

“Slaughterhouses and cutting plants use biocides on a daily basis, even though the term may not ring a bell”

In slaughterhouses and cutting plants, disinfectants are used on a daily basis. Although they are effective to fight germs, a certain group of products – biocides – can pose a risk to human health. Carlo van der Mast, head of quality, safety and environment at pig slaughterhouse Noordvlees, and Tino Vanderlinden, regional manager at cleaning company ISS, explain how, as a slaughterhouse or cutting plant, you can use biocides in a safe way and what obligations you have to comply with.

Biocides are pesticides. They are used to deter or destroy harmful organisms, ranging from bacteria and viruses to moulds and vermin. Such biocides pose a high risk to health. They can be toxic, carcinogenic or harmful to reproduction. They belong to the ‘closed circuit’ and are mainly reserved for professional users. You can find the hazards and risks of each product in the authorisation acts and on the safety data sheets.

“Slaughterhouses use these chemicals on a daily basis, even if the term ‘biocides’ may not ring a bell,” says Tino Vanderlinden, regional manager at ISS. “Think of disinfectants containing peracetic acid or hydrogen peroxide, disinfectants containing chlorine, or products based on quaternary ammonium salts for sensitive materials. These are all biocides that are used in the sector, especially to disinfect the production area and the transport trucks thoroughly.”



“We pay a lot of attention to ensuring that our cleaning team can work in a safe and healthy environment”

TINO VANDERLINDEN,
REGIONAL MANAGER AT ISS



Using a service company

Carlo van der Mast, head of quality, safety and environment at Noordvlees: “The larger slaughterhouses use external cleaning companies to disinfect the production area on a daily basis. Our pig slaughterhouse works with ISS for this. As soon as our own employees finish their day’s work, they take care of the entire area.”

Tino Vanderlinden: “We pay a lot of attention to ensuring that our cleaning team can work in a safe and healthy environment. We do not only see to it that biocides are used correctly and only for the authorised uses, we also make sure our personnel wear the right clothing and personal protective equipment, such as safety boots, safety goggles or a full face mask with a filter. In addition, new employees are given thorough training on the risks posed by those hazardous substances, the measures they can take to reduce those risks, and the protective clothing they have to wear. We also show them how to wear this in a proper way. For example, the sleeve of the chemical-resistant suit must be worn on top of the glove, and not the other way around, to prevent liquid from entering the glove. Finally, every year our employees take a refresher course on the safe use of chemicals.”



“In our water purification plant we use closed circuit biocides to disinfect the water. We can then reuse the purified water”

CARLO VAN DER MAST, HEAD OF QUALITY, SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT AT NOORDVLEES

Self-control

The Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain (FASFC) obliges slaughterhouses and cutting plants to take measures to ensure that the meat complies with strict quality and safety standards. As a large company, Noordvlees carries out this self-control itself. “We always check whether the disinfection has been carried out properly,” says Carlo van der Mast. “Aside from a visual inspection, we also carry out bacteriological tests.” Tino Vanderlinden: “In order to guarantee our quality, at ISS we also have a self-control carried out by an independent lab.”

Water purification

In Noordvlees’s own water purification plant, closed circuit biocides are used as well. “We use them to disinfect the waste water. It is a closed system; this means that the water is automatically purified using a product that contains chlorine. We only need to refill the biocide carefully and perform regular checks,” Carlo van der Mast explains. “We use the purified water to clean the transport trucks.”

In the production area the water has to comply with the stricter standards for drinking water. “To this end, we pump groundwater. This water is completely safe and perfectly drinkable. This is also shown by the microbiological tests we regularly carry out,” Carlo van der Mast adds. “There are also slaughterhouses and cutting plants where the water pumped cannot immediately be used in the production area. They disinfect it first with chlorine or UV radiation.”

Mandatory registration

If you want to use a closed circuit biocide, you have to register as a professional user at www.biocide.be and confirm your status each year. Carlo van der Mast: “We work with an external cleaning company, but we also buy biocides ourselves. the rule is clear: anyone who buys or uses closed circuit biocides must register as a user. This means that both Noordvlees and ISS have to register as professional users.”

The FPS Public Health informs

Want to know more about the safe use of closed circuit biocides, the risks involved or the obligation to register? You can find plenty of information on www.biocide.be.

You can also find a brochure and an information sheet adapted to the meat sector:

- **Biocides in the meat sector. What do you need to know as a professional user?** (for the employer/prevention advisor)
- **Working safely with disinfectants. Biocides: recognise them and protect yourself!** (for employees)



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