

Swine Euthanasia: Methods & Considerations

Methods of Euthanasia Appropriate for Pigs of Different Sizes (weights)

	Suckling pig (up to 12 lbs)	Nursery pig (up to 70 lbs)	Grower - Finisher pig (up to market weight)	Mature pig, sow or boar
Carbon dioxide (CO ₂)	Yes	Yes	Yes, but not practical†	Yes, but not practical†
Gunshot	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Penetrating captive bolt	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Non-penetrating captive bolt	Yes	Yes with secondary step	No	No
Electrocution, head-to-heart	Only for pigs over 10 lbs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Electrocution, head-only	Only for pigs over 10 lbs	Yes, with secondary step	Yes, with secondary step	Yes, with secondary step
Veterinarian administered anesthetic overdose	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Blunt trauma	Yes	No	No	No

†This method is an acceptable form of euthanasia for this size of pig but may not be practical for individual pig euthanasia on-farm due to lack of equipment suitable for this size.

Adapted from the American Association of Swine Veterinarian's
On-Farm Euthanasia of Swine: Recommendations for the Producer



Considerations for Specific Euthanasia Methods for Swine

	Risk to Human Safety	Skill Required	Aesthetics	Limitations
Carbon dioxide (CO ₂)	Moderate	Moderate to low, based on equipment design	Bloodless, some excitatory movement or vocalization possible in pigs	Currently only practical for small pigs
Gunshot	High	Moderate to high	Discharge of blood from wound	Security of firearms; legal restrictions
Penetrating captive bolt	Moderate	Moderate	Discharge of blood from wound	May be a two-step process depending on equipment design; maintenance of equipment
Non-penetrating captive bolt	Low	Low	Minimal to no blood discharge as a one-step process	May be a two-step process based on size of pig
Electrocution – head-to-heart and head-only	Low if proper lock out/tag out procedure followed	Moderate	Muscle contraction	Adequate amperage needed; commercial hog stunner recommended; head only is a two-step process
Veterinarian administered anesthetic overdose	Low	High, veterinary administration only	No blood discharge, limited pig movements	Applicable agents available only to licensed veterinarian; carcass disposal
Blunt trauma	Low	Moderate	Some blood discharge; objectionable for some	Only applicable to small pigs