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Animal Welfare 2012, 21(S2): 9-13
doi: 10.7120/096272812X13353700593284
ISSN 0962-7286

Advances in the electrical stunning and bleeding of ostriches

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Abstract

The stunning of ostriches (Struthio camelus) has traditionally been carried out with hand-held tongs whilst birds are held in a restraining area by applying pressure normally from behind by gently pushing on the tail feathers. The area is often a V-shaped structure, high enough that the stunning operator is not kicked. After stunning, the birds are rocked backwards and a rubberised leg clamp placed over the legs at the tarso-metatarsal bone allowing the birds to be chain-shackled by the big toes. This stunning procedure has been replaced by a new restraining and stunning mechanism which completely envelops the ostrich in a padded clamp holder. Double-padded sides restrain the bird's upper thighs and a rubberised foot clamp holds the feet so there is no physical damage to the bird. As the bird is electrically stunned with electrodes placed both sides of the head, the entire stunning box rotates 180° so that toe clamps can be applied without any danger to the stunning operators. Within 20 s of stunning, the birds are bled by means of a complete ventral cut to the neck and/or by thoracic sticking.

Keywords: animal welfare, exsanguination, ostriches, ratites, restraint, stunning