Annex I.

The agenda for the electronic review and the teleconference is presented as Annex II.

During the electronic review and the teleconference Dr William Karesh, chair of the *ad hoc* Group, thanked the members of the *ad hoc* Group for their dedicated work, and the Member Countries and organisations for sending constructive comments.

Dr Leopoldo Stuardo, Chargé de mission of the Standards Department, thanked the *ad hoc* Group, on behalf of the Director General, for their commitment to work with the OIE on this important topic.

The teleconference was dedicated to discussing the comments in which there were differing points of view during the electronic review process. Due to time constraints Leisha Hewitt, Mathias Lörtscher, Paolo Martelli, Christopher Foggin and Slamet Raharjo, could not participate in the teleconference, but they provided their comments electronically beforehand.

2. Review of Member Countries comments on the draft chapter on killing methods for farmed reptiles for their skins, meat and other products

The *ad hoc* Group proposed a revised draft Chapter 7.Y. included as Annex III for consideration by the Code Commission at its February 2018 meeting.

Comments were received from Argentina, Australia, Canada, China (People Republic of), New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, United States of America, European Union, African Union Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources and the International Coalition for Animal Welfare.

During the drafting of this chapter and in response to several Member Countries' comments, the *ad hoc* Group also proposed a number of changes throughout the text to improve grammar, syntax, clarity and the translation in the Spanish version.

General comments

The *ad hoc* Group noted several other Member Countries' comments supporting the development of this chapter and encouraging the OIE to adopt it at the next General Session in May 2019.

¹ Note: This *ad hoc* Group report reflects the views of its members and may not necessarily reflect the views of the OIE. This report should be read in conjunction with the September 2018 report of the Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission because this report provides its considerations and comments. It is available at <http://www.oie.int/en/international-standard-setting/specialists-commissions-groups/code-commission-reports/meetings-reports/>

The *ad hoc* Group did not agree with the general comment of a Member Country proposing the use of tables in the structure of the draft chapter. This was previously addressed by the *ad hoc* Group, in that the readability of tables had been difficult for some Member Countries. The Secretariat also recalled that Chapter 7.5. on Slaughter of Animals is in the process of revision by another OIE *ad hoc* Group and that the tables would not necessarily be kept in the revised structure of the chapter.

The *ad hoc* Group agreed with the comment of a Member Country to review and modify the text for consistency in the use of the word, 'reptiles', when relevant.

Article 7.Y.2.

The *ad hoc* Group agreed with a Member Country's comment to include the source of the animals in a separate article, which will become the new Article 7.Y.4, as this important aspect is considered an environmental and species conservation topic, and not an animal welfare issue.

Article 7.Y.3.

The *ad hoc* Group partially agreed with the comment of a Member Country to include the restraint aspects in the first sentence, of the first paragraph of Article 7.Y.3., but they proposed to remove it from the additional description in the second part of the paragraph, to improve readability. The *ad hoc* Group also replaced the word 'specific' with 'various' at the initial part of the paragraph to improve clarity.

The *ad hoc* Group did not agree with the proposal of a Member Country to include 'Species of animal' when choosing the appropriate stunning and killing method, in particular, with venomous animals, as the *ad hoc* Group considered this aspect was already covered in the section referring to the safety of the animal handlers.

1. Animal welfare plan

The *ad hoc* Group did not agree with the proposal of an Organisation to include housing and care aspects, as the chapter is about the humane killing and not the husbandry of reptiles.

2. Competency and training of personnel

Regarding the proposal of a Member Country to replace 'monitoring' with 'verifying', the *ad hoc* Group partially agreed with this proposal and kept the monitoring concept, as 'verification' refers to checking an individual, while monitoring suggests on-going confirmation of the process. Therefore, both are important activities to conduct.

The *ad hoc* Group agreed with the proposal of some Member Countries and an Organisation to add wording to note the importance of recognising the different reptile species, as this would help handlers to consider species-specific issues when taking action in relation to their handling and stunning or killing process.

Regarding the proposal of a Member Country to include the concept of 'training' in relation to personnel, the *ad hoc* Group agreed with the importance of this aspect but modified the order where it appears in the draft text.

The *ad hoc* Group did not agree with a comment of a Member Country to include reference to the frequency of the need to verify the competence of the personnel. The *ad hoc* Group believed the proposal did not add value to the sentence, furthermore leaving it as is confirms that verification of competency is an on-going process rather than a planned event.

3. Source of animals (new Article 7.Y.4.)

The *ad hoc* Group did not agree with the proposal of a Member Country to change the subtitle to include wild-caught animals. The *ad hoc* Group considered that sourcing includes reptiles raised in captivity still needing to be acquired legally. Nevertheless, the *ad hoc* Group agreed with Member Countries comments to move the section on the source of the animals to a new Article 7.Y.4., after the General Considerations. Finally, the *ad hoc* Group also made a slight modification to the title of the new article to include a reference to the importance of maintaining good welfare conditions during the transport of the reptiles.

Regarding the proposal from an Organisation to include the national legislation of the importing and exporting countries when acquiring reptiles, the *ad hoc* Group agreed with the proposal and included this aspect in the draft text. The *ad hoc* Group also considered that if illegal activities are going to be assumed, then there may also be a source and intermediate destination countries that are not the exporter or importer of record and added some new wording to the text to cover this possibility.

The *ad hoc* Group did not agree with the comment of a Member Country to include in the source of the reptiles a reference to farmed and captive wild reptiles, as it considered that it did not add clarity to the paragraph.

The *ad hoc* Group agreed with the proposal of some Member Countries that capture and transport conditions should be applied to both farmed and captive wild and wild reptiles and modified the text accordingly at the beginning of the third paragraph of this section.

4. Behaviour

Regarding the comment of some Member Countries to give more clarity to the content of the behavioural aspects, the *ad hoc* Group agreed to modify the subtitle referring to behaviour.

The *ad hoc* Group agreed with a Member Country comment that handling, restraining, stunning and killing should be grouped together, and modified the text accordingly.

The *ad hoc* Group agreed to include the olfactory stimuli to which reptiles can have a response as some scientific evidence shows that reptiles have an olfactory system, well developed, particularly in squamate reptiles. Therefore, they could react to the presence of smells by modifying their behaviour.

The *ad hoc* Group agreed with the proposal of an Organisation to modify the fourth bullet point of this article to clarify that there are other causes of slow metabolic rates in addition to low body temperature.

The *ad hoc* Group agreed with an Organisation to replace the words ‘common or normal’ with ‘typical’ to improve the readability of the last bullet point of this section referring to the absence of vocalisation.

Regarding the proposal of an Organisation to include a new bullet point to emphasise that some species-specific behaviours indicate fear, pain and distress. The *ad hoc* Group partially agreed with the proposal and include the proposed text in the introductory part of this section.

Article 7.Y.4. (New Article 7.Y.5.)

Considering the comment of a Member Country to use ‘reversible’ when qualifying a stunning method, the *ad hoc* Group considered revising the original text to avoid using terms such as ‘reversible’ and ‘irreversible’ as they could lead to different interpretations. The *ad hoc* Group suggested rewording the first paragraph clarifying that the process should involve either stunning followed by a killing method or direct killing method.

The *ad hoc* Group agreed with Member Country comments to take out the ‘cost of the method’ from the bullet points. Nevertheless, the *ad hoc* Group proposed to include a short sentence at the end of this section, as even if the cost of the method is not an animal welfare issue, it could indirectly have an important impact on the animal welfare outcomes.

The *ad hoc* Group agreed with an Organisation to include ‘pain’ as one of the aspects to be avoided during the killing process.

In response to a Member Country comment regarding the similarities of the last two bullet points, on how to conduct the killing process, the *ad hoc* Group restructured the three last bullet points to improve their readability.

Article 7.Y.5. (New Article 7.Y.6.)

The *ad hoc* Group agreed with the proposal of a Member Country to replace the word ‘establishment’ with ‘verification’ in the second paragraph of this article, as it improves the clarity of the text.

In response to a Member Country comment which required a clearer explanation on the criteria to measure the effectiveness of stunning and killing methods, the *ad hoc* Group added the word ‘objects’ to clarify that this, in the line of sight, produces the pupilar response.

Regarding the comment of a Member Country to include an exemption for crocodilians concerning the jaw tone as an indicator measure of the effectiveness of stunning and killing methods, the *ad hoc* Group agreed to include it, as crocodilians maintain some jaw tone even after decapitation.

In response to the comments of two Member Countries about using heartbeat as an indicator of death, the *ad hoc* Group reworded the sentence to clarify that cardiac activity as the sole indicator should not be used to evaluate whether the reptile is dead. The *ad hoc* Group also agreed to remove the last phrase of the text to improve readability.

Article 7.Y.6. (New Article 7.Y.7.)

Concerning an Organisation suggestion to include a new bullet point on the requirements for an adequate restraint method, the *ad hoc* Group did not agree with the proposal. The *ad hoc* Group considered that is not feasible to measure this parameter in a slaughterhouse context, and also because this is considered as an outcome to be achieved by using all the procedures mentioned.

Regarding the proposal of an Organisation to cover all potential injuries during the stunning and killing process and allow only for those necessary to quickly and humanely stun and kill the reptile, the *ad hoc* Group agreed to add a new bullet point at the end of this section to better cover this aspect.

The *ad hoc* Group agreed with the comments of Member Countries that is important to consider that in the phase of restraint reptiles can still experience pain if pulled or probed in sensitive parts of their body. Nevertheless, the *ad hoc* Group did not modify the point as it was already considered as a new paragraph in the section covering the “Procedures or practices unacceptable on animal welfare grounds”.

Regarding the comment of a Member Country in relation to the limited capacities for vocalization of reptiles, the *ad hoc* Group included the word ‘excessive’, to clarify this is the condition that should be looked for as an indicator.

Article 7.Y.7. (New Article 7.Y.8.)

The *ad hoc* Group agreed with an Organisation to include ‘pain’ as one of the aspects to be avoided during the stunning and killing process.

The *ad hoc* Group agreed with some Member Countries to replace the word ‘excitement’ with ‘agitation’ for consistency with the use of this concept throughout the draft text.

Article 7.Y.8. (New Article 7.Y.9.)

The *ad hoc* Group did not agree with the proposal of a Member Country to add a sentence in regard to differentiating a stunned reptile from an immobilized one as stunning is a completely different concept of immobilization.

The *ad hoc* Group agreed with the suggestion of a Member Country to add a reference to some variables to consider when using electrical stunning to harmonise this article with other methods mentioned in this draft (e.g. captive bolt method).

The *ad hoc* Group agreed with Member Countries comments to include an additional recommendation for the effective use of the electrical stunning method in crocodylians.

Article 7.Y.10. (New Article 7.Y.11.)

The *ad hoc* Group agreed with the comment of an Organisation to add more information concerning the different sizes of reptiles in which non-penetrating captive bolt can be used.

Regarding the proposal of an Organisation to add a new bullet point concerning the importance of the selection of the equipment and its maintenance, the *ad hoc* Group agreed with the proposal to modify the draft accordingly.

Article 7.Y.11. (New Article 7.Y.12.)

The *ad hoc* Group agreed with some Member Countries to add a new sentence to highlight the importance of the anatomical differences between reptiles when using a percussive blow to the head because of the thickness of the braincase. Nevertheless, the *ad hoc* Group did not agree to mention any specific species of reptile.

The *ad hoc* Group did not agree to add two new bullet points to indicate the maximum live weight and the number of reptiles to be managed, as these considerations are already mentioned in Article 7.Y.3. in the second section for all procedures covered in the chapter.

The *ad hoc* Group did not agree with the comments of an Organisation to include a specific recommendation for crocodylians about the thickness of the braincase, as this article covers all reptiles and a percussive blow to the head is extremely effective for many species in line with the four recommendations mentioned in this section.

Article 7.Y.13. (New Article 7.Y.14.)

In response to the question from Member Countries on why pithing could promote animal welfare, the *ad hoc* Group indicated that immediate pithing in an unconscious reptile is considered as an important adjunct to ensure animal welfare.

Article 7.Y.14. (New Article 7.Y.15.)

The *ad hoc* Group did not agree with the proposal of a Member Country to delete the reference regarding the need to only use decapitation in stunned and unconscious reptiles. The *ad hoc* Group recalled it had mentioned in its previous reports, pithing *per se* requires a considerable degree of handling and performance precision and should not be regarded as an acceptable adjunct for conscious animals – hence the well discussed and agreed caution and requirement to ensure that decapitation of any reptile is preceded by unconsciousness. Also, for many species, it is impractical due to the difficulties of removing some cervical vertebrae that are protected by supracaudal processes. In addition, time between decapitation and pithing is likely to be highly variable according to species, animal size and handler, and this period, even if apparently short to the observer, implies severe pain and stress for the animal, and therefore the Member Country suggestion runs counter to the welfare-oriented assurances of the draft chapter.

Article 7.Y.15. (New Article 7.Y.16.)

In response to the proposal of a Member Country to add a reference to the species and size of the reptile when using a chemical agent, the *ad hoc* Group agreed with this proposal as the parameters mentioned are important to find the most appropriate product and dosage to be used.

Article 7.Y.16. (New Article 7.Y.17.)

The *ad hoc* Group noted the comment from a Member Country that the OIE should consider the implications of identifying unacceptable stunning and killing methods in reptiles that could be transferred to standards for fish welfare. The *ad hoc* Group recommended the OIE share this point of view with the Aquatic Animals Commission.

The *ad hoc* Group did not agree with the addition of the word “inhumane” and reiterated that there is no room for misinterpretation of the words “inappropriate” or “unacceptable” for the purposes of this article and the chapter. The *ad hoc* Group recalled that words ‘humane’ or ‘inhumane’ have been avoided in this chapter, and they had not been tasked to delve into the philosophical implications of terminology related to the killing of animals.

3. Programme for further work after the teleconference

The *ad hoc* Group was informed that the report of the electronic review and the teleconference, including the amended draft chapter, will be presented to the September 2018 meeting of the Code Commission. The OIE Headquarters will contact the Members of the *ad hoc* Group if additional work is required in the future.

4. Draft a report of the *ad hoc* Group meeting

The *ad hoc* Group agreed to complete their meeting report by early September 2018 for submission to the September 2018 meeting of the Code Commission.

5. Other business

There was no other business proposed for discussion.

.../Appendices

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Adopted agenda

1. Welcome and introduction.
 2. Consider Member Countries' comments on draft Chapter 7.Y. 'Killing of reptiles for their skins, meat and other products' and amend text as appropriate.
 3. Programme for further work of the *ad hoc* Group.
 4. Draft a report of the *ad hoc* Group electronic review and teleconference.
 5. Other business.
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[Note: this Annex has been replaced by Annex 10 to the report of the meeting of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission which was held on 11–20 September 2018.]

