

Temporary Operational Instruction

Action note: 2025-06-26 - Chapter 2.2 of the Manual for Official Controls (MOC) - Emergency slaughter of domestic ungulates outside the slaughterhouse

Purpose

This action note provides guidance for Official Veterinarians (OVs) on appropriate actions when potential breaches are identified when receiving and/or processing animals that have undergone emergency slaughter.

The final decision to apply the health mark on carcasses coming from animals that have undergone emergency slaughter (EMSL) rests with the Official Veterinarian (OV) at the slaughterhouse.

The following scenarios provide guidance on the actions OVs at the slaughterhouse should take when issues arise regarding the eligibility of EMSL animals and/or the application of the health mark after completion of the post-mortem inspection. This is

not a comprehensive list, and this guidance is intended to help the OV to reach a final decision on the fitness of the meat, which is always dependant on their professional judgment.

Background

In December 2024, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) introduced enhanced training, an online test, and a new appointment process for veterinarians to be able to sign Emergency Slaughter certificates. This training, accessible via the FSA website, became mandatory for veterinarians performing ante-mortem inspections of domestic ungulates undergoing emergency slaughter as of 1 April 2025.

The previous Temporary Operational Instruction (TOI) no longer applies, as the transition period has concluded and the most relevant information has been incorporated into MOC amendment 109.

Procedure

1. Initial approach

- If the emergency slaughtered animal is not acceptable for dressing on arrival, it can be declared unfit for human consumption at that point. Examples include very dirty animals, blown belly, maggot infestation, signs of putrefaction, etc.
- If an investigation to gather further information is required, the carcase and offal need to be detained. The required evidence will be collected to inform whether to apply the health mark to the carcase.
- When any of the above apply, the Food Business Operator (FBO) should be informed immediately and the OV-EMSL who completed the health certificate contacted.

2. Potential breaches and required actions

Animal welfare

If the animal welfare has been compromised follow the procedures outlined in MOC Chapter 2.3 Animal welfare.

FCI

If there are any issues with FCI follow the procedures outlined in MOC Chapter 2.1 Food Chain Information (FCI).

Animal identification

If there are any issues with animal identification, follow the procedures outlined in MOC Chapter 2.5 Animal Identification.

Incomplete or incorrect Official Health Certificate

Issues in relation to the information or format of the Health Certificate might include: wrong template, missing information such as slaughter date and time, OV-EMSL signature, reason for emergency slaughter (for example, calving-related conditions are not considered an accident nor acceptable reasons for including that animal in the definition of emergency slaughter), etc. In these cases, the OV can request further details from the OV-ESML to decide whether to declare the meat unfit for human consumption.

Lack of Official Health Certificate, or not signed by an appointed OV-EMSL

If there is no health certificate provided or the signing veterinarian is not appointed OV-EMSL, then the ante mortem inspection (AMI) was not performed in compliance with the regulations and therefore the carcass must not be health marked and its offal should be declared as unfit for human consumption.

Post-Mortem findings

While the OV is performing the postmortem inspection of the emergency slaughtered animal, if findings do not clearly match the emergency slaughter description, and if

chronic and/or systemic disease is identified, the carcass and offal should be declared as unfit for human consumption.

If required, the OV-EMSL should be contacted for further clarification before deciding.

Investigation of Common ES Reasons

Commonly recorded emergency slaughter reasons include: nerve damage, inability to stand, muscle damage, spinal injury, suspected nerve or spinal damage, pelvic injury, acute paralysis, musculoskeletal injury, leg damage.

When the health certificate does not provide sufficient information about the accident and cause of such an injury, the OV can request further details from the OV-ESML and conduct further enquiries to confirm cause of the accident. Following this process the OV can then decide whether to apply the health mark. It needs to be considered that post-mortem findings may reveal information not available during ante mortem.

Suspected Fraud or Document Alteration

If there are clear indications of fraud or document tampering in the paperwork accompanying an emergency slaughtered animal – for example, if an official health certificate appears to have been altered without proper initials or authentication – and the OV has reasonable grounds to believe the documentation may be inaccurate (e.g. inconsistencies in dates, times, or the stated reason for emergency slaughter), then further checks must be carried out to verify the validity of the documents.

Importantly, carcasses must not be health marked while these investigations are ongoing.

In addition, if an unusually high number of animals is received from a single source, this must be reported immediately to the relevant FSA regional team. The report should include any supporting evidence, as outlined in MOC Chapter 7, Section 2.5 Gathering and Preserving Evidence, for appropriate review and action.

Note the contents of the action note, ensuring it is read by all front-line staff.

Where necessary, print a copy for the plant file.

Distribution

This action note will be:

- uploaded to the [Temporary Operational Instruction Folder held in the MOC area of SharePoint](#) (accessible only on an official FSA device)
- logged on the [Temporary Operational Instruction tracker](#) (accessible only on an official FSA device)
- published alongside the [MOC chapters on food.gov.uk](#)

The action note will remain live until either incorporated into the MOC or revoked.

Annex

Action note drafted by and date	Action note agreed by and date	Published and date
DM 03/04/2025	JGL 25/06/2025	26/06/2025