

ANTE MORTEM

What is this?

Ante mortem refers to the veterinary inspection prior to animals being slaughtered. An animal may be condemned or separated at this stage if disease or an injury is identified.

Ante mortem inspectors are required to identify sick or injured pigs unfit for human consumption prior to slaughter. Suspect animals are separated for slaughter to reduce the risk of any contamination of healthy carcasses occurring. After slaughter the inspectors are required to conduct a post-mortem to verify carcass condition and provide advice on further carcass processing.

What conditions are identified at ante mortem?

The main conditions that are identified at ante mortem are limited to those that can be easily identified visually such as:

- injuries
- lameness
- swelling
- enlarged testicles (orchitis)
- abscesses
- tail bite
- hernia
- prolapses
- skin conditions (erysipelas)
- diarrhoea
- emaciation
- fever (more difficult to identify).

One area where the ante mortem inspection can identify illness that might be missed post-mortem is nervous signs such as a head tilt and abnormal movement (e.g. stumbling, can't walk straight), which can indicate conditions such as meningitis. Animals suffering from severe injury or illness are required to be humanely euthanased immediately.

Emergency euthanasia

In some instances where the welfare of an animal has been compromised, but emergency euthanasia is not required they may be processed as an emergency kill at the abattoir. Downer pigs, or pigs that are unable to walk unassisted, are required to be euthanased as soon as they are identified. This can be caused by obvious injury or illness (e.g. fractures, dislocations), or can be due to reasons not identified until post-mortem, such as a broken back.

Prevention

Careful inspection of pigs before they are put on the truck and exclusion of any that are not fit to load. See the '[*Fit for the Intended Journey Guide*](#)' for more information.



A pig with a large hernia • Source: MINTRAC