

Horse slaughterhouses

Report on site visits in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay

November 2025

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1 Preface

During a 16-day tour of Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, six horse slaughterhouses were visited: LandL, Infriba and Lamar in Argentina, Foresta in Brazil and Clay and Sarel in Uruguay. The visits took place between 31 October and 14 November 2025. This was the first visit to Foresta; the other sites were part of a follow-up to previous audits.

The purpose of the visits was to gain a snapshot of how the horses are treated and of relevant aspects of the infrastructure and day-to-day operations. In this context, attention was paid to the animals themselves, the workers and their interaction with the horses, the infrastructure and environmental factors such as lighting, noise and climate. The observations at each site took several hours. They should therefore be regarded as a snapshot rather than a continuous assessment of operations.

Where possible, the extent to which recommendations from previous visits had been implemented was assessed. During the visits, photographic and video material was also collected for subsequent analysis. The visits were carried out by Prof. Dr Bert Driessen (Ghent University), who has 25 years of expertise in the field of animal welfare and behaviour, and more specifically in the monitoring of animals during transport and their stay at holding facilities at slaughterhouses and cattle farms.

This final report sets out the main elements of the common findings.

2 Programme

This was the programme for 2025:

Friday 31 October 2025

Visit to/audit of the LandL slaughterhouse (Argentina)

Monitoring the unloading of horses at the LandL slaughterhouse unloading bay (Argentina)

Monday 03 November 2025

Visit to/audit of the Infriba slaughterhouse (Argentina)

Visit to a collection centre of Infriba's supplier (Argentina)

Wednesday 05 November 2025

Visit to/audit of the Lamar slaughterhouse (Argentina)

Monitoring the unloading of horses at the Lamar slaughterhouse unloading bay (Argentina)

Thursday 06 November 2025

Lecture and visit to trailer manufacturer Hermann (Argentina)

Visit to a collection centre of Lamar's supplier (Argentina)

Friday 07 November 2025

Visit to/audit of the Rio Platense cattle slaughterhouse (Argentina)

Monday 10 November 2025

Visit to/audit of the Foresta slaughterhouse (Brazil)

Wednesday 12 November 2025

Visit to/audit of the Clay slaughterhouse (Uruguay)

Visit to a collection centre of Clay's supplier (Uruguay)

Monitoring the unloading of horses at the Clay slaughterhouse unloading bay (Uruguay)

Thursday 13 November 2025

Visit to/audit of the Sarel slaughterhouse (Uruguay)

Friday 14 November 2025

Installation of a CCTV system at the Sarel slaughterhouse (Uruguay)

3 Summary of the findings

General trends

The follow-up visits in 2025 show that, at several sites, specific infrastructural or organisational changes had been made on the basis of recommendations from previous audits. Examples include covering or modifying unloading and waiting areas, improving lighting, minimising visual distractions in driving corridors, providing additional shelter and modifying elements of the restraint infrastructure. The focus on monitoring, training and internal checks also remains clear.

One recurring positive aspect was the workers' calm handling of the horses. At various locations, flags were used as a visual aid without any contact with the animals. When animals showed hesitation, the procedure was usually adjusted rather than increasing the pressure on them.

Unloading and unloading infrastructure

Unloading infrastructure varies from site to site, but raised unloading bays that are level with the transport floor are generally in place. At various locations, the unloading bays are fully or partially covered, which helps to minimise the effects of the weather and strong light/shadow contrasts during unloading. Where unloading operations were observed, they generally proceeded calmly and in an orderly manner. Switching off the truck engine before unloading and taking a calm, controlled approach are examples of practices that help to ensure smoother movement.

Attention must continue to be paid to details that may affect the movement of horses, such as noise from metal floors or grating, flickering light, contrasts and the slip resistance of floors. Such technical considerations are usually specific in nature and the necessary adaptations can be made.

Pens and waiting areas

In the pens and waiting areas, the horses under observation had access to drinking water. At the sites where horses were kept in pens for extended periods, roughage was also available. The space available was generally ample, and the horses were calm during the observations. In recent years, additional shelter has been provided or planned at several sites, including through the installation of canopies or tarpaulins and the planting of trees.

The degree of shelter varies from one location to another and therefore remains a point for attention when the site is at full capacity and in adverse weather conditions. Floor condition, drainage and the maintenance of drinking facilities are also part of effective day-to-day monitoring.

Driving of horses and entry into the restraint box

During the visits, the animals' movement towards the restraint box was generally calm. Enclosed or screened-off side walls minimise visual distractions, and previously identified issues relating to lighting or infrastructure at various locations have now been addressed. At the same time, the observations confirm that horses can react sensitively to sudden contrasts, reflections, flickering lights, noises and

changes in the floor. Minor infrastructural changes can therefore make a noticeable difference to the ease with which animals move down the driving corridor.

In recent years, several sites have been working towards a more standardised, calm approach to the horses' entry into the restraint box. Further optimisation is focusing primarily on minimising reflections and noise, ensuring sufficient grip and avoiding unnecessary visual distractions.

Stunning, bleeding and process control

Stunning is carried out using mechanical or pneumatic bolt guns designed for this purpose. At the sites visited, facilities were in place to monitor the procedure and take immediate corrective action where necessary. A key point for attention remains the systematic monitoring of the effectiveness of stunning and the organisation of the process between stunning and bleeding.

The 2025 audit confirms the importance of fixed internal checks: the correct administration of stunning, a brief and consistently controlled transition to bleeding, the immediate availability of backup equipment and the monitoring of each individual animal at several stages of the process. Recording and regularly reviewing these parameters make it possible to identify deviations quickly and to refine the procedure.

Monitoring and continuous improvement

Comparison with previous visits shows that regular audits are having an impact: recommendations are being translated into concrete investments and adapted working methods at various sites. Examples from 2025 include new or extended shelter capacity, modifications to lighting, roofing over of infrastructure, visual screening of driving corridors and modifications in and around the restraint box.

Camera surveillance, internal records and staff training can support this improvement cycle. It is not only major refurbishments that are relevant here; even relatively minor adjustments to lighting, noise levels, floor finishes or work organisation can improve the calmness and predictability of the process.

4 Conclusion

The site visits carried out in 2025 demonstrate a continued focus on horse welfare at the slaughterhouses visited in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay. At the sites that had been visited previously, various earlier recommendations had been implemented in full or in part. This points to a process of continuous improvement in which infrastructure, working methods and monitoring are adapted step by step.

The key common areas for attention requiring further follow-up are ensuring adequate shelter, minimising disruptive environmental stimuli such as flickering light, reflections and loud noises, maintaining good slip resistance on floors and further standardising checks relating to stunning and bleeding. These points can be clearly defined from both a technical and an organisational perspective and can be reassessed during future visits.

In this context, the annual audit remains an important tool for evaluating any improvements that have been made, identifying new areas for attention swiftly and further supporting the ongoing developments relating to horse welfare.