

Annual Animal Welfare Report 2022/23

FSA 23-09-06 This paper provides an update on FSA activities delivered through the 'Deter, Prevent, Detect, Enforce' Animal Welfare Action Plan.

1. Summary

1.1 This paper provides an update on FSA activities delivered through the 'Deter, Prevent, Detect, Enforce' Animal Welfare Action Plan and its objective of making ongoing improvements to animal welfare in slaughterhouses in England and Wales. This paper also highlights additional work completed in the period.

1.2 The Board is asked to:

Consider, discuss, and comment on:

- the work since the 2021/22 update to the Board delivered under the 'Deter, Prevent, Detect, Enforce' Animal Welfare Action Plan and through other activity not on the Action Plan.

Put on record its support for:

- improvements made to the process of referring of farm and transport animal welfare breaches to Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) and Local Authorities (LAs), supported by enhanced reporting to them.
- the FSA position of zero tolerance towards any breaches of animal welfare.

2. Introduction

2.1 This paper provides the annual report to the Board on the FSA's delivery of animal welfare activity on behalf of Defra and Welsh Government as policy holders in England and Wales respectively. The key actions are outlined in our 'Deter, Prevent, Detect, Enforce' Animal Welfare Action Plan.

2.2 The paper covers:

- Section 3 – Background and context
- Section 4 – The Animal Welfare Action Plan: highlights and progress
- Section 5 – In year activity in addition to the Animal Welfare Action Plan
- Section 6 – Consumer and stakeholder interest in animal welfare
- Section 7 – Summary of data on animal welfare compliance in slaughterhouses, on farm and in transit
- Section 8 – Policy activity and forward look on animal welfare.

3. Background and Context

3.1 Defra and Welsh Government are the policy holders for animal welfare controls within approved slaughterhouses. Application of the controls and enforcement of animal welfare breaches are carried out by the FSA in England and Wales under a Service Level Agreement with funding provided by Defra and Welsh Government. Animal welfare is monitored by Official Veterinarians (OVs) based in approved slaughterhouses. Where checks at the slaughterhouse identify animal welfare breaches originating on farm or from transportation, they are referred to the APHA and the LA, who are responsible for subsequent investigation and enforcement. In Northern Ireland, the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has the policy and delivery responsibility for animal welfare. The FSA animal welfare team regularly liaise with DAERA about animal welfare.

3.2 Full responsibility for animal welfare and food safety in slaughterhouses rests with Food Business Operators (FBOs) who must meet legislative requirements in terms of slaughterhouse design, layout, equipment, and operation.

3.3 The Animal Welfare Action Plan and related work builds upon official controls that uphold the responsibility of FBOs in producing safe food and ensuring the welfare of animals at slaughter. The Action Plan links to other FSA, government, and industry activity on animal welfare through cross government membership of the steering group and through the provision of updates at industry forums.

4. The Animal Welfare Action Plan: Highlights and Progress

4.1 The 'Deter, Prevent, Detect, Enforce' approach is delivered through the Animal Welfare Action Plan and approved by Defra and Welsh Government. The Action Plan is monitored by a steering group comprising representatives from FSA and other government departments. In 2022/23 we have:

Strengthened verification and compliance by:

- running our fifth Animal Welfare themed audit covering: FBO Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) facilities, CO2 operation and contingency, Standard Operating Procedures, lairage facilities, delivery of animals, slaughter facilities, and access to plants.
- developing and implementing a digital evidence repository that provides instantaneous and secure transfer of evidence for farm and transport non-compliances to APHA and LAs, to support their analysis, investigation, and enforcement.
- developing an industry survey to help identify any inhibitors to take up of the "demonstration of life" protocol which aims to reduce the number of animals subject to slaughter without stunning. The survey will run in 2023/24.
- refining our Referral for Investigation triage process, which utilises a panel of experts to oversee and assess the proportionality and consistency of animal welfare cases that could be subject to prosecution. Refined to include the FSA enforcement decision making team into the process.

Improved accountability and collaboration through:

- Building closer working relationships with meat and farming industry representative bodies through attendance at joint working forums.
- developing our extreme weather animal welfare reporting process where a set of agreed actions, across government, can be easily triggered in extreme weather events.
- agreeing with Defra and Welsh Government activities to be funded to deliver animal welfare controls in 2022/23.
- delivering improvements under the animal welfare referrals joint working group such as reporting of data on repeat offences and offenders to support enforcement prioritisation of APHA and LAs.

Improved education and instruction by:

- enhancing guidance about referring cases to APHA and LAs, and subsequent actions to be taken by those departments.
- enhancing guidance relating to those working in the meat industry who require a Certificate of Competence (CoC) to perform certain handling and slaughter activities, and on considerations for suspension and revocation of CoCs.
- enhancing guidance for FSA Officials on requirements to view CCTV.
- enhancing guidance on a range of FBO controls and procedures relating to animal welfare compliance.

Improved quality of our analysis and reporting through:

- improving the functionality of FSAs enforcement database (Chronos) by linking it with the new digital evidence repository to enhance the farm and transport referrals process, and by improving how referrals are categorised to aid APHA in triaging of cases.
- improved data and reporting from Welfare Assurance Team (WAT) visits to slaughterhouses.
- producing the 2022 slaughter sector survey final report in liaison with Defra and Welsh Government.
- conducting a survey of slaughterhouses in Wales to determine the level of CCTV coverage in advance of the proposed mandatory CCTV in slaughterhouse regulations in Wales. Of 23 slaughterhouses, 17 had some form of CCTV in place.
- publishing animal welfare non-compliance statistics.

4.2 The animal welfare referrals working group, initiated by the FSA in 2021/22, has continued to deliver various enhancements to farm and transport referrals such as improved guidance, processes, and technology, for example: the creation of a training video, enhancements to the Manual for Official Controls, enhanced guidance for LA use, enhancements to Chronos, the development of a new evidence repository, and reporting of repeat offences and offenders.

5. In Year Activity In Addition To the Animal Welfare Action Plan

5.1 In August 2022 the supply of CO₂ to the food and hospitality industry came under scrutiny as a major UK manufacturer shut down production and changed their business model from domestic manufacturing of CO₂ to importation. This coincided with a shutdown for essential maintenance of another major supplier. These factors impacted CO₂ supply to the UK and created a critical period during September with concern over supplies. CO₂ is a permitted killing method for pigs and poultry, and a shortage of CO₂ could cause backlogs of animals on farm, impacting their welfare. The FSA requested that the slaughter industry procure stocks and retain full tanks as much as possible, to minimise impact. The FSA Animal Welfare team was integral to cross-industry and government contingency planning, meaning that CO₂ supplies to the slaughter industry were maintained during the critical period. The FSA Animal Welfare team have rehearsed contingency planning arrangements with Defra and industry to prioritise supply for animal welfare at slaughter to mitigate against any future supply issues. This has included exploring alternative stunning methods, alternative food packaging options and alternative methods of manufacture of CO₂.

5.2 Following the extreme weather (heat) in July and August 2022, the FSA animal welfare team led the development, supported by Defra and APHA, of a new procedure whereby Met Office warnings of extreme weather prompt a set of agreed actions, such as the issuing of guidance to transporters and FBO representatives, and daily monitoring and reporting of non-compliance data to feed into cross government contingency planning discussions.

5.3 One incident of undercover filming within slaughterhouses by activist groups required attention in May 2022. The activists believed the footage showed ineffective handling and stunning of cattle. FSA veterinarians inspected the premises and reviewed the available social media footage, and additional footage supplied directly to the FSA, and did not identify any non-compliances of animal welfare legislation.

5.4 An industry-led initiative, the Demonstration of Life (DoL) protocol, provides assurance for Muslim consumers that stunning of sheep and goats is compatible with halal slaughter requirements. This involves an approved stunning procedure prior to slaughter, with an approved religious body certifying that the stun method is halal compliant. This voluntary scheme has been available since 2021 although there has been limited take-up by industry despite the FSA animal welfare team simplifying the annual review and extension process for membership of the scheme.

Careful consideration has been given towards improving scheme awareness and adoption and further engagement will take place with relevant stakeholders in the form of a survey (planned for September 2023). The objective is to gain increased understanding of the scheme utilisation and any perceived barriers with a view to increasing its use and improving assurance for Muslim consumers in relation to stunned halal.

6. Consumer and Stakeholder Interest In Animal Welfare

6.1 Insights from the FSA Food and You 2 Survey, [Wave 5](#), showed the extent to which consumers are concerned with animal welfare in the food production process. 33% of consumers reported that they were highly concerned and 43% were somewhat concerned. Insights from [Wave 6](#), showed a marginal reduction with 32% of consumers reporting that they were highly concerned and 42% were somewhat concerned.

7. Summary of Data On Animal Welfare Compliance In Slaughterhouses, On Farm and In Transit

7.1 In 2022/23 there were over 1 billion animals (1,013,294,689) processed in slaughterhouses. Over 99.9% met animal welfare compliance standards and regulations. There were 48,898 animals (0.0049%) that experienced some impact on their welfare, which is fewer than in 2021/22 (51,132). The number of slaughterhouse non-compliances decreased by 5% (from 372 to 354). This demonstrates that FSA presence, guidance, and enforcement is having a positive impact on industry compliance.

7.2 Enforcement data indicates that 15% of major and critical slaughterhouse non-compliances are identified either by live or retrospective CCTV viewing, with the rest identified in person by the FSA Official. CCTV is routinely used as evidence to support enforcement action. CCTV also continues to play an active role in the suspension and revocation of CoCs. There were 7 CoCs revoked and 43 CoCs suspended 2022/23, 84% of all suspensions and revocations were supported by CCTV footage. For context, the suspensions and revocations in 2022/23 equate to 0.57% of all CoCs held.

7.3 2022/23 transport non-compliances increased by 8% (from 3105 to 3344), farm non-compliances decreased by 36% (from 835 to 535). Part of the shift is due to a change within Chronos. Lameness, open wounds, and incoordination were previously assigned in Chronos as farm non-compliances, but this was changed, enabling them to be assigned as transport non-compliances. Looking at farm and transport non-compliances collectively, there has been a reduction in 2022/23 of 2% from 2021/22, and there was a reduction of 7% from 2020/21 to 2021/22. The ability for FSA to influence compliance is limited given that other parts of government are responsible for regulation and enforcement of non-compliant producers and transporters.

8. Policy Activity and Forward Look On Animal Welfare

8.1 In 2021 Defra published its Post Implementation Review of the Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015. In 2023 Defra published its post implementation review of and the Mandatory Use of Closed-Circuit Television in Slaughterhouses (England) Regulations 2018. The FSA animal welfare team will continue to work closely with Defra and Welsh Government to consider the conclusions from these reviews.

8.2 Welsh Government have committed to mandating CCTV in slaughterhouses in their Programme for Government and have consulted on a proposal during 2022/23. The FSA animal welfare team continue to work closely with Welsh Government to support implementation, likely to be in 2024.

8.3 Defra and the Welsh Government have asked the FSA to undertake a new Slaughter Sector Survey (like previous biennial surveys) in all operating slaughterhouses in England and Wales to update the dataset and to inform animal welfare at slaughter policy. The survey will focus on throughput, slaughter methods (including stun and non-stun), and where livestock is sourced from and distributed to (including exports). It will run for one week in February 2024.

8.4 In April 2022, the Animals (Penalty Notices) Act was passed in Parliament. The act provides powers in England that sit alongside other enforcement options for offences under animal welfare legislation, including welfare at slaughter. A penalty notice gives an individual the opportunity to discharge liability from prosecution for an alleged criminal offence in exchange for a fee. Defra has consulted on proposals in 2023 and the FSA animal welfare team are working closely with them to understand the impact if a new enforcement approach is implemented.

9. Conclusions

9.1 This paper provides an update on animal welfare activities in England and Wales. The Board is asked to note:

- the progress made in delivering against the Animal Welfare Action Plan and positive reactive work that impact the delivery of animal welfare policy within slaughterhouses resulting in a 5% reduction in non-compliances.
- the progress made relating to farm and transport activity resulting in a 2% reduction in non-compliances. Noting that the FSA works in partnership with APHA and LAs who are responsible for regulation and enforcement of non-compliant producers and transporters.
- the ongoing activities to improve animal welfare implementation and assurance in slaughterhouses in England and Wales on behalf of policy owning departments, particularly in the areas of farm and transport referrals to APHA and LAs, and religious slaughter.
- the FSA position of zero tolerance towards any breaches of animal welfare with proportionate enforcement and collaborative working with other regulators.

Annexes

[Annex 1 – Animal Welfare Action Plan](#)

[Annex 2 – Animal welfare compliance data](#)

[Annex 3: Analysis of welfare trends for major and critical non-compliances in England and Wales](#)