

Home slaughter of livestock: A guide to the law in England and Wales - introduction

Legal requirements and guidance for home slaughter.

Introduction

Home slaughter is the slaughter of a livestock animal by its owner on their property for their own personal consumption or for consumption by members of their immediate family living there. The slaughter may also be carried out by a licensed slaughterer, defined as a person holding either a Welfare at the Time of Killing (WATOK) licence or a Certificate of Competence (CoC), provided it is done under the supervision of the owner. Home slaughter does not take place in an approved slaughterhouse. Carcasses or parts of carcasses from home slaughtered livestock, other than those being disposed of as animal by-products (ABPs), cannot be moved to another premises for processing.

Home slaughter is distinct from 'private slaughter' which is when the owner of the animal sends it to an approved slaughterhouse to be slaughtered, and the dressed carcass is returned to the owner. Animals that undergo 'private slaughter' would be subject to formal inspection procedures by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) as determined by the [Official Control Regulation](#) (OCR), following which the carcass would receive a health mark to verify that it is fit for human consumption.

Home slaughter is also distinct from 'emergency slaughter' which is the slaughter of domestic ungulates (e.g. cows, sheep) outside the slaughterhouse, following an accident/injury under emergency procedures within legislation. This only applies to the slaughter of an otherwise healthy animal where the accident/injury has prevented its transport to the slaughterhouse for welfare reasons. Under these circumstances, such animals must be subject to ante-mortem inspection and certification by an Official Veterinarian (OV). The carcass would then be subject to further veterinary examination by an OV and undergo formal inspection procedures by the FSA before a health mark is applied, if it is fit for human consumption. Unlike meat from home slaughtered animals, meat from animals slaughtered in compliance with emergency procedures may be placed on the market for sale for human consumption.

It should be noted that home slaughter is likely to carry a greater risk to public health than slaughter that takes place in approved premises where the animal and the meat are subject to formal inspection procedures to verify that it is fit for human consumption. The FSA website provides [a list of all establishments in England and Wales](#) that are approved to handle, prepare or produce products of animal origin and this includes the locations of approved slaughterhouses. Livestock owners can also find these details in [Annex A](#).

It is a legal requirement that all livestock owners maintain appropriate records of identification and movements of their animals. This includes ensuring that the home slaughter (deaths) of cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and deer are recorded in farm registers and reported to the appropriate agency, such as the British Cattle Movement Service (BCMS), [the Livestock Information Service \(LIS\)](#) or EID Cymru for sheep and goats, or the [electronic animal movement licensing \(eAML2\)](#) for

pigs, in the usual way. Please see further information on record keeping of livestock in [England](#) and [Wales](#). Where it is found that appropriate records have not been kept, enforcement action will be taken as necessary.

Intended audience

Livestock ([footnote 1](#)) owners considering home slaughter at their farm ([footnote 2](#)) for their own personal consumption or for members of their immediate family living there.

Holders of a WATOK licence to slaughter animals, or a CoC issued by the relevant competent authority, who carry out home slaughter under the responsibility and supervision of the livestock owner on farm for the owner's personal consumption or that of members of their immediate family living there.

Regulatory and enforcement authorities responsible for the enforcement of Animal Welfare, the Food Hygiene Regulations, Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs) Regulations and ABP Regulations on farm.

Purpose of the guidance

To provide advice on the conditions that must be met to allow the legal home slaughter of livestock.

To protect the food and feed chain and minimise any potential risks to human and animal health and welfare.

Legal status of guidance

Directly applicable EU legislation no longer applies in GB. EU legislation retained when the UK exited the EU became assimilated law on 1 January 2024, published on legislation.gov.uk. References to any legislation in FSA guidance with 'EU' or 'EC' in the title (e.g. Regulation (EC) 178/2002) should now be regarded as assimilated law where applicable to GB and as directly applicable EU law where applicable to Northern Ireland. References to 'Retained EU Law' or 'REUL' should now be regarded as references to assimilated law.

These guidance notes have been produced to provide:

- Best practice guidance
- Guidance on the legal requirements of:

[Regulation \(EC\) No. 178/2002](#) laying down the general principles and requirements of food law.

[Regulation \(EC\) No. 852/2004](#) on the hygiene of foodstuffs.

[Regulation \(EC\) No. 853/2004](#) laying down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin (as amended).

[Regulation \(EC\) No. 999/2001](#) (as amended) which lays down rules for the prevention, control and eradication of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) in animals.

[Regulation \(EC\) No. 1069/2009](#) laying down health rules as regards animal by-products and derived products not intended for human consumption.

[Regulation \(EU\) 2017/625](#) lays down rules on the performance of official controls and other official activities by the competent authorities.

[Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1099/2009](#) on protection of animals at the time of killing.

[Food Hygiene and Safety \(England\) Regulations 2013](#) (as amended)

[Food Hygiene \(Wales\) Regulations 2006](#) (as amended)

[The General Food Regulations 2004](#)

[Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies \(England\) Regulations 2018](#)

[Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies \(Wales\) Regulations 2018](#) (as amended)

[The Animal By-Products \(Enforcement\) \(England\) Regulations 2013](#) (as amended)

[The Animal By-Products \(Enforcement\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2014](#)

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

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

The guidance notes on legal requirements cannot cover every situation and you may need to consider the relevant legislation to see how it applies in your circumstances. Livestock keepers or businesses with specific queries may wish to seek advice from their local enforcement agency, which will be the Trading Standards/Environmental Health department of the Local Authority (LA) where their farm is situated. Please see information on [Trading Standards contact details](#) and your [Local Authority details](#). Following these guidance notes will help you to comply with the law.

You are not required by law to follow best practice guidance, but you are encouraged to take up the actions recommended. All guidance on best practice is identified in shaded boxes, with a heading of Best Practice:

Best practice

All best practice guidance is clearly identified within this document by this style of format.

1. This Guide is not intended to cover all livestock species, but it does cover those species for which we receive most enquiries. It is particularly applicable to cattle, sheep and goats where TSE controls apply.
2. For the purpose of this guide, 'farm' is defined as any premises where livestock are kept.