



United States Department of Agriculture

One Team, One Purpose



# Food Safety and Inspection Service

Protecting Public Health and Preventing Foodborne Illness



# Food Safety and Inspection Service

## **PHV Refresher Training: Consciousness And Stunning**

# Purpose for PHV Refresher training

**PHVs must be confident they can  
determine whether or not  
an animal is conscious**

# Definitions

## Unconscious:

- Not awake or aware;
- Not able to respond to stimuli;
- Not able to respond to environment

**Unconscious = Insensible**

# Definitions

**Stunning**: The action of causing unconsciousness in an animal; performed by one of the four approved methods

- **Chemical**
  - Carbon Dioxide (9 CFR 313.5)
- **Mechanical Captive Bolt (9 CFR 313.15)**
- **Mechanical Gunshot (9 CFR 313.16)**
- **Electrical**
  - Electric current (9 CFR 313.30)

# Definitions

Stunning Attempt: Application of one of the four methods of stunning with the intent to render the animal unconscious

Effective Stun: Successfully making an animal unconscious throughout shackling, sticking, and bleeding

# Definitions

**Ineffective or Failed Stunning Attempt:**  
A stunning attempt that makes contact with the animal but does not make the animal unconscious

# Definitions

Security Stun/Knock: An additional stunning action applied after the effective stun renders the animal unconscious

- It is applied at the discretion of the plant
- It is also sometimes called a Safety Stun, Assurance Stun, or Double Stun

# Definitions

## Immediate, Effective Corrective Action:

A plant employee instantly makes an ineffectively stunned animal unconscious

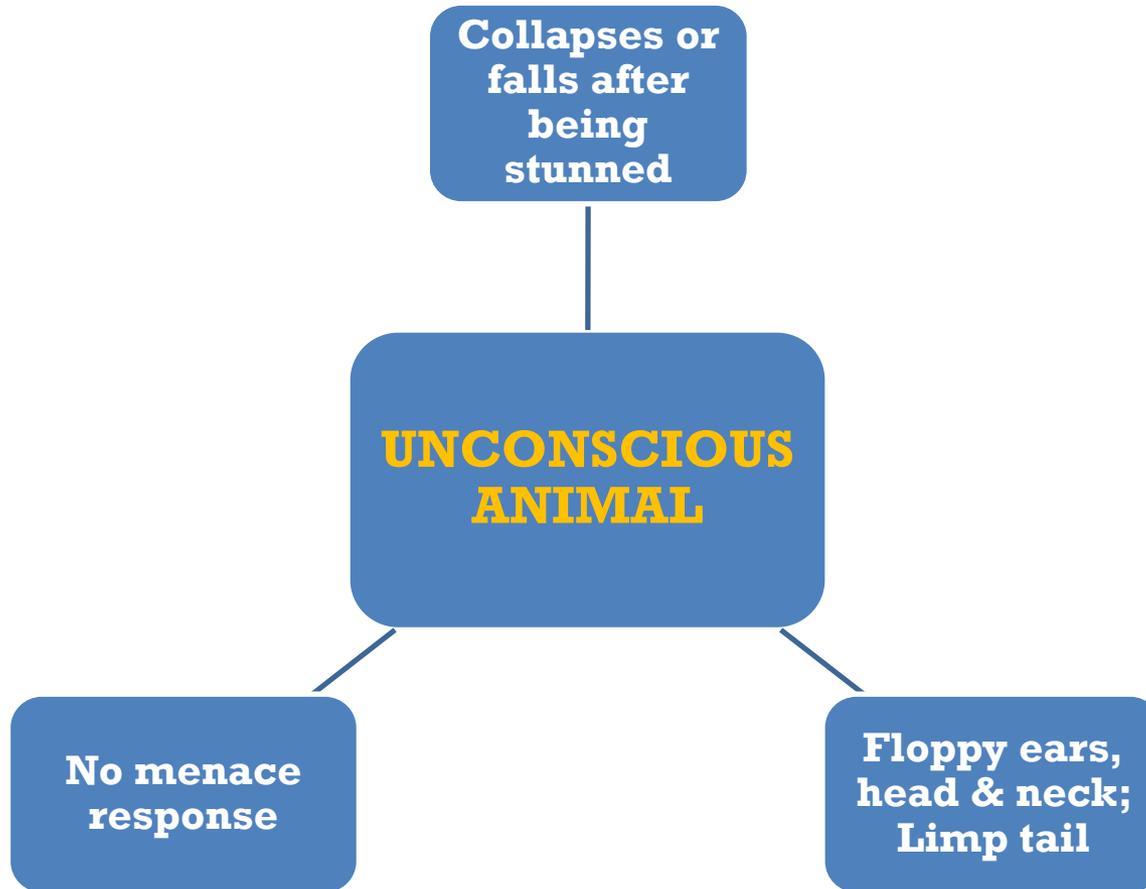
- Without hesitation
- With immediately available back-up stunning device
- Without being instructed by IPP

# Definitions

## Immediate, Effective Corrective Action

- Not defined by a specific elapsed time
- Timely and effective in rendering the animal unconscious
- Consider access to animal, animal movement, adequate placement of stunning device

# Signs of an Unconscious Animal



Menace response is the reflex blinking that occurs at the rapid approach of an object

# Floppy, Loose Head



# Limp Tail



# Unconscious Animals

An unconscious animal may display the following signs

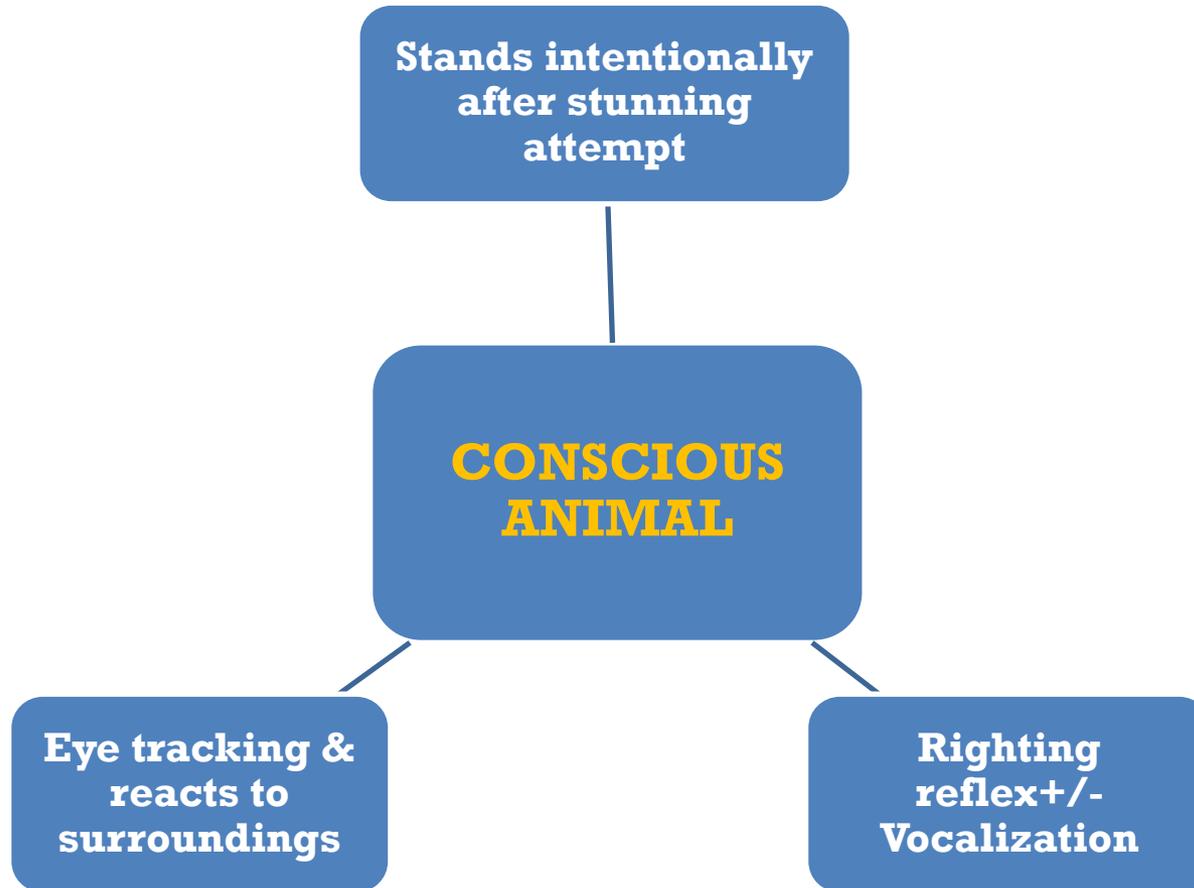
- Rhythmic breathing
- Eye reflex in response to mechanical (touch) stimulus
- Spontaneous natural eye blinks without touching the eye or eye area (in isolated cases)

# Unconscious Animals

Observations of these signs should not automatically result in taking a regulatory control action.

- These should trigger further evaluation to determine if the animal is conscious.
- These signs need to be carefully assessed and interpreted, as they are indications that the animal *may* be regaining consciousness or that the stunning was ineffective.
- They are not, in and of themselves, a definitive determination that the animal is conscious and able to feel pain.

# Signs of a Conscious Animal



# Righting Reflex



# Enforcement

## Regulatory actions are only taken when:

- An animal remains conscious after an ineffective stun
- An animal returns to consciousness after an effective stun

# Examples of Enforcement

## Missed Stunning Attempt followed by Effective Stun

- The animal is stunned with a minimum of excitement and discomfort
  - **No Action** at the discretion of the IPP
- The Missed Stunning Attempt causes excessive excitement and discomfort to the animal
  - **NR** at the discretion of the IPP

# Examples of Enforcement

## Ineffective or Failed Stunning Attempt

- With Immediate Corrective Action (one second stun) that makes the animal unconscious
  - **NR**
  
- No Immediate Corrective Action or Delayed Corrective Action
- The animal remains sensible after multiple stunning attempts
- Back-up methods fail
- Animal returns to consciousness before fully bled out/dead
  - **Egregious Inhumane Event - Suspension or NOIE**

# Examples of Enforcement

IPP should not take enforcement action for an unconscious animal that shows signs of returning to sensibility, if it either dies or is re-stunned by the plant before sensibility occurs

# Food Safety and Inspection Service

**Questions?**