

HoMeFe

**Manual for the Animal Welfare of horses
during transport and slaughtering**

22/10/2015 Version 1.2

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A. Introduction

Unlike some other domestic species, horses are in general not bred in view of human consumption. More than any other domestic species, our relation to the horse is however often tinted with an emotional character. Moreover, the sensitivity of customers with regard to animal welfare and animal protection also increased considerably these last years.

In this context, HoMeFe, the international Horse Meat Federation, also considers animal protection and animal welfare as a major concern. As a result of this, they have decided to create a scheme dedicated to the good practices in terms of husbandry, transport and slaughter of horses.

HoMeFe expects from its members, worldwide, to adopt and implement this scheme as a standard. By agreement between HoMeFe and its members, compliance with this standard will be monitored by an accredited organization. Even if the implementation of those guidelines is the responsibility of the supplier, a constant and constructive dialogue will be held with local third parties involved in the welfare of the animals, such as universities, researchers, authorities both in the EU member states and in the third countries or animal welfare organizations in order to improve this scheme and to help with the implementation of those guidelines in the field.

B. Legal Basis

This manual is based on the following legislation and international guidelines:

- Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 of 24th September 2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing
(<http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2009:303:0001:01:EN:HTML>)
- Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 of 22 December 2004 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations and amending Directives 64/432/EEC and 93/119/EC and Regulation (EC) No 1255/97
(<http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32005R0001:EN:HTML>)
- EFSA Animal Protection (<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/topics/topic/animalwelfare.htm>)
- EU Strategy for Protection and Welfare of animals
(http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/actionplan/actionplan_en.htm)
- DG Sanco Animal Protection and Animal Health
(http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/index_en.htm)
- OIE Animal Protection (<http://www.oie.int/en/animal-welfare/key-themes/>)

Important note: Some of the legislation and standards used to write this manual have been developed considering European circumstances. They are therefore not necessarily the best possible practices for the welfare of the animals in third countries producing horse meat intended to be exported to Europe. The implementation of this scheme should therefore take geographical, environmental and climatological conditions, local farming experience etc of every third country into consideration.

C. General

All slaughterhouses/suppliers should have a dedicated plan for animal welfare that contains standard operating procedures, as well as controls, for each step of animal handling to ensure that animal welfare is properly implemented, based on relevant indicators. Companies must keep a complete record of those animal welfare controls and of the corrective actions implemented in case of non-compliance.

1. Handling, interventions and prohibitions

Horses must neither be mistreated, tortured nor unnecessarily overstrained.

The following is moreover prohibited:

- Strike or kick the horses, especially on the head or genitals.
- Apply pressure to any particular sensitive part of the body in such a way as to cause unnecessary pain or suffering.
- Suspend the animals themselves by mechanical means.
- Lift or drags the horses by the head, ears, legs, tail, or handle them in such a way as to cause unnecessary pain or suffering.
- Tail-docking.
- Creating unnatural hoof position.
- Driving or punishing with electronic device or sticks.
- Tethering of tongue.

2. Training

People dealing with horses or responsible for horses until the moment they enter in the sphere of activity of the slaughterhouse must be properly trained in their field of activity and have the appropriate level of competence. The food business operator shall ensure that the persons concerned are regularly trained with regard to animal protection and animal welfare and that they can present a current certificate demonstrating their competence.

The people involved are all the peoplepersons in the sphere of activity of the slaughterhouse, such as buyers, transporters, people responsible for collecting points, people responsible for the stunning or killing, etc...The supplier is not responsible for people buying or handling horses outside the scope of his activities.

Training material and sessions can be developed and/or executed by associations or institutions (universities, authorities,...) active in the field of animal welfare and located in the country or the region.

D. Keeping of animals before and during transport

1. General requirements

- Welfare, health and nutrient condition of the horses must be checked once a day, including at the collection, loading and resting points. The control includes water and forage supply as well as the proper functioning of the ventilation if applicable. The documented check must be done by a skilled person, and includes the time of the activity.

- The forage supply must be adjusted to the group in order to provide every animal with sufficient forage.
- Horses need 20 to 60 litres of water per day. Therefore, they must be able to quench their thirst several times a day with clean water. All devices for water supply have to be checked on their functionality and cleanliness in order to guarantee the appropriate amount of water at anytime.
- If applicable, the limitation of the open-air access area must be provided by a well visible, escape-proof fence. The fence should not hurt the horses. Use of barbed wire for fencing is generally prohibited. It is only tolerated on large open spaces but not in the watering and feeding areas as well as tight passages where the horses must pass through.
- The construction of the floor must not endanger the health of the horses.
- In case of stables:
 - Fixed floors must be clean and non-slip.
 - Devices, floors, etc. must not affect injuries or health of the horses.
 - Infrastructural condition of the building must allow a standard cleaning as well as an effective rodent control.
- The horses must not be exposed to excessive noise for long periods.
- The hooves should be kept along enough so that the horses can stand anatomically correct, without affecting their movement.
- For weak, ill, stressed or injured horses appropriate sheds must be kept available for provide them with a separate and appropriate accommodation.
- Young animals must be kept in groups.

2. Prohibition of tethering

Long time tethering is avoided as much as possible. However, horses may be tethered in the following situations:

- Short-term tethering during feeding
- Short-term tethering during care
- Tethering during long-distance transports
- Short-term tethering during special events (horse markets) or comparable situations.

3. Holdingsystems

- If horses are kept in groups, evasion and retreat possibilities must be available.
- Horses that do not have permanent access to the open air must have at least 2 hours per day outside the stables. The periods of access to open air have to be documented.
- The stables must be constructed and built in order to reduce the risk of injuries and the occurrence of sudden noise to a minimum.
- The resting area must be supplied with sufficient clean and dry litter. If the lying areas are made of wood a slight littering for moisture bond is sufficient.
- The use of electric prods is not permitted at anytime.
- Ventilation has to be provided, constructed and maintained according to the climatic conditions of the country or region and to the expected weather changes so that the good welfare of the animals is guaranteed at all times. For closed rooms fresh air supply must also be guaranteed in case of breakdown.
- If automatic ventilation is required an alarm system and emergency power supply system must be available.
- The stables must be constructed and built in order to facilitate the controls of animals. Appropriate fixed lighting or manual lighting must be available in order to inspect animals at any time.

- Horses that do not tolerate each other due to the nature or gender, age or origin must be kept separately.
- In case of the horses are kept in groups on pastures, besides the general requirements, horses must not be exposed unprotected to extreme weather conditions. Definitions of adverse and extreme climatic conditions shall be discussed with local authorities or associations and differ from country to country. In case of adverse climatic conditions, a suitable, natural or artificial protection shall be available for the horses.

E. Animal Transport

Prior to the journey, all the necessary arrangements have to be made in order to meet the animals' needs. An appropriate transport planning shall subsequently be established in a journey plan before the loading of the animals as to guarantee the welfare of the animals during their journey.

People who handle the horses during transport and handlers in general, are trained or experienced, and competent for this purpose. In the absence of a separate animal handler, the driver is the animal handler.

1. Preparation of the animals for transport

- A journey plan has been established before the loading of the horses, stating at least:
 - The origin and the ownership of the horses
 - The number of animals
 - Their place of departure
 - The date and time of departure
 - The itinerary, including the resting places, if any
 - Their intended destination
 - The expected duration of the intended journey, including rests and inspection points.

The person in charge of the transport shall ensure that he carries all necessary documentation for the transport before the journey. The transporter shall make this documentation available to the competent authority upon request.
- No animal shall be transported unless it's fit for the intended journey, and all animals shall be transported in conditions guaranteed not to cause them injuries or unnecessary suffering. The person responsible for the transport checks that only healthy and not stressed horses are loaded.
- Animals that are injured or that present physiological weakness or pathological processes shall not be considered fit for transport and in particular if:
 - They are unable to move independently without pain or to walk unassisted
 - They present a severe open wound, or a prolapse
- Horses that are not used to be loaded or show fear should be handled in a way to reduce their anxiety and to considerably improve accessibility. The animals should not be brought into a state of stress as much as possible.
- The use of tranquilizers which could calm the horses is not permitted unless strictly necessary to ensure the welfare of the animal. Tranquilizers must not be used routinely during transport and should only be administered when a problem arises with an individual animal, always under veterinary supervision.
- During long-distance transports the animals (mostly) cannot be given water. Before transportation the animals have to be prepared for such a long period without water supply. In the period before transport they must have unlimited access to clean water.

- A separation of the horses must be made if they are hostile to each other. Stallions must be transported separately from other horses. If a separation is needed during the transport, the partitions shall be strong enough to withstand the weight of the animals. Fitting shall be designed for quick and easy operation.
- The number of animals has to be determined according to space availability before the journey. If a separation is needed, it also has to be defined in which compartment of the vehicle the horses are loaded.
Factors that may affect the space:
 - Design of vehicle
 - Quality of roads
 - Expected weather conditions
 - Transport time
 - Sex and age of animals.

2. Transportation

- The transport vehicles must be designed, constructed, maintained, equipped and operated to avoid injury and suffering and ensure the safety of the transported animals, according to their species, size and weight. The design must allow an appropriate transport according to animal welfare.
- The following range of space is allowed for horses during transport:
 - Horses transported in EU countries: from 1 to 1,75 m² per horse according to Council Regulation (EC) 1/2005 of 22 December 2004.
 - Horses transport in third countries: from 1,1 to 1,4 m² per horse.

Considering the physical condition of the horses, the meteorological conditions, the journey time and the age, weight and size of the horses, variations of space between 10 and 20% are accepted. Moreover, horses are transported in standing position. Sufficient space has to be ensured so that the horses can take a proper and balanced position while driving. It should be ensured that the horses can resume their natural position and that there is sufficient space towards the top for sufficient air circulation if a roof is present.
- The floors must be tight and anti-slip so that the horses cannot slip during loading and unloading as well as during transport. If required, appropriate litter should be used.
- Transport must prevent the animals escaping or falling out and be able to withstand the stress of movements.
- During transport of the horses, no excrements may get outside. The flooring surface must then minimize the leakage of urine and faeces. If necessary, the floor has to be covered with sufficient absorbent material.
- If necessary, and in function of the general meteorological conditions of the country, the transport vehicles must provide the required protection for the horses against inclement weather, extreme temperatures and adverse changes in climatic conditions. Transport can also be planned during the night if temperatures are too hot during daytime.
- If a roof is needed in case of adverse climatic conditions, a ventilation system must ensure that the air quality and quantity are appropriate according to the type and number of horses, so that the horses feel comfortable and not strained by the climate. Definitions of adverse and extreme climatic conditions shall be discussed with local authorities or associations in the Third country.
- Should an animal fall ill during the journey, get seriously injured and is no longer able to walk the competent veterinary at the collection point/ stopover point / slaughterhouse must be contacted immediately. He/she will decide on further action in particular about emergency slaughter if necessary.
- There should be an emergency management plan that identifies the important adverse events that may be encountered during the journey, the procedures for managing each event and the

action to be taken in an emergency. For each important event, the plan should document the actions to be undertaken and the responsibilities of all parties involved, including communications and record keeping.

3. Special Provisions to Transport Vehicles

- Only one-level vehicles may be used for the transport of horses. Mutli-deck vehicles can only be used if the horses are loaded on the lowest deck with no animals on higher deck.
- Transport must be easily cleaned and disinfected.
- The vehicles shall carry suitable equipment for loading and unloading.
- The vehicles must be regularly maintained in good mechanical and structural condition to prevent breakdowns during transport. An appropriate maintenance plan must be documented.

4. Transport time

To protect animals, long-distance transports of horses should be kept to a minimum.

The following maximum transport times apply for transport of animals:

- Horse transports in EU countries: max. 8 hours (according to Council Regulation (EC) 1/2005 of 22 December 2004).
- Horse transports in non-EU countries: max. 12 hours (in justified exceptional cases, which have to be documented, up to 14 hours).

The transport must be carried out without any delay to the place of destination and that can be controlled by means of the transport documentation.

Calculation of the driving time starts anew after every driving interruption, which lasts for more than 4 hours, if the horses are unloaded and for the time of the interruption are kept in suitable pens and have access to water and forage. The area available for the horses during the interruption must comply with the local requirements and considering the local climatological conditions.

During the stops, water, feed and rest are offered to the animals and are appropriate in quality and quantity to their size. For all animals, it is essential that the rest stops during long journeys are long enough to fulfill each animals' need for feed and water.

5. Loading / Unloading

- The loading and unloading facilities, including the flooring, are adequately designed, constructed, maintained and operated to avoid injury and suffering and ensure the safety of animals
- For low risk of injury the loading/unloading area must consist of harmless material and be built accordingly.
- The ramps shall not be slippery and lateral protections shall be provided so as to prevent escaping or injuries. The lateral protections of the ramp must be according to size and width of the horse. Side protectors are obligatory if the distance between floor and loading bridge is more than 50cm. Side protectors must be at least 100cm high and the distance between side protectors and vehicle may not be larger than 10cm
- The ramps should not be steeper than an angle of 20 degrees, that is 36,4% to the horizontal. If the slope is more than 10° (17,6%), ramps shall be fitted with a system, such as provided by foot battens, which ensure that the animals climb or go down without risks or difficulties.

- The interior of the vehicle must be enlightened and shall provide appropriate lightning during loading and unloading to allow animals to be observed by the handler and to allow the ease of movement of the animals at all times.
- Loading and unloading process must take place calmly and without exposing the horses to unnecessary noise, stress, harassment and violence.
- The horses have to be driven carefully and according to their typical behaviour. The use of electric driving aids and sticks is prohibited as well as the use of dogs.
- During loading, unloading but also transport, it shall be prohibited to:
 - Strike or kick the horses, especially on the head or genitals
 - Apply pressure to any particularly sensitive part of the body in such a way as to cause them unnecessary pain or suffering
 - Suspend the animals themselves by mechanical means
 - Lift or drag the horses by head, ears, legs, tail, or handle them in such a way as to cause them unnecessary pain or suffering

F. At the slaughterhouse

1. Approval for slaughter and documentation

Horses intended for slaughter:

- must be healthy at the time of slaughter.
- must be fed and treated in a good manner
- do not contain any banned substances
- that have been administered approved substances the limits must be in accordance with CR (EU) No.37/2010 on pharmacologically active substances and their classification regarding maximum residue limits in foodstuffs of animal origin.
- must be brought to slaughter without any obvious pathological process.

For ill and/or animals treated with drugs notification is compulsory!

Upon arrival at the plant, horses have to be properly identified and come with proper documentation. Relevant documentation are the documents required either by the concerning EU member state and/or by the relevant third country.

Before slaughter the horses must be examined by an official veterinarian (ante mortem inspection). The examination has to be done within 24 hours after arrival of the horses at the slaughterhouse and within 24 hours before slaughter.

Approval for slaughter may only be granted if the documents, traceability and animal health are assessed and approved by the official vet.

2. Stable / Keeping

Upon arrival, the horses are unloaded and put in lairage pens, or, if applicable, in stables. The condition of the horses shall be assessed upon their arrival at the slaughterhouse for any health or animal welfare problems. If the horses are kept in the slaughter establishment overnight they have to be fed, watered and their welfare and health condition have to be checked in the evening and in the morning. The slaughter establishment must name a person responsible for this control.

Ill, injured and weak horses shall be isolated from other animals and must be slaughtered or killed as soon as possible after arrival at the slaughterhouse. Horses with peracute or severely painful injuries are to be stunned and killed immediately.

Lairage pens/stables must be designed such as driving passages and driving areas are non-slip, without risk of injury, dazzle-free and shadow-free. Furthermore there should not be:

- v-shaped constriction or driving obstacle
- constrictions in curves;
- distracting influences from environment, that prevent the horses from moving forward
- change of direction of less than 100° and
- curve radius of less than three meters

The pens are filled in such way that the density for which the pens have been designed for and approved is respected at all times.

3. Stunning

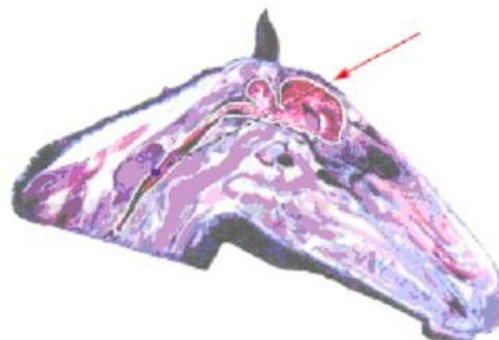
According to Council regulation no. 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing, animals shall be spared any avoidable pain, distress or suffering during their slaughter and related operations.

Animals shall only be slaughtered after stunning by one of the following approved systems: captive bolt and free bullet, and the loss of consciousness and sensibility shall be ensured until the death of the animal.

3.1 Stunning with penetrative captive bolt

- In order to be effective, the bolt gun must be placed tightly on the head and pressed for the shot. The captive bolt must be positioned as follows:

Exactly vertical to the forehead in the midline, 2 cm above the cross point of the diagonal line between the eye center and the opposite ear base;



To be considered additionally:

- For stunning with captive bolt, appropriate velocity, exit length and diameter of bolt has to be respected to the animal size. The bolt gun shall be used only if the bolt is fully retracted into the gun stock before the shot.

- The length and diameter as well as the impact energy of the bolt shall be such that the bolt breaks through the cerebral cortex. Depending on the size and weight of the horses sufficiently strong propelling charges or operating pressure according to manufacturer's data have to be used.
- Bleeding happens immediately after the stunning with the penetrative captive bolt

3.2 Stunning with Bullet Shot into the Brain (pistol-, revolver or rifle shot)

- If animals are stunned with a well-directed bullet shot into the brain they have to be jugulated immediately after the shot.
- The bullet shot into the head of the horse is to be executed so that the horse is stunned immediately. The bullet must have an appropriate calibre and have sufficient impact energy.
- Only bullets may be used that deform or dismantle in a suitable way upon impact. The use of full metal jacket bullets is prohibited.

The firing position should be selected as follows:

Vertical to the forehead in the midline, at the cross point of the diagonal line between the eye center and the opposite ear base (see figure point 5.4.1).

3.3 Persons in charge of the stunning

Persons carrying out stunning should be properly trained and have the appropriate level of competence.

They should ensure that:

- If applicable, the animals in restraint (e.g. head restraint) are stunned as soon as possible
- The equipment used for stunning is maintained and operated properly in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations;
- the equipment is correctly applied and calibrated, in particular with regard to the size of the animal;
- stunned animals are bled out (slaughtered) as soon as possible;
- animals are not stunned when slaughter is likely to be delayed

3.4 Control of the stunning.

Operators shall ensure that persons responsible for stunning or other nominated staff carry out regular checks to ensure that the animals do not present any signs of consciousness or sensibility in the period between the end of the stunning and death.

The result of the stunning must be checked based on at least 2 of the following symptoms:

- a) Immediate fall;
- b) Tonic spasm (sustained muscle contractions of high intensity) followed by tonic phase (rapid succession of short twitching);
- c) Respiratory failure;
- d) Loss of corneal reflex;
- e) No rotation of the eyeball;
- f) No vocalization and
- g) No directed movements, no roll up attempts.

The persons responsible for stunning should be able to recognize if an animal is not correctly stunned and should take appropriate action. Any animals showing signs of recovery should be re-stunned immediately and professionally before they are bled.

Business operators shall ensure that during stunning operations appropriate back-up equipment is immediately available on the spot and is used in the case of failure of the stunning equipment initially used. The back-up method may differ from the one used at first.

All deficiencies and corrections made during the stunning process must be documented. The records must be kept at least for a year and presented to the authorities upon request.

3.5 Requirements for stunning equipment

The abattoir must have all technical documents relating to the stunning equipments.

At the technical inspection of the stunning facilities and equipment before the first service, the manufacturer must define the extent and interval of the maintenance. The maintenance must be performed by the manufacturer or by a person authorized by him. The interval between two maintenance works shall not exceed two years. Business operators shall also draw up a record of maintenance and make it available to the competent authority upon request.

The competence of the operators, the effectiveness of the method for stunning and the maintenance of the equipment are the responsibility of the slaughterhouse, and should be checked regularly by the competent authority.

4. Bleeding

4.1 Length of time to bleeding

The length of time between the completion of the stunning process and the beginning of bleeding shall happen immediately as to exclude a recurrence of sensation and perception up to the time of death.

There must be a correct and swift communication between the person responsible for the stunning and the one responsible for the bleeding, such as to avoid any delay between the 2 operations (visual contact between the 2 people, mirror, visual or auditive signal,...).

4.2 Control of bleeding and time of death

At the plant a person must be responsible for the control of bleeding and time of death. This inspection must be carried out randomly. For this purpose maximum pupil dilatation can be checked with a flash light .

All deficiencies and corrections made during the bleeding must be documented. The records must be kept at least for a year and presented to the authorities on request.

In the events of signs of recurrent sensation or perception due to insufficient bleeding the animal must be re-stunned immediately and professionally. If death is uncertain the animal must be bled correctly and killed immediately before carrying out further slaughter activities.

5. Emergency killing:

Any animal that has suffered pain or other sufferings during transport or arrival at the slaughterhouse has to be slaughtered immediately in a humanely manner. An animal that is unable to move shall not be transported to the slaughterhouse but should be killed where it is located.

6. Standard operating procedures

Business operators shall put in place appropriate standard operating procedures in slaughterhouses, including:

- A map of the country with the localization of every suppliers of living animals, and an indication of the distance/time of transport till the slaughterhouse
- The name of the people responsible for the stunning and bleeding and the monitoring procedures for those activities.
- Indicators used by the operators to detect signs of unconsciousness or death.
- The circumstances and/or the time when the monitoring must take place
- Appropriate procedure to ensure that in the event that stunning or bleeding are not efficient, those operations are reviewed in order to identify the causes of any shortcomings and the necessary changes to be made to these operations.

7. Audits

In the framework of the guidelines HoMeFe, the operators have to receive an audit carried out by an external, independent and accredited certification body. The frequency of this audit will be determined by the activity of the premises:

- Slaughterhouses: one audit per year (every 2 years if the company is in compliance with the HoMeFe guidelines)
- Upstream activities (Collecting points, markets, ...): Every slaughterhouse will have to provide list of suppliers to his certification body, with the percentage of horses delivered every year for each of them so they are able to schedule the audits, taking in to account that:
 - A number of suppliers have to be audited each year in order to cover at least 40% of the horses delivered to the slaughterhouse.
 - The quality team of every slaughterhouse will carry out an inspection once per year of its suppliers. Non-compliances will be communicated to the control organism and the certification body who will subsequently schedule his audits in function of the nature and number non-compliances observed by the slaughterhouse.
 - Every collecting point delivering horses to a slaughterhouse participating in the HoMeFe guidelines must receive an audit at least every 3 years. The control organism will then have to make a rotation in the premises that are audited to be sure that all the suppliers have been audited in the 3 years. In case of unsatisfactory audit outcomes, an audit of control can occur within the three months. If no action plan has been settled or implemented after that delay, the premises will be no longer approved within the HoMeFe scheme.

On the other hands, some collecting points delivers horses to several slaughterhouses. In that case, those collecting point must not be audited for every slaughterhouse they supply but only once. It's the responsibility of the slaughterhouse to check that his supplier is compliant with the HoMeFe standards.

The HoMeFe audits are carried out on the basis of the HoMeFe Check-lists (Checklist Slaughterhouse and Check-list Keeping and Transport). The elements of the check-list are classified in 3 categories:

- Non compliance A: major non compliance : the company has one month to implement corrective actions
- Non compliance B : minor non compliance : the company has 3 months to implement corrective actions
- Bonus : some points will not be considered as a non-compliance if the requirement is not met. On the contrary, they will add bonus point as this company has paid extra attention to the animal welfare of horses during keeping, transport or slaughter. Bonus must be seen as a recommendation more than an obligation.

G. Final remark

This manual should be reviewed and corrected regularly following modifications of the legislation and the reality in the field. It must be part of a constant constructive dialogue between all the parties involved in the welfare of the animals. For this, we ask all suppliers, auditors, inspectors and animal protection officers to contact the following person directly in case of questions on this scheme or observations requiring amendments to this scheme:

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1. Summary of the versions and their reviews

Summary of the reviews of the sectorial monitoring plan			
Version	Date	Applicable from	Reason and extent of the review
1	25/06/2014	To determine	-
1.1	05/08/2014	To determine	First review of the draft
1.2	12/10/2015	To determine	Chapter 7 and corrections due to the visit in Argentina