

UNETHICAL SLAUGHTERING PRACTICES AT THE TRANSIENT ABATTOIR OF THE INTERNATIONAL CATTLE MARKET, IBADAN, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

Unethical practice in handling and slaughtering of cattle is on the increase in Nigerian abattoirs. Proper handling and prevention of stress in animals prior to slaughter avails good carcass. The study was carried out at Akinyele international Cattle Market abattoir in Ibadan for a period of five consecutive weeks. information were gathered on the restraining methods, slaughtering style, slaughtering interval and processing interval from 7.00am – 7.00pm daily using direct observation with the aid of checklist. Data were subjected to descriptive statistics using frequencies and percentages. Out of the 1839 slaughtered cattle observed at the facility during the period of the study, a total number of 1584 cattle (87.2%) were slaughtered without restraining while 255 were restrained before slaughter. A total of 1635 cattle (89%) were bled by slashing through the neck while 11% were slaughtered by piercing narrowly with knife. Most cattle (72.2%) were slaughtered within the first 5 minutes of arrival at the abattoir while a larger number of cattle slaughtered were also processed within the first 1-5 minutes. It could be concluded that cattle handling and slaughtering practices at Akinyele International Market were unethical. Slaughtering should therefore be done humanely, cattle should be properly restrained before bleeding and allowed to bleed well before the commencement of singeing or further processing.

INTRODUCTION

In the recent time, there is an increasing concern on the unethical practices in Nigerian abattoirs especially the way animals are handled before slaughtering. Cattle marked for slaughtering are handled with little or no human feelings. Akinyemi *et al.* (2013) reported that some cattle handlers are of the opinion that cattle intended for slaughter should require little or no care since they will eventually end up slaughtered. This mentality is uncalled for, because how animals are handled will eventually have effect on the quality of meat obtained from such animals. Voisinet *et al.* (1997) reported that agitation and excitement of cattle during handling results in significant lower weight, tougher meat and more border line dark cutters. Such carcass might also not command consumer's preference.

Cattle are often slaughtered without restraining during exsanguination which could result in animal struggling and stress. However, Tennessee and Morrigan (1999) noted the advantages of restraining before slaughtering to include effective physical appraisal of body conformation of animals marked for slaughter, efficiency of livestock handling and processing facilities. Also, different slaughtering styles that could inflict pain on animals are used during slaughtering exercises in the abattoirs.

There is limited information on pre-slaughtering handling and pattern of slaughtering in most Nigerian abattoir. The study was therefore designed to observe the slaughtering handling processes of cattle at Akinyele International Cattle Market, Ibadan.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The transient-abattoir located within Akinyele International Cattle Market, Ibadan (AICM) was used for the study. This study was carried out from 7am-7pm for a period of five consecutive weeks (Monday to Sunday). Data were collected on the restraining methods, slaughtering style, slaughtering interval and processing interval. Direct observation with the aid of check list was used to obtain relevant data. Data obtained were analysed using descriptive statistics of SPSS 2020.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Presented in Table 1 is the restraining and slaughtering methods of cattle at the AICM market. The study revealed that most of the cattle brought for slaughtering were not restrained before slaughter. The high

population of cattle slaughtered without restraining might be that most of the butchers are either ignorant or negligent of the ethics and importance of restraining or careful handling of animals prior to slaughter. It could also be that most of the cattle brought for slaughtering are weak and recumbent in nature with limited ability to struggle during slaughtering as observed on the field. Voisinet *et al.* (1997) reported that agitation and excitement of cattle during handling results in significant lower weight, tougher meat and more border line dark cutters. Slashing was the slaughtering method mostly used which is commendable. It was recorded that some butchers bled cattle by piercing narrowly the throat (Fig 3) as against the general practicing of slashing, such practice is unethical as the event is stressful and could inflict severe pain on the animals. Cattle were directly observed to be struggling for life over a period of time. Warris (1984) reported that animals should be rendered unconscious prior to bleeding and that bleeding should be with severe cut.

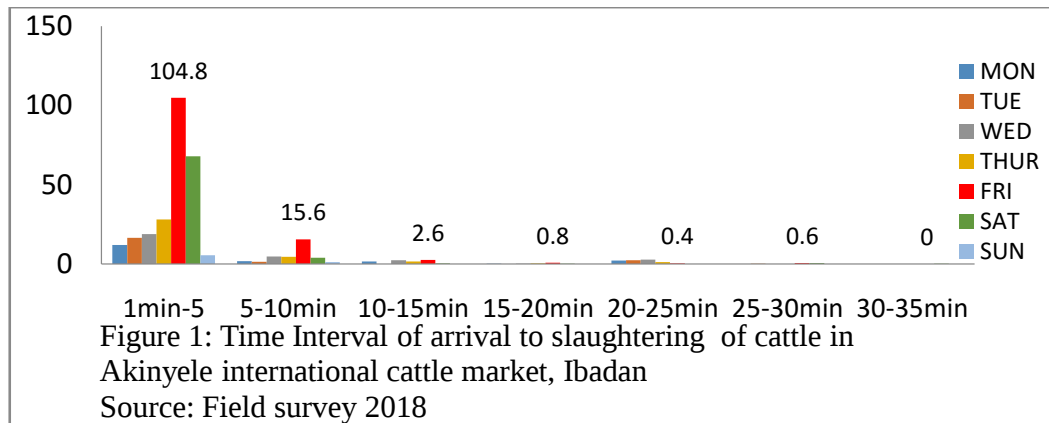
Table 1: Slaughtering pattern of cattle at Akinyele international cattle market, Ibadan

Breeds	Restraining methods (%)				Slaughtering style (%)			
	Restraining		Unrestrained		Slashing		Piercing	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
White Fulani	118	6.4	676	36.8	698	38.0	96	5.2
Red Bororo	92	5.0	552	30.0	585	31.8	59	3.2
Gudali	42	2.3	323	17.6	319	17.4	46	2.5
Kuri	3	0.1	33	1.8	33	1.8	33	0.2
	255		1584		1635		204	

Source : Field survey 2018

The time interval between arrival of cattle and slaughtering at the AICM market is as shown in Figure 2. Most Slaughtering occurred within the first 1-5 mins of cattle arrival at the abattoir all through the period of the study. It was observed that the cattle were not fasted overnight and rested in the lairage and there was no stunning to render them unconscious. It was also observed that butchers were in a hurry to slaughter the weak and recumbent cattle that were about to give up so as to prevent economic loss on the part of the owner. Komolafe *et al.* (2019) reported that butchers are mostly in a hurry to slaughter several animals in order to make more money. Also, butchers might also want to quickly display meat for sale so as to prevent left over of meat as means of preservation are not readily available. Wolterdorf and Troeger (1987) encouraged that the time interval to move from lairage and slaughtering should be as short as possible as long waiting times are stressful., This is consistent with the observation in this study where most

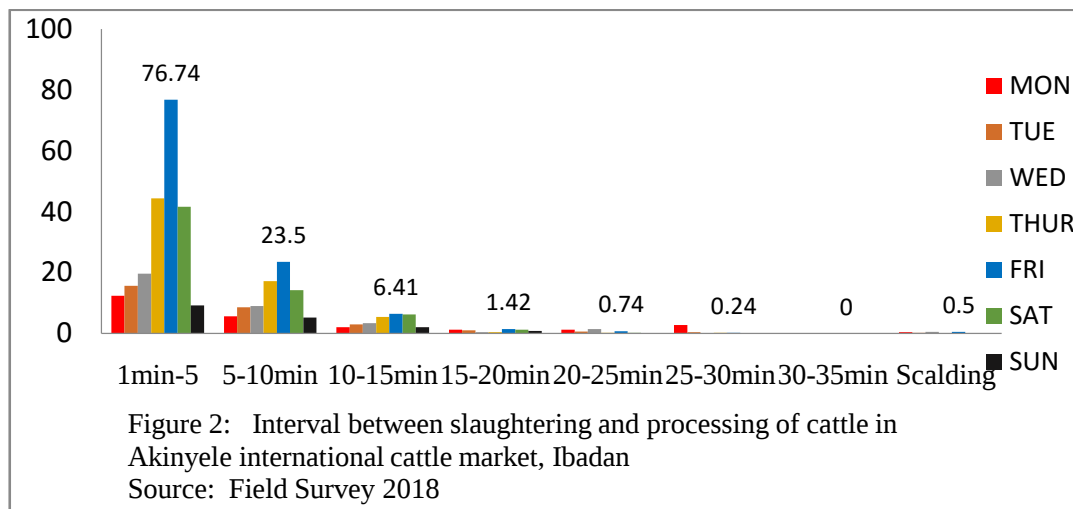
slaughtering activities were done within a short period, although there was no presence of lairage in the study area.



The time interval between slaughtering and processing is presented in Figure 2. It was observed that processing of cattle slaughtered began within the first 1-5 minute of slaughtering. Proper bleeding and animals complete quietness was not achieved before singeing commences. This practice is unethical and a serious height of cruelty as cattle were mostly observed to struggle for life when set ablazed (Singeing with kerosene) before they eventually die.. The likely reason for this cruel act might be as a result of the general believe among cattle handlers that animals can be handled without special care since they are not humans. Warris (1984) however reported that no animal should be bled when conscious and no carcass processed until nervous reflexes disappear.



Plate 1: A picture showing slashing and piercing methods of cattle slaughtering at Akinyele abattoir
Source: Field survey 2018



CONCLUSION

The study showed that most of the cattle brought into Akinyele Cattle Market were not restrained and while some were unethically slaughtered. The study also revealed that the time interval between arrival and slaughtering and slaughtering to processing was 1-5 minute.

RECOMMENDATION

Cattle is expected to be slaughtered humanely, properly restrained before bleeding and allowed to bleed well before the commencement of processing

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