

Animal welfare

We maintain regular checks on slaughterhouses in the UK, to ensure that they comply with our regulations that maintain animal welfare.

FSA's role in regulating animal welfare

The FSA is responsible for approval of all slaughterhouses in England and Wales, and the delivery of official controls in approved meat establishments (slaughterhouses, cutting plants and game handling establishments) subject to veterinary control within England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The FSA monitors and enforces welfare compliance in approved slaughterhouses on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in England and the Welsh Government in Wales through a Service Level Agreement. In Northern Ireland, this work is carried out for the FSA by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in through a Service Level Agreement.

The FSA's role focuses on ensuring those businesses are compliant with all specific requirements in hygiene and animal welfare legislation.

These requirements are monitored and enforced by Official Veterinarians of the FSA to ensure that animals are spared avoidable suffering, distress or pain during the slaughter process. The FSA has a zero-tolerance approach to animal welfare breaches and all staff are instructed to take prompt and proportionate enforcement action where breaches are identified.

Responsibility for animal welfare

Business operators are responsible for animal welfare and food safety in slaughterhouses rests with business operators and are responsible for ensuring the health and welfare of animals in their care.

This responsibility and requirements are set out in the guidance on the [Welfare of Animal at the Time of Killing regulations](#).

Individuals that are involved in killing and related operations must be appropriately trained and licensed. They must hold a proficiency qualification before being able to apply for a Certificate of Competence.

A Certificate of Competence is required licence to slaughter animals in a slaughterhouse which the FSA issues on behalf of Defra and Welsh Government.

[How to apply for a Certificate of Competence](#)

[Food and Drink Qualification \(FDQ\)](#) approve food businesses and learning providers to deliver and assess proficiency qualifications, as well as providing approved training for Certificates of Competence. They can provide further information for business operator staff to complete the required qualification.

FSA welfare checks

Official Veterinarians carry out checks to make sure that there have been no issues concerning the welfare of animals presented for slaughter.

This can happen

- when the animals are on the farm
- during transport
- when the animals arrive at the slaughterhouse
- up to the point of slaughter

These checks include making sure that the business operator has appropriate procedures in place to safeguard animal welfare. Meat hygiene inspectors support them with these duties.

So that the risk of any animal suffering during the process is minimised, our operational staff check:

- the unloading and handling of animals
- where they are kept prior to slaughter
- the restraint and handling of animals
- the positioning of stunning equipment
- the effectiveness of the stun
- the efficiency of bleeding

This includes monitoring of slaughter by religious methods including special restraint facilities that may be in place for this purpose.

In England we enforce legislation for animal welfare at slaughter. This is done with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in England.

England

[The Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing \(England\) Regulations 2015 SI 1782](#)

In Wales we work with the Welsh Government to enforce animal welfare legislation.

Wales

[The Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing \(Wales\) Regulations 2014 SSI 951](#)

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs enforces animal welfare legislation for animal welfare in Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland

[The Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing \(Northern Ireland\) Regulations 2014](#)

Mandatory use of CCTV in slaughterhouses

Regulations on mandatory use of CCTV in slaughterhouses in England came into force in May 2018. A business operator must:

- install CCTV equipment in their slaughterhouse
- keep CCTV images for 90 days
- make the images available to our inspectors

There is currently no legislation requiring compulsory CCTV in Wales.

Guidance

[Guidance for business operators on how to comply with the CCTV regulations](#)

Regulations details

CCTV equipment must provide a complete and clear view of killing and related operations in all areas of the slaughterhouse where live animals are present, such as areas where they are unloaded, kept, handled, stunned and killed, up to the point where the assessment for absence of life is carried out.

Picture resolution should be sufficient for individuals and operations to be identified. The frame rate should record continuous motion.

All currently installed CCTV equipment must meet the same requirements of the regulations as newly installed equipment.

Businesses must retain CCTV recordings for a minimum of 90 days.

New slaughterhouses

New slaughterhouses must meet all requirements of the regulations and will be assessed during their application for approval to operate.

Access to the CCTV equipment and footage

Slaughterhouses must give access to their CCTV facilities and footage to FSA inspectors so they can provide effective monitoring and verify animal welfare standards. CCTV will be used as an additional tool; it does not replace direct practical official observations.

There is no legal requirement for businesses or their representatives to be present when footage is reviewed. Business operators may decide to have a staff member present when footage is viewed or copied, or equipment seized.

Enforcement

Our inspectors may issue an enforcement notice if business operators are in breach of the CCTV regulations.

It is an offence if business operators:

- do not have CCTV that complies with the CCTV regulations
- do not retain images for 90 days from the date taken
- do not make CCTV images available to inspectors to view, copy or seize
- do not comply with an enforcement notice

Data protection

A business operator is the data controller and will need to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements.

If our inspectors copy or seize CCTV footage, the FSA will become a data controller for that portion of footage and will also need to comply with GDPR requirements. The footage will be returned to the business operator as soon as is practicable when it is decided it is no longer required for investigations or court proceedings.

Animal Welfare Data - our checks

England and Wales

We have published new Open Data sets relating to animal welfare enforcement action and animal welfare compliance as a proportion of throughput. There are three data sets, links below:

- [Animal Welfare non-compliance \(on farm, transport and slaughterhouse\)](#)
- [Animal Welfare compliance slaughterhouse \(critical non-compliances against throughput\)](#)
- [Animal Welfare compliance on farm and transport \(critical non-compliances against throughput\)](#)

The non-compliance data set shows the number of incidents which attracted enforcement in England and Wales in each area of the slaughterhouse, and the number and nature of the non-compliances which were assessed to have occurred either on the farm or during transport, and have been shared with the competent authority

The compliance data sets compare the number of animals, by species, that have experienced suffering or distress as recorded in the non-compliance data; against the total either arriving in compliance (on farm and transport) or processed in compliance (slaughterhouse) with relevant animal welfare legislation

Historically, we have concentrated on the enforcement/non-compliance aspect of animal welfare; however, we are now publishing a more balanced view.

We have produced supporting documentation which will be published along with the Open Data. This guidance covers the background to the data, understanding the hierarchy of enforcement, and how the scoring is allocated

National Survey

The FSA has carried out a number of surveys on behalf of Defra and the Welsh government.

Week-long animal welfare surveys were carried out in slaughterhouses in 2011, 2013, 2015 and 2018 to provide assurance that:

- food business operators were taking active steps to comply with legal requirements and achieve necessary animal welfare standards
- Official Veterinarians and front-line teams were carrying out their roles effectively, with appropriate monitoring and relevant enforcement action being taken in the event of food business operator non-compliance

Results of animal welfare surveys carried out in 2011, 2013 and 2015 are available in the [national archives](#) and [Farm animals: data from survey of slaughter methods 2015](#)

The results of [2018 animal welfare survey](#) were published by Defra.