

WELLINGTON SPCA

REPORT

Facility name: Helderstroom Correctional Services

Area: Helderstroom, Caledon, Western Cape (Tel: 0282151021)

Contact information: Mr Presley Mrubata (Abattoir) – presleymrubata07@gmail.com
Mr Bongani Magadla (Stand-in at Abattoir and Dairy farm)
Mr Siya Mqadi (In charge at Dairy) – siya.mqadi@dcs.gov.za
Mr S Sjengana (2nd in charge at Dairy)
Mr Monnapula Thebe (Piggery) – 0714734105
thebe.monnapula@dcs.gov.za
Mr Kabeli Mathibeli (Sheep) - 0713533459

Date: 2025-03-19

Time: 10h30 – 12h23

Inspector: Elani Graham and Trainee Inspector Hugh Lewis

1. Background:

The Wellington SPCA had been informed that there is a possible cost containment issue relating to the availability of feed at agricultural prisons. Therefore, I was requested to carry out an out of area follow-up inspection at the Helderstroom Correctional Services in Caledon. This was after Inspector L. Konstabel from Franschhoek SPCA has been there on the 11th of March 2025. I was asked to specifically follow-up on Warning W109 and see whether I observe any other concerns. They have a total of 909 Merino sheep, 2253 pigs, and approximately under 100 Friesian cattle.

2. Findings:

Trainee Inspector Hugh Lewis and I, arrived at the facility and was directed towards the dairy feedlot by the correctional services officers. We arrived at the facility at 10h30 and concluded the inspection at 12h23. We went to the dairy feedlot that is situated right next to the abattoir. Mr. Mqadi that oversees the dairy farm was on leave. We were then assisted by Mr. Magadla that stood in for him whilst on leave. Mr. Magadla did not know all the details and functions of the Dairy farm and Abattoir and tried to assist us as best he could.

3. Dairy feedlot:

At 10h35 we started with the inspection at the dairy accompanied by Mr. Magadla. The calves are kept in an outside camp during the day. This camp has grass and a tree for shelter. They get fed with dairy feed for calves. The calves did seem underweight. The fencing of this outside camp was also in disrepair with protruding metal and holes. The walkway between the camps was also covered with excess faeces.



Figure 1: Outside enclosure where calves are kept during the day.



Figure 2: Walkway with excess faeces causing parasitic conditions.

When asked about the food that the dairy cattle and calves are being fed, Mr. Magadla claimed that they only have about 30 bales of lucerne and 180kg of dairy feed for calves left for all dairy cattle. The adult cattle that were in the outside fields had grass as ad hoc feed. He claimed that a small delivery of feed will be coming for the cattle on Friday the 21st of March 2025. He then also claimed that their irrigation system is broken and that all the dairy cattle's water must be filled manually by water tanks, buckets or hose pipes. This is also a major issue as they cannot grow crops at the moment to produce feed for the livestock on site. He claimed that the process of fixing the irrigation is in motion and for now they must buy food for the animals weekly or ask Brandvlei- or Voorberg Correctional Services to assist them with feed. We also went to the building where the calves are kept at night. This area was sufficient except for the fencing being broken and dilapidated. I informed him that they might as well replace this as the calves can easily injure themselves.



Figure 3: Concentrates available for all cattle on site (Dairy feed Calf).



Figure 4: Broken fencing in calf indoor night shelter.

4. Abattoir:

At 10h51 we started the inspection at the abattoir assisted by Mr. Magadla. There were prisoners present but the abattoir was not in operation for the day. Mr. Magadla then claimed the abattoir is not operational as the fridges are broken and therefore, they cannot proceed with slaughter. They do the different species of livestock on different days. As Lewis and I inspected the offloading ramp for the truck and runs, Mr. Mrubata arrived and assisted us with further questioning.

We observed the cattle run and found this to be acceptable as the cattle kept in waiting would not be able to observe the slaughter of the cattle. The cattle get stunned and then roll inside the building with an opened metal side to get cut inside. All the equipment for the abattoir for slaughter is sufficient. They use a .22 captive bolt pistol to stun the cattle and a butcher knife to cut the throat. They have two captive bolt pistols on site which they keep safely locked away in their offices.



Figure 5: Cattle stun area.



Figure 6: Visual of the entrance of the pig slaughter area with no visual obstruction to the slaughter area.

We then went to where the pigs get slaughtered around the corner. They have two Jarvis electrical stunning tongs on site. They slaughter about 60 pigs a day. The pigs get stunned by the entrance and then when inside they are cut to bleed out for 8 minutes. I noticed that the pigs waiting to be slaughtered and the ones getting stunned have a full view of the butcher area and would be able to see carcasses of other pigs clearly. The run is also very wide. I advised Mr. Mrubata on solutions to obstruct the view for the pigs waiting to be slaughtered by suggesting plastic curtains and closing the rails with metal sheets or thick shade cloth. I also educated him on pig boards to move pigs through the run.



Figure 7: A visual of the inside of the abattoir.

He was very interested on advice and said he will make a plan to fix this as soon as possible.

We were handed over to Mr. Thebe who accompanied us the rest of the inspection.

5. Outside dairy camps and enclosures:

At 11h02 we proceeded to where the adult cattle were kept in the fields and to their overnight camps. Most of the adult cattle were outside in the field. They had a water tank out in the field where the cattle are kept providing drinking water for them whilst the irrigation system is broken.



Figure 8: Where most of the adult cattle are kept in the field.

We then went to their overnight sheltered camp. This area had excess faeces that needed to be cleaned. There were also old, rusted feeding troughs that are not being used but can pose a risk for serious injury when cattle are kept in here. I then informed Mr. Thebe that they need to properly clean this enclosure from excess faeces and remove the old, rusted food troughs.



Figure 9: Old, unused, rusted trough seen in outside night cattle enclosure.

There were also about six enclosures outside for cattle and calves to be kept. These camps were very run down and dirty with excess faeces and poor drainage. Cattle and calves were present inside these enclosures upon our inspection. We noted that there was a pile of bricks in each of these camps with paving built but not finished. Mr. Thebe claimed that they started to fix the flooring of these camps for drainage and then the funding to finish it stopped and it has been left like this for a year now. I then suggested to neatly finish the paving off with a straight line of bricks and cement and also use cement for a proper drainage line. I also said they need to remove the pile of bricks, rubble and loose bricks as this can cause serious injury to cattle kept here. I also noted some of the gates were old, rusted and had protruding sharp edges. They use one of these camps for maintenance that has a brand-new gate. I therefore suggest that they swap the broken gate with the new gate at the maintenance camp or replace all of the old gates. Mr. Thebe agreed that this part of the farm needs lots of fixing.



Figure 10: One of the outside camps with hazardous material and excess faeces seen with cattle inside.



Figure 11: Broken, rusted gate with a sharp edge at one of the outside camps holding calves.

He also showed us a large outside sheltered structure where they supposedly keep the bales. This is where I only observed about 30 bales left to feed all the cattle. They usually feed Lucerne bales, 19% concentrates and Oathay pellets to the cattle from a company called MRN.



Figure 12: Outside holding facility where bales are kept. Red circle shows two people and behind them are the thirty bales left for ad hoc feed.

This dairy farm in comparison with the other prisons is highly concerning for various reasons.

6. Piggery:

At approximately 11h47, Mr. Thebe then assisted us to the piggery. He oversees this section of the farm. This facility was the cleanest and most organized part of the entire agricultural department at Helderstroom. The pigs' feed was fine. They get fed with Sow and Boar, Weaner, Lactation and Grower concentrates.

We first went into one of the sow houses. This area was very clean and well maintained. The plumbing works perfectly here as all the nipples worked very easily. We then did a walk through and found one of the piglets busy dying. I then asked Mr. Thebe what they do in situations like this that happen frequently. He then claimed that they would leave the piglet to inside with the mother and other piglets until it dies and then remove it. I then told him that this is unacceptable and that they need to place emergency slaughter protocols in place.



Figure 13: Example of sow holding areas including heat lamps.

I then instructed Lewis to fetch our captive bolt pistol and butcher knife. We then took the piglet outside to show the staff how to conduct an emergency slaughter. Lewis shot the piglet and I cut its throat. I then told Mr. Thebe that it is of utmost importance that he obtains his own emergency slaughter equipment for this facility on the farm.



Figure 14: Piglet after performing an emergency slaughter.

They do not castrate the pigs but do the teeth cutting and tattooing at the age of three days old.

We then went to the boar houses and where the older piglets are kept. Some of these houses were still in the process of being cleaned. No other issues were found in these areas.



Figure 15: Piglet house still in need of cleaning.



Figure 16: Adult pig holding facility.

7. Livestock truck:

We arrived at the livestock truck around 12h21 assisted by Mr. Thebe. They only have one livestock truck available being used for all the livestock.

There were several issues found with the truck. One of the side rails was hanging loose and not fastened correctly. This can cause escape and injury to animals being transported. Mr. Thebe claimed that they throw sand in the truck to provide non-slip flooring when transporting animals. I said this is okay if enough sand is thrown in, but I strongly suggest that they get a fitted metal grid or adequate rubber as non-slip flooring. I showed him Brandvlei's truck, and he appreciated the ideas I gave him. There was also rubbish inside the truck. I informed him that no rubbish should be kept in the back of the truck. The truck is also not equipped to transport pigs as they do not provide protection from the elements.



Figure 17: Livestock truck showing no protection against the elements, rubbish and a broken rail on the right hand side.

8. Action taken:

Warning 070 was issued to the facility for:

- 1) The castration of calves after 60 days of being born.
- 2) The lack of shelter provided to sheep.
- 3) The lack of emergency protocols for the slaughter of severely compromised animals.
- 4) The piggery obtaining their own emergency slaughter equipment to keep on site.
- 5) The presence of rubble, a broken rail, absence of shelter and absence non-slip flooring inside the livestock transport.
- 6) Cleaning of dairy cattle enclosures from hazardous material such as poles, bricks, broken gates, dilapidated fencing etc. that can cause injury to the animals present.
- 7) Cleaning of dairy cattle enclosures from excess faeces to prevent spread of disease.
- 8) Lack of feed for dairy cattle and broken irrigation systems for crop production.
- 9) Broken freezers to keep edible meat delaying abattoir functions and emergency slaughter protocols.
- 10) Pigs observing other pigs being slaughtered and butchered.

9. Conclusion:

This facility in comparison with the other prison has a lot of welfare issues that are of concern to the animals as stated above. I am mostly concerned about the dairy farm at this facility as they do not have sufficient feed due to their broken irrigation system. This facility needs to fix things urgently.

Report Compiled by: Inspector Elani Graham