Live Animal Handling for Butchering Stats and Facts

FACTS

1. Workers in slaughter facilities may be exposed to hazardous chemicals such as ammonia, which is used in meat packing, chlorine which may be added to water for disinfecting meat and hydrogen peroxide which is sometimes used as a disinfectant. These exposures may lead to irritations of the throat, eyes, nose, and skin; burns from accidental splashes; and respiratory symptoms.
2. Many injuries go unreported in the “meat”-processing industry. In general, workers are afraid to report injuries out of fear of losing their job. In addition, many corporations pay supervisors an annual bonus for minimizing the number of worker comp claims at their facility.
3. Workers in the animal slaughtering and processing industry have higher incidence rates of injury or illness than the overall average for private industry workers.
4. The GAO found several situations that may keep reported numbers from packing plants lower than reality.
    - Sanitary workers who clean machinery in meat plants have suffered amputated limbs and severed fingers. Some have died on the job. But their cases are not always counted with meat and poultry industry data because many work for third-party contractors.
    - Meat and poultry workers are often immigrants or refugees. They may downplay or not report injuries to protect their jobs and livelihoods. Language barriers can also prevent workers from receiving proper safety training.

STATS

- Workers in the meat processing sector are exposed to biological agents when handling freshly slaughtered meat and when they are exposed to sick animals. About 61% of infectious organisms affecting man today are zoonotic; and slaughter facilities act as an important interface between human health, animal health, and environmental health.
- U.S. slaughterhouses and “meat”-processing facilities employ over 500,000 workers.
- The animal slaughtering and processing industry reported 26,600 nonfatal occupational injuries and illnesses.
- In 2017, 73 workers in slaughtering and processing were fatally injured in this industry: 34 % of these fatal injuries.
- In 2017, 4,910 cases of injury and illness involving days away from work occurred in the animal slaughtering and processing industry. In most of these cases (69 %), the workers were men.
- Hispanic or Latino workers accounted for 24 % of the cases in the animal slaughtering and processing industry.