

To: All abattoirs in England requested to facilitate in the testing of sheep for Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies, as shown on the attached list.

Copies: All other licensed red meat abattoirs in England for information and comments.
The organisations shown on the attached list, for information and comments

22 November 2001

Dear Sir or Madam,

TSE REGULATION (EC) 999/2001: TESTING OF SHEEP AND GOATS

1. This letter is to let you know of our plans to give effect to European Union (EU) legal requirements for testing sheep for Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs). TSEs are a group of diseases that include BSE in cattle and scrapie in sheep. The EU requirements* come into effect on 1 January 2002 and are directly applicable in the United Kingdom.
2. This letter applies to England only. The Agency is writing in similar terms to abattoirs in Scotland and Wales.
3. **The deadline for comments, including information requested at paragraph 11 below, is close of business on 10 December 2001.**
4. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) are responsible for epidemiological testing, including overall responsibility for TSE/BSE testing. As operations that affect licensed abattoirs are the responsibility of the FSA, we are working closely with DEFRA to get testing requirements implemented. We are still considering exactly how the requirement to test sheep and goats will be implemented in the longer term but we intend that testing will start from 1 January at abattoirs, such as yours, that slaughter significant numbers of older sheep for human consumption.
5. EU Member States, including the UK, are required to test various categories of cattle, sheep and goats for TSEs. In the UK, two surveys are required for sheep from 1 January:
 - a) sheep slaughtered for human consumption - the abattoir survey; and
 - b) sheep not slaughtered for human consumption - the fallen stock survey.

* European Union Regulation (EC) 999/2001 of 22nd May 2001 "Laying down rules for the prevention, control and eradication of certain transmissible spongiform encephalopathies" and the amendment in Commission Regulation 1248/2001 of 22nd June 2001.

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The first of these is of direct relevance to you and is the subject of this letter.

6. The testing programme for sheep slaughtered for human consumption requires:
- a) animals to be over 18 months old;
 - b) 14,000 animals to be sampled in Great Britain and 1,213 animals in Northern Ireland; and
 - c) the sample to be representative of each region and season;
 - d) avoidance of over-representation of a group in regards to –
 - i. origin,
 - ii. age,
 - iii. breed,
 - iv. production type,
 - v. any other characteristic;
 - vi. where possible, avoidance of multiple sampling from same flock.
 - e) age selection on the basis of –
 - i. dentition.
 - ii. obvious signs of maturity, or
 - iii. other reliable information.

7. The EU requirements are intended to provide epidemiological information on TSEs but, as you may be aware, the Agency believes that more extensive information is needed in respect of the UK, as has been recommended by the independent Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC) that advises the Government. It is envisaged that the programme will be expanded to 20,000 samples in order to meet this need.

Selection of sheep to be tested

8. It is envisaged that:
- a) the Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA) will notify selected abattoirs, including yours, of the number of sheep that need to be tested. Quotas will be set on a weekly basis;
 - b) Meat Hygiene Service staff will select, in the lairage, the sheep that are to be tested.

Handling arrangements in abattoirs

9. We are aiming to keep handling arrangements as simple as possible, while complying with EU testing requirements and other statutory provisions, and protecting public health. In particular, it is important to guard against the possibility of contamination from an animal that tests positive for TSE. We intend instructing the Meat Hygiene Service (MHS) to enforce the following:

- a) that the animals to be tested must be slaughtered as a separate batch followed by washing down of the bleed area. The times of kill will be flexible to suit individual plant schedules and the requirements for the despatch of heads for sampling (see below);

- b) the removal of heads for onward transport to the nearest VLA laboratory. Heads will need to be despatched to arrive before 1630 hours (the MHS will arrange this). If this is not possible, the heads will need to be kept in refrigerated storage at the abattoir until they can be sent to the VLA. Suitable containers will be provided;
- c) the consignment of complete bodies (less heads) as SRM, i.e. carcase dressing will not be required;
- d) the disposal of the blood of tested animals as Specified Risk Material (SRM).

Costs

10. The costs associated with testing (MHS enforcement, transport of heads, analysis of samples) will be paid by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). In addition DEFRA will pay £50 for each sheep that is tested. This payment is to cover:

- a. the price of the carcase,
- b. operator costs, and
- c. the cost of disposing of the body and any separately collected blood as SRM.

You will wish to note, however, that **if blood from tested animals is pooled with blood from 'normal kill' animals it must all be incinerated or disposed of as SRM at the expense of the abattoir operator.** It may therefore be in your interest to collect the blood separately from tested sheep, which may require special arrangements when sheep are bled out (we would welcome comments on how you would propose to do this).

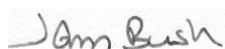
11. In order for DEFRA to prepare a sampling strategy, we would be grateful for information on your plans for slaughtering sheep aged over 18 months in 2002 (in terms of expected throughput on a monthly basis). We are aware that many abattoirs are not currently slaughtering for human consumption and we would welcome your views on when you are likely to start if you are not already doing so.

12. More detailed procedural guidance for this survey will be issued shortly. Meanwhile there is a contact number below if you have any general queries.

13. I would be grateful if you would send comments and information on expected throughputs to Meg Patel at the address or fax number shown on this letter (Meg's e-mail address is meg.patel@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk). **This needs to arrive by close of business on 10 December 2001.**

14. Please also contact Meg if you have queries or need more information. Her telephone number is 020 7276 8385.

Yours faithfully,



J R Bush
BSE Division

ABATTOIRS IN ENGLAND REQUESTED TO FACILITATE THE TESTING OF SHEEP FOR TRANSMISSIBLE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHIES (TSEs)

Name

A & G Barber – Chelmsford, Essex
AC Hopkins (Taunton) LTD – Taunton, Somerset
Aytac Halal Meat LTD – Swadlincote, Derbyshire
Birmingham Halal Abattoir LTD – Birmingham
Bishops Castle Meats LTD – Bishops Castle, Shropshire
Blacklidge Bros – Wigan
Burrows & Smith – Stockport, Manchester
Coast & County Meat Supply – Gateshead, Tyne and Wear
Doncaster Slaughtering Co – Doncaster
Euro Quality Lambs LTD – Craven Arms, Shropshire
F Drury & Sons LTD – Swindon, Wiltshire
Forge Farm Meats LTD – Southborough, Kent
HF Stiles & Sons – Chippenham, Wiltshire
H Lyes & Son – Gloucester
HR Jasper & Son LTD – Launceston, Cornwall
Janan Meat Company LTD – Kingswinford, W.Midlands
Kepak UK LTD – Bamber Bridge, Preston
Kepak UK LTD – Wakefield, West Yorkshire
Lincolnshire Meat Company LTD – Grantham
Machin Yorkshire Lamb LTD – Thirsk, North Yorkshire
Melton Meat LTD – Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire
Nabjib and Sons – Foston, Derbyshire
Northern Counties Meat Group LTD – Sunderland, Tyne and Wear
Preston Abattoir LTD – Cattle Market, Preston
RG Meats LTD – Milton Keynes
Rochdale Halal Meat CO LTD – Lancaster
RP Winder – Ulverston, Cumbria
RW Newman & Partners – Farnborough, Hampshire
Spensborough Abattoir LTD – Liversedge, West Yorkshire
St Merryn Meat (Probus) LTD – Truro, Cornwall
Stockton Butchers – Stockton-on-Tees, Cleveland
Sturminster Newton Abattoir LTD – Sturminster-Newton, Dorset
TG Sargeant & Sons – Uttoxeter, Staffordshire
West Devon Meat LTD – Okehampton
West Scottish Lamb – Carlisle, Cumbria
Z Property Management LTD – Halifax, West Yorkshire

ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED

Name

Al-Hasaniya Moroccan Women's Centre
Al-Khoie Foundation
Anglo-European Livestock Association
Association of Coloured Sheep Breeders
Association of Independent Meat Suppliers
Association of Meat Inspectors (UK) Ltd
Association of Muslim Scholars of Great Britain
Assured British Meat
Australian High Commission
Beltex Sheep Society
Board of Deputies of British Jews
Bradford Council of Mosques
British Bleu Du Maine
British Friesland Sheep Society
British Goat Society
British Gotland Sheep Society
British INRA 401 Sheep Society
British Meat Federation
British Milk Sheep Society
British Sheep Dairying Association
British Texel Sheep Society
British Veterinary Association
Butterworths Law of Food and Drugs
Cambridge Sheep Society
Campaign for the Protection of Shechita
Cheviot Sheep Society
Clun Forest Sheep Breeders' Society Ltd
Colbred Sheep Society
Confederation of African Organisations
Confederation of Indian Organisations
Confederation of Sunni Mosques
Consumers' Association
Consumers' Group in Europe
Cotswold Sheep Society
Council of British Pakistanis (CBP)
Council of Rabbinical Authority of the Independent Orthodox Jewish
Communities in GB
Countryside Alliance
Country Landowners' Association
Dept of Local Government & the Environment – Isle of Man
Dept of Agriculture Fisheries & Forestry – Isle of Man
Derbyshire Gritstone Sheep Breeders' Society
Devon and Cornwall Longwool Flockbook Association
Devon Closewool Sheep Breeders' Society
Dorset Down Sheep Breeders

ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED

Name

Dorset Horn and Poll Sheep Breeders' Association
Dr Richard A E North
Est a Laine Merino Sheep Society
Family Farmers' Association
Farm Assured British Beef and Lamb
Farm and Food Society
Farm Animal Welfare Council
Farm Livestock (Welfare) Advisory Group
Farm Retail Association
Farmers' Guardian
Federation of Muslim Organisations (Leicester)
Federation of Small Businesses
Food Commission
Food Law Group
Food Policy Update
Goat Advisory Bureau
Goat Producers Association
Goat Veterinary Society
Greyface Dartmoor Sheep Breeders' Association
Hebridean Sheep Society
Halal Consumers
Halal Food Authority
Halal Meat
Hampshire Down Sheep Breeders' Society
Human BSE Foundation
Humane Slaughter Association
Imams & Mosques Council UK
Institute of Animal Health
Islamic Cultural Centre
Islamic Food and Nutrition Council
Islamic Forum of Europe
Islamic Foundation (Leicester)
Islamic Medical Centre
Islamic Shariah Council
Jacob Sheep Society
Kashrut Department, United Synagogue
Lancashire Council of Mosques
Leatherhead Food Research Association
Leicester Longwool Sheep Breeders' Association
Licensed Animal Slaughterers & Salvage Association
Lincoln Longwool Sheep Breeders' Association
Livestock Traders' Association
London Board for Shechita
London Islamic Culteral Centre
Lonk Sheep Breeders' Association

Manchester Shechita Board

ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED

Name

Manx Longtan Sheep Breeders' Association
Masham Sheep Breeders' Association
Meat and Livestock Commission
Meat Industry Liaison Group
Meat Trades Journal
Muslim College
National Animal Health and Welfare Panel
National Consumer Council
National Council of Shechita Boards
National Farmers' Union
National Federation of Consumer Groups
National Federation of Meat and Food Traders
National Federation of Womens' Institutes
National Food Alliance
National Housewives' Association
National Office of Animal Health
National Sheep Association
National Trust
Network of Sikh Organisations UK
New Zealand High Commission
North Country Cheviot Sheep Society
North of England Mule Sheep
Office of the Chief Rabbi
Organic Farmers & Growers Ltd
Organic Food Federation
Quality Meat and Livestock Alliance
Rare Breeds Survival Trust
Romney Sheep Breeders' Society
Rough Fell Breeders' Association
Royal Agricultural Society of England
Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)
Royal Society for the Promotion of Health
Royal Veterinary College (Farm Animal & Equine)
Sheep Veterinary Association
Shetland Sheep Breeders' Association
Shropshire Sheep Breeders' Association
Small Business Service
Small & Family Farms' Alliance
Small Abattoirs Federation (SAFE)
Soil Association Certification Ltd
Southdown Sheep Society
State of Guernsey Agriculture and Milk Marketing Board
State of Jersey Department of Agriculture

Suffolk Sheep Society
Sustain: The Alliance for Better Food and Farming

ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED

Name

Sustainable Agriculture, Food and Environment (SAFE) Alliance
Swaledale Sheep Breeders' Association
Tenant Farmers' Association
Townswomen's Guild
UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs
Union of Muslim Organisations
Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations of GB and the Commonwealth
Wensleydale Longwool Sheep Breeders' Association
West Indian Standing Conference
WFU National Office
Women's Farming Union
Women's National Commission