

Abattoir fined more than £265,000 for failure to follow public health regulations

Dunbia (Preston) Limited has been handed fines and costs totalling more than £266,000 after pleading guilty for failing to ensure the removal of specified parts of the animals required by law, referred to as “specified risk material”.

The fine is the most significant to be handed out to a UK meat producer and is for failures to comply with the Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (England) Regulations 2010.

FSA inspectors found a sheep without a fully removed spleen and a cow that had not had its spinal cord fully removed. The final charge was for two sheep heads with permanent incisors erupted which were incorrectly identified as lambs and therefore destined for human consumption instead of disposal.

After pleading guilty, Dunbia received a reduced £250,000 fine for the three offences and was ordered to pay full prosecution costs of £16,121.42 and a victim surcharge of £170.

The written judgement from HHJ Woolman was issued on Monday 25 March following a sentencing hearing which took place at Preston Crown Court on Monday 11 March.

TSE regulations help to reduce risk from a group of brain diseases that cattle, sheep and goats are vulnerable to by requiring correct removal and disposal of specific parts of those animals before they enter the food chain. The most widely recognised of these diseases is BSE in cattle (referred to as ‘mad cow disease’), which has been linked to the human TSE diseases such as Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD).

Dr Colin Sullivan, Chief Operating Officer at the FSA said:

“This very significant fine underlines just how seriously breaches of these regulations are taken.

“It is vitally important for consumers and the wider industry that they are followed and public health is protected. The FSA will continue to investigate and prosecute any food businesses we find failing to uphold them.”

“However, I should put on record that since the start of court proceedings Dunbia has signed up to our enhanced assurance initiative which involves working more closely with the company using data from a range of different audits and other data to help demonstrate compliance with official controls.”