

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is applicable to all UniSQ Research Workers who care for and use Animals for Scientific Purposes. The procedure must only be performed by those persons who have been deemed competent, and who believe they remain competent to do so. Access to supervision by suitably qualified staff whilst undertaking this procedure is encouraged, where required.

Species

- Sheep (Ovine)

Purpose

The purpose of this SOP is to describe the procedures of moving, handling and working with sheep in yards, in accordance with the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for sheep (2016), and in compliance with the industry animal welfare requirements for handling and managing livestock (2021) using low-stress stock handling (LSSH) procedures (Grandin 1990).

Definitions

Flight zone	The area surrounding an animal that if encroached upon by a potential predator or threat, including humans, will cause alarm and escape behavior. Herd animals usually turn and face a potential threat when it is outside of their flight zone, but when it enters the flight zone, the animal turns and moves away. An approximation of the flight zone can be made by approaching the animal and noting at what distance the animal moves away. The size of the flight zone will gradually diminish if they are handled calmly and have frequent contact with people.
Point of balance	Is a factor related to flight zone, and working with an individual animals point of balance will also help you move livestock more safely.
LSSH	Low Stress Stock Handling Procedures.
Forcing pen	A pen used to aid the movement of sheep into the race leading to the crush. They may be automatic and/or designed with curved panels to improve the safety and flow of sheep.
Crush	A stall for holding sheep safely and stationary while general management procedures are carried-out, such as a reproductive examination and/or the administration of veterinary treatment(s).
Drafting	The act of selecting and separating sheep for a certain purpose. Usually refers to separating sheep into different groups for purposes such as ear tagging, or treating and/or into different categories such as gender, weight, or age.

Linked SOPs

SOP ID number	SOP title
N/A	N/A

Potential hazard to Research Workers

Potential Hazard	Management Strategy
Crush injury	Only persons trained and supervised adequately are to work in the forcing pens. Do not stand behind gates when moving animals. If operating a crush, ensure the instructions from the operation manual are followed.
Slip and fall hazards	Inspection of all yards for foreign objects, trip hazards, mud and sticks before use.
Kick and strike injuries	Personnel trained in LSSH procedures. Maintain safe distance from the animals to avoid being kicked.

Disease risk	Mandatory Q-fever vaccination. Handlers must wash hands thoroughly before and after handling animals and wear gloves when necessary. Personnel to work with vaccinated animals.
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UniSQ Risk Management Plan ID number	UniSQ Management Plan title
RMP 2022 (Draft)	Livestock handling competencies

Personal Protective equipment required

- Appropriate covered foot protection must be worn (E.g., work boots).
- Appropriate clothing must be worn (E.g., Coveralls or long pants such as jeans and long-sleeved collared shirt).
- Hat and sunscreen protection (E.g., 30-50+).

Animal wellbeing considerations

Perceived stressors	Management strategy
Handling	The chances of this will be minimised by the implementation of LSSH procedures. Where movement has caused over exertion, cattle should be rested before drafting or handling.

The overall perceived level of risk to an animal undergoing this procedure is:

High
 Medium
 Low

Substances to be administered

Substance	Dose	Route	Purpose
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Equipment/ materials required

- Appropriate yard facilities (yards, race and crush).

Site specification or location requirements

At locations outlined in the UniSQ AEC approved application that includes the use of the Standard Operating Procedures.

Waste disposal

N/A

Duration of the procedure

Pre-procedure and preparation	30 minutes – pre-operational safety checks
Procedure	1 hour (teaching LSSH procedures).
Post procedure and monitoring	30 minutes

Procedure

References: Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Sheep; Code of practice for transport of livestock (Schedule 3 of the Animal Care and Protection Regulation 2012).

Pre-operational safety checks:

1. Check that all guards, gate latches, chains, gate handles and safety gates are in place, properly secured, and functional.
2. Check all gates are swinging freely and chains lock correctly.
3. Inspect all yards for foreign objects, trip hazards, mud and sticks before use.
4. Set up work area with wash down of area if required.
5. Faulty equipment must not be used.
6. You should not perform any duties in the yards until adequate competency has been confirmed. If you have NOT been assessed as competent – DO NOT PROCEED (refer to section; Training, qualifications or competencies required).

Operational safety checks:

1. Ensure all workers understand the workflow, drafting and operations required prior to commencing.
2. Work slowly and carefully with livestock in the yards.
3. Always keep a firm footing and identify safety points for quick exit if required.
4. Always make animals aware of your position in the yards.
5. Maintain safe distance from the animals to avoid being kicked.
6. Only persons trained and supervised adequately are to work in the forcing pens.
7. Do not stand behind gates when moving animals.
8. If operating a crush, ensure the instructions from the operation manual are followed.
9. Stand and work in the yards to help maintain a good flow of animals to the crush.
10. Do not put hands through gates, the race or crush sides.

General work environment checks:

1. Keep work area clean and free of accumulation of manure, dirt or debris.
2. Keep the work area and implements in a clean and tidy condition.
3. Wash down as required.

Procedures:

To instruct students in the appropriate methods of training sheep to regular human handling in existing yard facilities. The use of low stress handling and techniques are necessary for this procedure:

- Stay within the animal's field of vision, and at the edge of the flight zone.
- Position yourself relative to its point of balance to move the animal in the desired direction.
- Create a flight path for sheep. Do not stand in their way, or too close to them as they may move quickly.
- Make note of the exit points from each pen. These are openings in the corners of the pens that a person, can get through.
- Work in pairs, or within sight of another person.
- Move slowly and quietly around the sheep, and demonstrate an awareness of their flight zone at all times (as depicted in Figure 1). Avoid making loud noises to frighten them into moving.

To move sheep forward, you should be positioned behind their shoulder. See Figure 1.

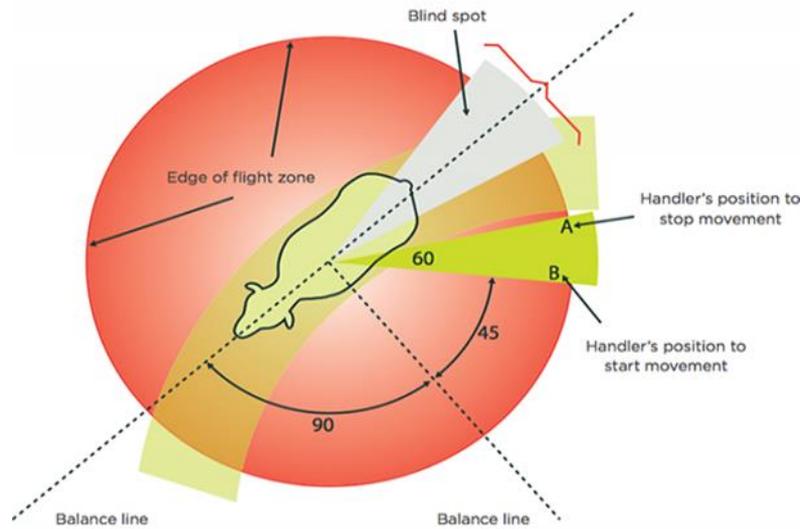


Figure 1: Flight zone diagram showing the most effective handle positions for moving an animal forward.

Moving sheep into the yards

1. As noted in Figure 2, the same principles apply as in cattle however, a key difference being that sheep will move in a circle around the handler, they also prefer to move into the wind and work across a slope rather than up and down.
2. Consider the geography of the paddock, gateways and direction of travel, so that sheep will move in the direction chosen.
3. Allow sheep to gather together in a loose bunch before attempting to move them in the required direction.
4. As depicted in Figure 2, it is important that the handler moves far enough out to the side so that they come into the field of vision of the leaders.

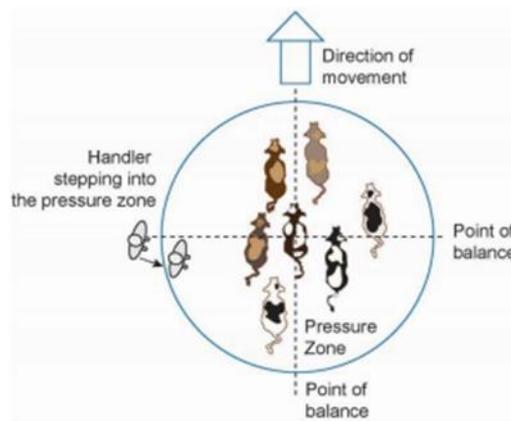


Figure 2: Moving a mob.

Drafting and working with sheep in the yards

1. Sheep to be rested and acclimated to the yards for up to 30 minutes before further drafting and handling.
2. Sheep should always enter yards via the same entry point and leave by a separate exit gate at the other side of the yards. This will encourage sheep to enter the yard themselves.
3. Docile sheep should be moved through the yards with the stock person on foot.
4. Sheep should be moved in the yards with an understanding of the pressure zone and point of balance as depicted in Figure 3.
5. Utilise the “follow the leader” instinct and don't overcrowd them in the yards.
6. Drafting should be performed in specially designed drafting yards or through gates between yards.
7. The drafted animal must be able to see where it is to go (ie its “escape route”).

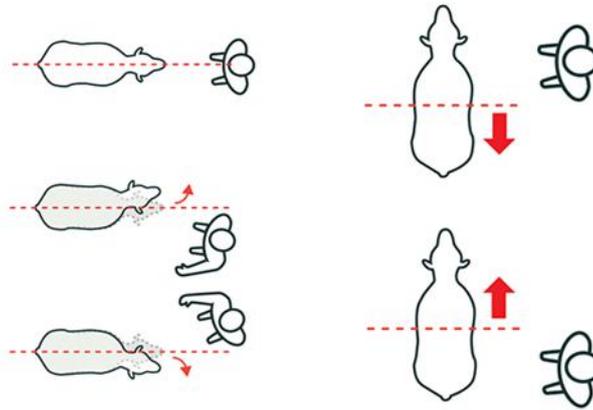


Figure 3: Sheep have two balance lines. One runs across the shoulders and the other runs along the backbone.

Moving sheep along the race

To get an animal to move forward or backward along the race:

1. Walk past the animal in the opposite direction to the way you want them to go
2. As you cross the animals point of balance, it will begin moving either forward or backward (As depicted in Figure 4).
3. Deflect and stop sheep with the drafting gate if possible. Keep body parts out of the race.

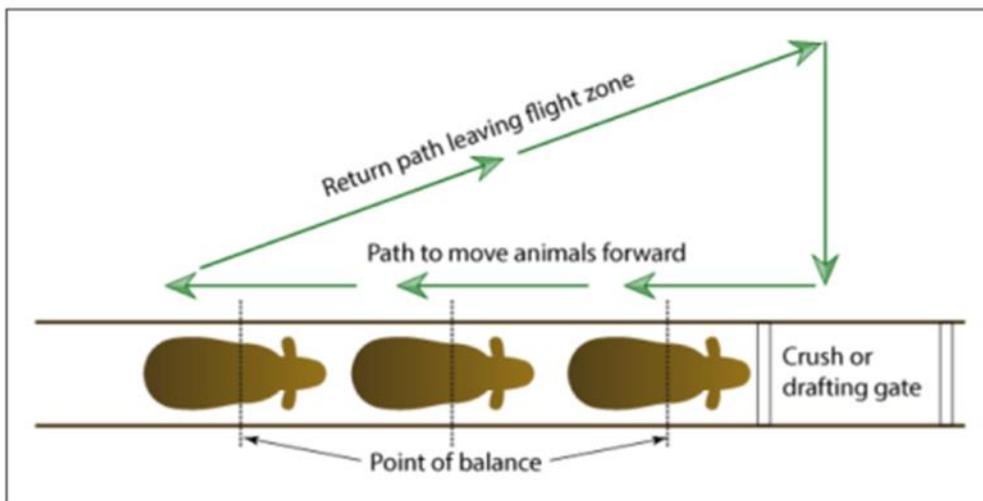


Figure 4: Moving an animal along the race.

Training, qualifications or competencies required

Personnel (Academic staff, researchers etc.) with relevant experience, training and qualifications may undertake this SOP to complete the required procedures. Students must receive appropriate training and supervision in accordance with this SOP.

References

Animal Care and Protection Act 2001

<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2001-064>

Animal Welfare Standards – Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Sheep

<https://www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au/files/2011/01/Sheep-Standards-and-Guidelines-Endorsed-Jan-2016-061017.pdf>

Grandin, T., 1990. Design of loading facilities and holding pens. *Appl. Anim. Behav. Sci.*, 28: 187-201.

<https://www.grandin.com/references/design.loading.facilities.holding.pens.html>

<https://www.grandin.com/design/non.slip.flooring.html>

Licences and permits

Ensure any required (if required) licences and permits are obtained prior to undertaking the activities covered within this Standard Operating Procedure.

SOP approval and review history

Date	Version	Review Pathway	Notes
01/09/2022	0.0	UniSQ AEC	