

Auditing meat establishments

How we audit your meat premises and what you need to know as a food business owner.

The audit process

Our audits focus on the effectiveness of the Food Business Owners (FBOs) food safety management systems during the audited period.

The audit covers:

- controls in place to minimise potential spread of animal diseases
- animal welfare safeguards
- controls ensuring hygienic production
- environmental hygiene and good hygienic practices
- effectiveness of food safety systems based on the principles of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP)
- handling of animal by-products and waste
- effectiveness of controls and removal of specified risk material from cattle, sheep and goats

Not all the sections need to be completed for every establishment. This will depend on the type of establishment and the activities it carries out.

Scoring of audits

Our audits are risk based. Each section of the audit checklist is fully assessed during the audit process. Scoring of the audit questions are based on objective evidence.

Compliant

An audit question is assessed as compliant if it:

- is found to be in accordance with the Food Business Owners (FBOs) food safety management system
- meets the requirements of the regulations

In the case of slaughterhouses, they need to meet the requirements of animal and welfare laws, too.

Minor non-compliance

Minor non-compliances are low risk situations which don't prevent an establishment from achieving the control measures of their food safety, animal health and welfare programmes.

When there are a number of related minor non-compliances, it may become a major non-compliance.

Major non-compliance

If no action is taken to resolve non-compliant incidents, they can become major non-compliances. This happens when a non-compliance compromises:

- public health
- animal health and welfare
- production and handling of unsafe or unsuitable food

When there are a number of related major non-compliances, it may become a critical non-compliance.

Critical non-compliance

An assessment of non-compliant incidents, where there is a serious risk to public health, animal health or welfare.

Audit outcome and compliance ratings

There are four compliance ratings for England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Compliance ratings

Good - no issues of significance for public health, animal health or animal welfare during the entire audit period.

Generally satisfactory - no immediate issues of significance for public health, animal health or animal welfare identified on the day of the audit. Any non-compliances identified during the audit period have been corrected promptly.

Improvement necessary - major non-compliances identified at audit and/or non-compliances during the audit period not always responded to and corrected promptly.

Urgent Improvement necessary - multiple major non-compliances or critical non-compliance identified during audit visit or interim audit period. Official intervention required to ensure public health safeguards.

When audits are carried out

When determining how often we audit a business, we look at the overall compliance rate. We audit slaughterhouses and cutting plants every two, three, 12 or 18 months depending on the potential risks identified in the previous full audit. Full audits and follow-up audits are carried out on an announced basis.

In cutting plants, unannounced inspections happen in between scheduled inspections.

Extended audit frequencies (EAF)

This system recognises highly compliant establishments, for example, sites with two consecutive good outcomes.

Highly compliant slaughterhouses will be audited every three years and highly compliant cutting plants every two years.

Publication of audit reports

We publish the most recent audit scores for our approved meat establishments in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. These audits are updated on a monthly basis. As FBOs can appeal the audit outcome, the final report will not be published until the end of the appeals process.

[View Audit - Metadata as CSV](#) (17.88 KB)

[Link to published audit datasets](#)

Appealing an Audit Outcome

A food business operator who wishes to request a review of the most recent audit report must complete the audit appeal form and return it to approvals@food.gov.uk within 14 calendar days of the receipt of the initial audit report.

[View Request for a Review of Full Audit as Word](#) (241.5 KB)

Intervention Protocol

The intervention protocol document provides information about action that will be taken if a FBO doesn't put measures in place to raise levels of compliance. This is a legal requirement.

[Intervention protocol for FSA approved meat establishments](#) (from Chapter 7 of the [Manual for official controls](#))

We have templates for you to use when documenting these measures.

[View Record of food business operator and veterinarian meeting as Word](#) (52 KB)

[View Report of head of operational delivery and field veterinary leader meeting. as Word](#) (56 KB)

[View Example FSA intervention log as Excel](#) (40 KB)

[View FSA intervention record as Excel](#) (44 KB)

[View Field veterinary leader review of approval report as Word](#) (451.5 KB)

Scotland

In Scotland these audits are carried out by [Food Safety Scotland \(FSS\)](#).

We carry out routine audits of approved meat establishments in England and Wales including:

- slaughterhouses
- cutting plants
- game handling establishments

Audits are done by government Veterinary Auditors (VA) and are intended to ensure that:

- FBOs comply with food law requirements
- FBOs meet regulatory standards in relation to public health and, in slaughterhouses, animal health and welfare

Full details of the audit process and instructions to our officials are in chapter 4 of the Manual for Official Controls.

In Northern Ireland, these audits are carried out by the Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs ([DAERA](#)) on behalf of the us in Northern Ireland.