

CAPE OF GOOD HOPE SPCA

REPORT

Facility name: Brandvlei Correctional Services

Area: Brandvlei, Worcester, Western Cape

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Date: 2025-03-06

Time: 10:25 – 14:54

Inspector: Jason Page

1. Background:

The Cape of Good Hope SPCA had been informed that there is a possible cost containment issue relating to the availability of feed at agricultural prisons. Therefore, we were requested to carry out an out of area inspection at the Brandvlei Correctional Services in Worcester.

There are various farmed animals as well as service animals at the facility. They have a feedlot with cattle and sheep, a dairy and the K9 unit. According to my knowledge, the NSPCA's Farm Animal Protection Unit had inspected this prison last year.

2. Findings:

I arrived at the facility at 10:25 and concluded the inspection at 14:54. I first announced my arrival at the offices and requested to speak to the area commissioner. I was advised that the area commissioner was not at the facility but I was referred to the Human Resources Deputy Director. I explained the reason for my inspection and was granted access. She arranged with the Fodder Project Manager to accompany me upon my inspection of the agricultural side of the facility.

A. Feedlot:

At 11:10 we started the inspection at the feedlot where they have sheep and cattle. I was handed over to the Feedlot Project Manager who accompanied me. They have a total of 33 permanent irrigation camps varying between 2-3 hectares each and carrying a combined total

of 512 sheep and 285 cattle (excluding the dairy cattle). They only have dormer sheep breed and Angus cattle. Both are mainly used for slaughter to feed the prisoners. They do not sell any of the wool or meat.

The facility makes use of Dr. De Wet from Worcester Diere Kliniek based in Worcester. Dr. De Wet is on call for any emergencies but will do routine assessments of the animals at least once per month. Dr. De Wet is the veterinarian for all the animals at the facility which includes the feedlot animals, dairy and K9 unit.

The sheep are left to graze naturally during the day and supplemented with Lucerne and oat hay in the evening. They are also provided with protein and maxi blocks once per week and pearls supplements are added to water twice per week. Pregnant ewes are also provided with molasses about six weeks prior to lambing. The cattle are left to free graze and is only supplemented in the winter season. They deworm all animals once every month between April and August (winter season). They use various products including Maxicare and Valbazen. Both products are used for the sheep and cattle. Water was available for all animals during the inspection.



Depicting sheep seen at the facility, grazing in one of the camps. Note that there is no shelter made available to them in this camp.



Depicting a storage area where they keep the food.



Depicting the area where they process and mix the feed before fed to the animals.

The sheep are taken to a night enclosure every afternoon where they are kept to protect them against natural predators such as leopards and caracal in the area. During the day when they are in the irrigation camps, they do not have adequate protection against all inclement weather. If needed, the sheep could be kept in their night enclosure, however, the cattle are left outside in the camps. Some of the camps does not even have trees for

protection which is a cause for concern. The enclosures are cleaned once every two months in the summer and every month in the winter.

During the inspection, I observed one sheep limping and not putting much pressure on his front left leg. I brought this to their attention and told them that we need to physically assess this animal. Upon closer examination of the sheep, I found two ticks in between that hoof. After removing the ticks, the sheep placed pressure on the foot and did not limp anymore. I asked that they keep an eye on the sheep, just in case. They advised that when they take the sheep back in the evening, they usually spot the compromised animals and isolate them. They have isolation pens for both sheep and cattle.

They breed their own animals at the facility. Sheep used for breeding purposes is only kept for about 4-5 years. Cattle used for breeding purposes are kept for about 10 years. Rams and bulls used for breeding are bought in. They do not breed with their own rams or bulls. Rams are sourced from a farm in Caledon and the bulls are bought from a farm in Wellington. They keep about 100 ewe's and 11 cows every lambing/ calving season to swop out with older ewes/ cows. Older ewes/ cows are slaughtered after lambing. Lambs are slaughtered when they reach a weight of 45kg and the cattle is slaughtered when they reach between 400kg – 450kg. No animals destined for slaughter was seen during the inspection as they explained that they sent slaughtered the last ones the previous month.

They dock the tails of the sheep themselves when the animal is about two months of age. They use the rubber band method by placing a rubber band around the animals' tail before immediately removing it with a gas detailer. The reason for the tail docking is allegedly to prevent flies and maggots on the wet coat of the animal. The young rams are not castrated. Lambs are not sheered, however, the adult sheep are sheered the first week in August. Male cattle born on site is castrated at about a month after being born. They use the rubber band technique to castrate their bulls and they do it themselves at the property.

The use tattooing on the sheep's ear as a form of identification which they do themselves. They also hot iron branding on the back leg of the cattle which they also do themselves.

They make use of their own transportation. During my inspection of the truck used, I found that the non-slip gridding in the truck was protruding upwards which could cause injury to the animals. I pointed this out to Mr. Sogiba and he advised that the truck will be going to the workshop this weekend and he will ensure that the concern is rectified. The animals are only transported to the abattoir which is based in Caledon, however, they also seldom use the one in Porterville. The abattoir in Caledon is about 80km away and the one in Porterville is about 110km away.

They facility does not have a proper emergency plan in place for when the farmed animals are compromised. Their current protocol is to contact the veterinarian to assess the condition of the animal and if emergency euthanasia is required, the animal is transported to the abattoir, which is 80km away. Transporting compromised animals is a huge concern and proper emergency protocols to humanely euthanise animals at the facility must be in place in cases where transportation would cause additional pain and suffering. This was explained to Mr. Sogiba during my inspection. He mentioned that they are in the process of erecting their own abattoir at the facility which would be better for emergency situations as animals won't have to be transported 80km away. This abattoir was already approved by their higher ups and they are only awaiting the funding. Their only disaster protocols in place for fires, floods, etc. is that animals are taken to the irrigation camps.

They make use of fly traps at the facility and use a product called tic tac spray on the cattle to deter flies. No flies seen pestering animals during the inspection suggesting the preventative measures in place are working. No disinfectant used to clean enclosures, they completely remove the sand in the night enclosures and replace it with new sand. Faeces is removed from the irrigation camps.

B. Dairy:

At 13:05 we started with the inspection at the dairy. We met with the Acting Project Manager of the dairy, Mr. C. Booysan. He accompanied me upon my inspection. They use a Friesian cow breed at the dairy section and have a total of 148 cows at the time of my inspection. Of that amount, only 52 of them is used for milk production. Milking takes place twice per day, at 06:00 in the morning and then again at 15:00 in the afternoon.

The cows are let out to graze but also gets supplementary feed which includes Lucerne and oat hay. They get a 19% protein feed in the mornings and maize in the afternoons. Water is provided at all times and was seen to be clean during my inspection. Calves are taken away from the cows after about one week of being born. Afterwards they are given milk twice per day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon. Both feeds add up to a total of about 6 litres per animal. They have Lucerne, oat hay and calf grower pellets available to them ad lib while still in the pens. After about 60 days of being kept in the pens, they are let out into a pen to graze. When they get to a stage where they can go out to graze, they are still brought back into the pens at nights to protect them against predators.

Even though I did not see the milking of the animals, I did inspect the milking station and the equipment used. The udders are cleaned using quantum spray before the equipment is attached. The area itself appeared to be hygienic and well maintained. They had non-slip flooring at the stations. There are six stations in total and three people attending to these stations.

I had a concern with the shelter in some of the pens, especially the ones containing bulls destined for slaughter. No shelter was seen in those pens during my inspection. The pens containing cows and calves had some protection in the form of trees and there is man-made structures these animals are taken to during inclement weather conditions. The bulls are not afforded this form of shelter. I also observed that there is a lot of rubble in some of the pens containing cattle. The rubble appeared to be excessive and could cause the cattle to become injured.

They do have an isolation pen available where sick or injured animals are taken to. During the inspection, one cow named Joy was there as she was under treatment. The cow had milk fever and then injured her leg as well. The milk fever was already under control but she still needs some rest for the leg injury. I contacted the veterinarian and he confirmed such. He suspects that the cow injured one of her ligaments. The cow is on pain management medication (Ketofen) and is being closely monitored by the veterinarian. He advised that the injury only happened on Wednesday he is not too concerned as the cow is still eating and drinking as per normal. Additionally, I didn't see any faeces piling up behind her which suggests that she can get up. This was confirmed by Mr. Booysan as he explained that the cow does get up and move around. The food and water containers are also placed right beside her for ease of access.

Male calves are castrated after about 60 days of being born. They make use of the rubber band technique and it is done by the facility themselves. Male calves are fed and raised until they get to about 400kg, after which they are slaughtered for meat.

If an animal is discovered to already be dead, the vet is contacted immediately to assess the body and do a post mortem. After the animal is cleared by the veterinarian, the animal is buried on the property.

C. Dog unit:

I arrived at the dog unit at about 14:07 and was handed over to Mr. J. Filanie. He was the person in charge at the time and is second in command after Ms. Swarts.

There is a total of 9 dogs at the property used for patrol or narcotics. They use various breeds including Labradors, Border Collies, Rottweilers and German Shepherds. All their animals are microchipped. The facility used to have 52 dogs at one stage.

They have a total of 42 kennels at the facility but only 9 is in use. The kennels are erected out of brick and wired mesh and in good condition. Adequate shelter is available for each animal. Dogs spend a maximum of 8 hours in the kennels and go to the exercise runs daily for about 1 hour each.

The animals stay on site and does not leave the property. They work from 07:30 – 11:30 in the mornings and then again 1-2 hours after lunch. The afternoon time varies as they do not know what time lunch will be ready for the prisoners.

The animals are fed once per day. The amount each dog get depends on the weight of the animal and as per the instructions at the back of the food bag. The feed Olympic brand of dog food. Water is readily available to all animals and was hygienic.

They do not dip the animals at the facility. They explained that they used to do this, but moved away from dipping as they are now using medication for parasite control.

3. Action taken:

Warning 14701 was issued to the facility for:

- 1) The castration of calves after 60 days of being born.
- 2) The lack of shelter provided to cattle.
- 3) The lack of emergency protocols for the slaughter of severely compromised animals.
- 4) The protruding gridding on the truck used to transport animals to the abattoir.
- 5) The presence of rubble inside enclosures containing dairy cattle.

Additionally, I contacted the veterinarian, Dr. De Wet, to follow up on the cow in the isolation pen at the dairy to ensure she was provided with adequate veterinary attention.

4. Conclusion:

Even though concerns were observed and addressed, none of those pertained to the lack of feed or animals starving. They have sufficient food available to them for at least the next month and supplements for the next two months at least. Additionally, they also grow their own feed at the facility and allow the animals to graze freely.

Report Compiled by: Inspector Jason Page