

Abattoir workers in Colombia and the human - animal relationship

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Framework Sc. 2, 3

Type: Case Study | 03/03/25

OWM No. 3

SUMMARY

A recent study analysed the attitudes of different groups of pig abattoir workers in Colombia and how this impacted on their relationship with the animals they were handling for slaughter.

The study surveyed 171 workers at 12 abattoirs across Colombia and summarised four different types of attitude displayed by the workers towards the human- animal relationship: sympathy, antipathy, cruelty and confidence in personal abilities. By grouping workers based on these attitudes four different profiles were identified: 1) workers that reacted to their work in a mechanical way; 2) workers committed to the animals and their work; 3), workers emotionally close to the animals; 4) workers apathetic to the animals and their work activity.

The study found that the human- animal relationship was influenced by both the degree of sympathy the workers had for the animals and their job satisfaction. It also highlighted how the meat industry could benefit from adopting a One Welfare approach by improving the working environment and conditions for workers to encourage more empathetic attitudes and behaviours towards the animals. The development of training strategies that take into account the different worker attitudes is recommended as a tool. Also further research on ways to improve the human-animal relationships at slaughterhouses should look at modifying certain attitudes relating to cruelty, lack of empathy, overconfidence in handling animals and job dissatisfaction.



Image: A. Pastrana-Camacho

Pigs been unloaded at the abattoir



Image: A. Pastrana-Camacho

Case study impacts

- Improvements in human attitudes and behaviours towards animals would improve animal welfare
- Improvements in working conditions and job satisfaction may boost productivity



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One Welfare Pillars

ANIMAL WELFARE



- Improved pig handling, lessening pain suffering and distress would result from better training and more positive attitudes from workers

HUMAN WELLBEING



- Better conditions and training for Abattoir workers;
- Improved job satisfaction

ENVIRONMENT



Physical

- Improved working environment:

Social environment

- Better quality of human-animal interactions during animal handling

Multidisciplinary relevant areas

Public health; meat production; social research; animal behaviour and welfare;

References / Source

- Pastrana et al., 2023. What slaughterhouse workers' attitudes and knowledge reveal about human-pig relationships during pre-slaughter operations: A profile-based approach. Meat Science, Vol. 195, 2023, 109017, ISSN 0309-1740.
- The Interconnection between different profiles of abattoir workers and the human-animal relationship. Pastrana, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oMqNtqUzQBg>

