



**A guide for Food Business
Operators on charging for meat
hygiene official controls in
Northern Ireland
April 2026**

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Summary

Category	Details
Intended audience:	Food Business Operators of approved meat establishments
Which UK nations does this cover?	Northern Ireland
Purpose:	This guidance informs readers how the FSA in NI charges for the delivery of official controls in approved meat establishments.
Legal status	This guidance does not place any legal requirements on food business operators. It explains the legal requirements that the FSA must comply with in charging for official controls in meat premises, and how charges are calculated.
Key words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charges Guide • Approved meat establishments • Meat Official Controls • Food Business Operator
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Revision History

This guidance follows the Government [Code of Practice on Guidance](#). If you believe this guidance breaches the Code for any reason, please let us know by emailing the contact on the previous page. If you have any comments on the guidance itself, please call us using the contact details on page 2

Revision No.	Revision date	Purpose of revision and paragraph number	Revised by
1	December 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Replaced references to Business Agreements with Statement of Resources ▪ Updated Annex A – hourly rates ▪ Updated Annexes B, C and D – calculations and worked examples ▪ Updated Annex F – examples of backing invoices ▪ Updated Annex G – delivery support costs 	Billy Armstrong
2	June 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DARD references to DAERA ▪ New discount system explained ▪ EU minima calculations updated ▪ Changes to PIA arrangements explained ▪ Updated Annex A ▪ New Annexes B, D, E, F, G, H, I and J 	Billy Armstrong
3	November 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Updated Annex A ▪ Updated Annex H regarding re-definition of global costs 	Billy Armstrong
4	April 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Removal of references to EU minimum including the relevant Annexes C & F 	Billy Armstrong

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Updated monthly timetable – Annex B ▪ Updated discount bandings – new Annex C ▪ Updated glossary of terms – new Annex D 	
5	September 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Updated Annex A 	Billy Armstrong
6	April 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Updated monthly timetable – Annex B ▪ Updated discount bandings – Annex C 	Billy Armstrong
7	September 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Updated Annex A 	Billy Armstrong
8	April 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clarified position regarding UAIs – paragraph 16 ▪ Removed references to PIA discount ▪ Clarified position regarding approval appraisal visits ▪ Updated Annex A – hourly rates ▪ Updated Annex C – Discount bands and rates ▪ Updated Annex G – removed PIA forms and replaced with FSA privacy notice 	Billy Armstrong
9	March 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ References to Regulation (EC) 882/2004 and Regulation (EC) 854/2004 replaced with Regulation (EU) 2017/625 and associated EU tertiary legislation where appropriate ▪ Removal of references to throughput information previously required ▪ Updated Annex A – hourly rates 	Billy Armstrong

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Updated Annex C – Discount bands and rates 	
10	June 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Removal of paragraph on charging for additional official controls under Article 28 of Regulation (EC) 882/2004 	Billy Armstrong
11	March 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Updated Annex C – Discount bands and rates 	Billy Armstrong
12	March 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Updated Annex C – Discount bands and rates 	Billy Armstrong
13	April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Added reference to the 2022 Review of Resources – paragraph 9 ▪ Added reference to the removal of discounts from time spent on enforcement activities – paragraph 20 ▪ Updated overtime premium rates – paragraph 21 table ▪ Updated Annex A – hourly rates ▪ Updated Annex B – Monthly accounting tables ▪ Updated Annex C – discount bands and rates 	Billy Armstrong
14	May 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Out of Hours postmortem Inspection of on-farm emergency slaughter ▪ Amalgamation of grades to simplify grade rates ▪ Updated Annex A – hourly rates and one off rates for emergency slaughter ▪ Updated Annex B – Monthly accounting tables ▪ Updated Annex C – discount bands and rates 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Updated Annex F – grade supplement 	
15	May 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Re-ordered to improve readability and clarity ▪ Expanded guidance on Statement of Resources ▪ Updated annexes A, B, C and D ▪ New Annex E on Statement of Resources including a typical SOR template, guidance on the SOR appeals process and a worked example demonstrating how SOR hours are translated to the invoice ▪ New Annex G showing the official controls cycle 	
16	March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facility time clarified (page 23) ▪ Updated annexes A, B and C ▪ Updated Annex E worked example 	Billy Armstrong

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Introduction:

Why are charges necessary

The need for charging arises from two sources. These are:

- Legislative requirements under European law, and consequently also national legislation and;
- A requirement by Department of Finance to charge the appropriate customer for the services provided.

Charges Regulations

Meat Hygiene Official Controls charges are required by the finance provisions set out in Articles 79 to 85 (inclusive) of [Regulation \(EU\) No 2017/625](#) (the EU Regulations). These provisions came into operation in Northern Ireland on 14th December 2019 under [The Meat \(Official Controls Charges\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2009 No. 247 \(as amended\) \(the Charges Regulations\)](#).

This means that we must charge you for the meat hygiene official controls that are carried out by DAERA VPHP on our behalf and must calculate charges in line with the requirements of those regulations.

Who is charged and what are they charged for:

Food Business Operators of FSA approved meat establishments will be charged for the Official Controls delivered at their establishments

DAERA VPHP currently provides a range of services in approved meat establishments in Northern Ireland including disease surveillance, welfare in transport and trade support in addition to the delivery of Official Controls relating to food safety on behalf of the FSA. Some of these services are paid for by other Government Departments, for example, trade activities, other services are charged to you, the Food Business Operator (FBO). This Charges Guide provides an explanation of the charging process for Meat Hygiene Official Controls only.

Table 1 below outlines the specific policy/work areas, the Government Department responsible for the associated policy, and the current arrangements with regard to charging for those controls.

Table 1			
Policy/work area	Activities	Dept responsible for policy	Charging arrangements
Approvals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory visits by DAERA • Approval visits by FSA and DAERA 	FSA	Indirect charges applied via management overhead element of hourly rate
Food safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Antemortem inspection • Postmortem inspection • Health marking • Verification of FBO activities • OC Sampling of suspect animals with an associated Public Health risk • Enforcement following established non-compliance 	FSA	Included in the individual invoice generated for all costs incurred when carrying out official controls and other official activities. SOR based charges
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit of FBO (including partial audits) 		Hourly rates- Included in the individual invoice generated
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unannounced inspections 		Chargeable only if non-compliance is identified- Included in the individual invoice generated
EU compliance audits (meat hygiene, SRM and animal welfare at time of killing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation for and participation in EU compliance missions 	FSA	Indirect charges applied via management overhead element of hourly rate
Specified Risk Material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PM inspection for removal of SRM • Verification of FBO removal, handling, storage and disposal of SRM at slaughter and cutting 	FSA	No charges applied (except where additional OCs are required following established non-compliance)
Animal welfare (at time of killing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification of FBO compliance with requirements of national legislation regarding the killing of animals in 	FSA	Included in the individual invoice generated for all costs incurred when carrying

	approved slaughterhouses		out official controls and other official activities
Emergency slaughter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out of hours Post Mortem inspection of on-farm emergency slaughtered animals 	FSA	Ad hoc charges when services are required: Mon-Fri -not applicable Saturday – minimum 3 hours @ 1.5 OV rate Sunday – minimum 3 hours @ 2.0 OV rate
Animal welfare (transport)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring animals/birds and transport on arrival for slaughter 	DAERA	No charges applied
TSE controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSE and scrapie sampling (at risk & suspect animals) • Scrapie scheme sampling 	DAERA	No charges applied
Animal By-Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification of FBO categorisation, segregation and disposal of animal by-products 	DAERA	No charges applied
Veterinary Residues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPA surveillance • Suspect scheme • AM inspection failures 	DAERA	Residues fees applicable and charged directly and separately by DAERA
Trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional inspection and verification activities associated with trade requirements • Third country audits 	DAERA	No charges applied
TB & BR reactor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional inspection and verification activities associated with animals presented under the TB/BR reactor contract 	DAERA	No charges applied
Notifiable diseases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification of FBO activities associated with Notifiable Diseases 	DAERA	No charges applied

Elements of Charging:

Under Regulation (EU) 2017/625 (the OCR), FSA approved slaughterhouses, cutting plants and game handling establishments are subject to official controls that will attract a cost.

There are three elements that will affect the charges levied by the FSA:

- Required level of service:
 - Type of activity/establishment.
 - Full time equivalent- number of Authorised Officers required to deliver Official Controls
- Statement of resources
- Discounts

Required level of service:

Article 9 of Regulation (EU) 2017/625 requires the competent authorities to perform Official Controls on all operators regularly, on risk basis and with appropriate frequency.

The type of official control required is dependent on the operations undertaken at the establishment.

Type of Official Control	Type of establishment
Approval	All establishments
FBO compliance Audits	All establishments
Official Controls during slaughter	Slaughterhouses
Out of hours emergency slaughter post-mortem inspection	Slaughterhouses requesting the service
Unannounced Inspections	Cutting establishments
Vertebral column removal for Over Thirty Months beef carcasses	Authorised Cutting Plants

Annex G: shows a scheme of the interactions between the different Official Controls

Approvals: FBO will need to obtain approval from FSA before they can commence operations. FSA guidance on approvals in Northern Ireland can be found [here](#)

- **Advisory Visits:** Prospective FBOs wishing to obtain approval for their establishment or existing FBOs wishing to add further approved activities to their approval may request an advisory visit prior to the approval visit. Advisory visits aim to help the FBO identify the welfare and hygiene requirements which may apply to their establishment. Areas of advice include structure, equipment and facilities, operational hygiene considerations and HACCP, good practices, records and procedures. Where DAERA invoice FSA for approval advisory visits, the FSA reserves the right to charge for such visits. If applicable, visits will be charged at a set fee which is payable before the visit is scheduled to take place.

- Approval visits: An on-site approval visit will be arranged by FSA once an application for approval has been made. Following the initial on-site visit the FSA may
 - a) grant conditional approval (which will require a further visit within 3 months)
 - b) grant full approval or
 - c) refuse approval (which discontinues the approval process)

FBO EU compliance audits:

These are carried out by a Veterinary Auditor.

The first audit of the establishment should take place within three months of obtaining full approval. The outcome of this audit will determine the frequency of future audits.

The time charged for this activity will include:

- audit preparation
- on site verification
- report writing.

Official Controls during slaughter:

These are delivered by the DAERA team, and will cover:

- Antemortem inspection
- Postmortem inspection
- Health marking
- Verification of FBO activities
- OC Sampling of suspect animals with an associated Public Health risk
- Enforcement following established non-compliance

The Competent Authority (FSA) will determine the number of Authorised Officers that are required to fully comply with the requirements of the OCR as regards meat hygiene official controls. The last review of resources was carried out in 2022, determining the number of full time equivalent (FTE) Official Auxiliaries required to carry out FSA meat hygiene official controls in each approved slaughterhouse. The use of FTE as a metric introduces an element of flexibility in the deployment of DAERA officials and is the reference point used for each establishment when agreeing the level of service forming the basis of the charges invoiced to the slaughterhouse operator following each monthly charging period.

The number of AOs required to operate will be indicated in the SOR in the “number of officials” section and would be communicated to you annually along with the revised hourly rates.

The Review of Service Delivery carried out in 2022 determined the required number of full time equivalent units of staff and number of inspection points in each approved slaughterhouse to achieve compliance with the EU official controls regulations.

These numbers are pre-populated in the SOR of your establishment.

Out of hours emergency slaughter post-mortem inspection

Animals slaughtered on-farm under emergency conditions having received ante-mortem by an appointed Emergency Slaughter Official Veterinarian, need to be transported to the slaughterhouse within 2 hours.

Post mortem inspection must take place without delay (within 24 hours) and can only be carried out by an official veterinarian. When this occurs out of agreed SOR hours, there is a one-off charge applied equating to a minimum of 3 hours of official veterinarian time. More details can be found in Annex A.

Unannounced Inspections (UAI):

Unannounced inspections (UAI) take place in cutting plants. If any non-compliances leading to enforcement activity beyond verbal advice are identified during the course of these inspections, the total hours spent dealing with them become chargeable.

Time spent carrying out follow up visits that have been deemed necessary by the auditor to assess the status of non-compliances will be chargeable.

Vertebral Column Removal for Over Thirty Months beef carcasses:

Cutting establishments require authorisation for the processing of beef carcasses of Over Thirty Month of age due to TSE requirements/SRM controls. Attendance regime will be risk based. These visits are currently not chargeable.

Statement of Resources (SOR)

The Charges Regulations require FBOs to provide information to the competent authority on the working hours and working practices so that the charge can be calculated in accordance with The Meat (Official Controls Charges) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009.

A Statement of Resources (SOR) detailing the level of service required must be agreed between the food business and the resident OV ahead of each charging period.

This information would also be used to plan resources to ensure that service can be delivered.

Authorised Officers (AO) attendance is organised based on information contained in the SOR (further details on the SOR can be found in Annex E).

The FSA will ensure proper arrangements for delivery of OCs will be put in place but regardless of this fact it may not be possible, acting rationally and reasonably for there to be an ability to provide OCs during extreme unforeseeable circumstances (i.e.: red weather warning, strike action). Such situations will be assessed on their own merits, with service provision maintained where possible and safe to do so.

The SOR should be agreed between the FBO and the resident DAERA meat inspection team ahead of any activities which may take place in the relevant charging period, which is typically one month. This will be important for all establishments, but especially those who operate on a seasonal or discontinuous basis.

Charges are calculated at the end of each charging period based on the actual time cost of carrying out meat hygiene official controls (recorded by each DAERA official on an electronic timesheet on a weekly basis) and may on occasion, include adjustments from earlier periods.

The key information required in the SOR includes:

- Operating days of the week
- Species (especially where multiple species are scheduled for slaughter on the same day)
- Type of animal (eg prime production stock or cast breeding stock)
- Anticipated throughput and line speed (for each species)

- Operating hours (FBO start time and finish time)
- Scheduled FBO breaks
- Start time for antemortem inspection
- Start time for postmortem inspection – first animal at first postmortem inspection point
- Finish time for postmortem inspection – last animal at final postmortem inspection station.

NB: DAERA officials may include facility (dressing) time up to a maximum of 15 minutes before the start of postmortem inspection, and up to a maximum of 15 minutes facility (dressing down) time following the finish of postmortem inspection (subject to exceptions referred to on page 23)

Based on the information provided by the FBO, the DAERA official must complete the relevant sections of the electronic SOR template ensuring there is sufficient resource to fully comply with the OCR requirements at all times during production and processing.

FSA chargeable time should ensure compliance with the requirements of the EU official controls regulation and will be expressed as a percentage of the total time.

Once the SOR template has been completed by the FBO and DAERA, the SOR template must be confirmed and date stamped by both parties.

The FBO will be charged for:

- actual OV hours spent on FSA-related chargeable activities as recorded by the OV
- agreed OA hours spent on FSA-related chargeable activities as required on the SOR.

To note that where actual OA hours exceed agreed SOR hours, the actual hours will be charged.

FBOs must provide as much notice as possible if they need to change their operating hours in the middle of a particular charging period. In most cases this will give DAERA time to ensure variations to service delivery can be accommodated in the most efficient and effective way.

At least two clear working days notice is required before changes can be implemented.

For major or permanent changes, including extended periods of closure, the FBO must notify FSA directly in writing at least 30 days

before the change is to be implemented (e-mail: <NIOperationalpolicy@food.gov.uk> include- SOR in the subject/ title).

SOR appeals procedure

Charges are based on the operating hours and attendance levels set out in the SOR. If the FBO is unhappy with the attendance levels set out in the SOR then they can appeal against them. The appeals procedure is described in Annex E.

While the appeal is being carried out, the FBO is still required to pay the FSA invoices in full. If the appeal is successful, the FBO will receive a credit on a future invoice. If the appeal is not successful, then the charges will not be credited and the charges will stand.

The FSA may in certain circumstances continue to retain the disputed resources in the establishment even after an appeal is lost by the FSA where it is considered necessary to meet the requirements of the EC Regulation, but the operator will not be charged for the excess attendance.

Discounts

Operators of approved slaughterhouses and game handling establishments may receive a discount/subsidy which will reduce the charges associated with their establishment.

To note that certain activities such as FBO compliance audits and enforcement do not attract any discount.

Currently FSA applies a discount/subsidy to meat establishments which is calculated on an annual basis. This is deducted from the full cost and the net amount is invoiced to the food business.

The calculation behind the discount/subsidy changed in 2016-17 in line with the recommendations of the Steering Group on Meat Charging.

The Steering Group on Meat Charging was an industry stakeholder group, which was tasked with the development of options for a fairer distribution of meat charging discounts/subsidies. The group was chaired by Bill Stow and was facilitated and supported by FSA. The NI meat industry was represented on the group by representatives from

NIMEA, the NI Pork & Bacon Forum and UFU. More information about the group can be found [on Meat Charging Steering Group guidance page](#).

In January 2022 the FSA Board agreed to pursue a path to full cost recovery by continuing to recover a greater proportion of the costs of meat controls. This would be achieved by increasing charge rates to reflect actual cost pressures and simultaneously reducing discount funding.

The discount/subsidy rates applied are based on the usage of DAERA hours and will reduce in stages as the usage of hours increases. Charges are discounted/subsidized at progressively lower percentage rates according to the discount/subsidy band into which they fall.

Where food businesses do not receive a discount/subsidy eg cutting plants, the charge will be based on the full cost of carrying out meat hygiene official controls.

Time spent on official controls following the detection of non-compliance compliances leading to enforcement activity beyond verbal advice, does not receive any discount/subsidy on charges.

Discount bands and percentages

There are six bands into which hours are allocated. These are calculated by distributing the total hours for the most recent 12 month dataset using centiles as the metric (10% of hours in band 1, 20% of hours in bands 2, 3, 4 and 5, and 10% of total hours in band 6).

Each sector (red meat slaughter, poultry meat slaughter and game handling) will have a different allocation of hours within each band.

Each band has an associated discount percentage. The discount percentage decreases with each band.

Details of bands and percentages can be found in Annex C.

For example, for a red meat slaughterhouse, the first **23.2520** hours used in each charging period will be allocated to the first band which attracts a **85.90%** discount/subsidy, the next **57.2546** hours will be allocated to the next lowest discount/subsidy rate eg **70.75%**, and so on until all the hours in each charging period have been allocated to a band.

NB: to take account of small establishments in the game handling sector, the red meat bandings now apply to this sector.

At the end of each charging period, one twelfth of the total hours available for that band will have been allocated, at the end of the second charging period two twelfths of the total hours available for that band will have been allocated and so on until the year end. This means that any unused hours from a higher discount/subsidy band will be carried forward. However, there is no carry forward of any unused discount/subsidy band from one financial year to the next.

Adjustments in respect of late additional time within the financial year, which has not yet been charged, will receive the discount/subsidy applicable to the month being charged, i.e. treated as current month charges.

Credits for previously charged time will be made at the lowest discount/subsidy percentage for the grade and rate of staff of the month to which the credit relates, which means the amount of money credited will be at the highest level band giving the highest value credit. Hours credited back will then become available again in the discount/subsidy band 'hours available' at which they were credited.

Any adjustments for a previous financial year will be calculated separately from the current financial year. These will be calculated as though the amendment had been included in the final charge period of the year, with the adjustment being detailed on a separate backing schedule and invoice or credit amounts included with the invoice of the month the amendment has been actioned.

Where there is a change of ownership of an approved establishment, and the approval number is unchanged, the establishment will continue using the remaining discount/subsidy allocation for the remainder of the financial year. Any invoices in the month of change will be recalculated applying the available discount/subsidy first to the original owner and then to the new owner.

Where a new approval number is issued, the discount/subsidy process will be reset and the discount/subsidy band allocation for the full year will be available. Operators of new establishments, never approved before, will also receive the full discount/subsidy band allocation for a financial year. Where operations commence part way through a financial year, operators in these circumstances should note that this can result in a proportionately larger discount/subsidy for initial invoices. There is no carry forward of any unused discount/subsidy band allocation from one financial year to the next.

Hierarchy of grades

Hours accrued by DAERA officials will be allocated starting with the most expensive core rate (OV grade) and following the hierarchy detailed in Annex C.

Adjustments regarding retrospective additional hours which have not been charged will receive the discount/subsidy applicable to the period being charged ie

treated as current period. Credits for previously charged hours will be made at the lowest discount/subsidy rate for the grade and rate of staff which means that the amount of money credited will be at the highest level band.

Hourly chargeout rates:

Calculation of hourly charge out rates

Hourly chargeout rates are applied to each hour (or fraction of an hour) spent on FSA tasks as recorded on the HOMIFtimesheet for your establishment. Hourly chargeout rates are generally revised on an annual basis (see Annex A for current rates).

What is included in the hourly charge out rates?

There are six elements to the hourly chargeout rate for each grade of staff;

- a. **Average salary** – which is based on the salaries of all staff at each grade over the previous financial year
- b. **Travel costs** – this consists of two parts.
 - (i) The time spent during the previous financial year by front line staff returning to headquarters following relief cover at an establishment other than their headquarters, multiplied by the hourly rate for the grade and
 - (ii) any expenses associated with relief cover during the previous financial year eg mileage and/or subsistence costs

The total travel costs for the previous financial year are divided by the total DAERA VPHP hours worked during that period to reach an hourly rate for travel

- c. **Management costs** – these consist of a proportion of the salary costs for management, technical and administrative grades of staff required to support front-line DAERA officials expressed as a percentage of the total cost. Proportions are based on time spent on operational-related activities and

expressed as a percentage of their monthly full staff cost. The monthly cost for each official is added together to get a monthly total which is then multiplied by 12 to get an annual total which, in turn, is divided by the total number of DAERA VPHP hours worked in the previous financial year to get an hourly rate.

- d. **FSA costs** – these consist of a proportion of the salary costs for FSA staff for time spent on operational-related activities. These are calculated on an annual basis, totalled, and divided by the total number of DAERA VPHP hours worked in the previous financial year to get an hourly rate.
- e. **Global costs** – these are basic running costs for each team such as telephone, laundry etc which are applied on a global basis across all FBOs. The annual total is divided by the total number of DAERA VPHP hours worked in the previous financial year to get an hourly rate.
- f. **Grade supplement** – which includes allowances, employers National Insurance, superannuation and DAERA overheads such as central staff, IT, HR etc

The salary elements are divided by 211 (working days per year) and by 8.4 (working hours per day) to reach the hourly rate for each grade.

The hourly rates for the overhead elements are calculated by dividing the total costs for the previous year by the total hours applicable in each case.

The hourly rates for each element are then added together to reach the total hourly rate for each grade

Hourly chargeout rates are generally reviewed on an annual basis to be applied from the start of the financial year ie the April charging period. However, the FSA reserve the right to review hourly chargeout rates when deemed necessary.

Time based charging

The FSA will charge food businesses for all the hours agreed on the Statement of Resources (SOR) with the following exceptions

- Where DAERA officials are not required at your establishment, and sufficient notice has been received so that they can be redeployed elsewhere;
- Where 'force majeure' applies, for example, where you are unable to operate due to a utility failure that resulted from activities beyond your control; and
- For up to two hours on any two occasions in any 4 or 5 week charging period, where downtime has resulted from events outside of your control, for example, a machinery breakdown where a verifiable programme of maintenance is in place and written notification is provided to the DAERA team.

Any time worked outside of the agreed SOR hours will also be included in the time costs e.g. if the daily finishing time of the business extends beyond those specified on the SOR, or there is an earlier starting time agreed for the verification of pre-operational checks.

Facility time costs

Facility time includes dressing up before the required start time and dressing down after the finish time. Any facility time (up to a maximum of 30 minutes per day) paid to DAERA officials will be included in the invoice except where

- Force majeure applies or
- operations finish 15 minutes or more before the end of the agreed finish time as stated in the Statement of Resources, in which case facility time at the close of operations will not be charged.

Break time costs

As employees of the NI Civil Service, DAERA officials are entitled to a 1 hour lunch break on a daily basis which is included in the charge. Any unexpended part of that lunch hour will be included in the time costs for each DAERA official.

Travel time costs

Travel time costs apply where backfill is required to maintain service delivery at your establishment. These costs will include any hours

spent exercising official controls at your establishment as well as the travel time accrued travelling to your establishment (single journey only) as a result of the re-location.

Other expenses associated with the replacement of staff eg the return journey and mileage expenses of relief officials, are included elsewhere in the calculation of the hourly chargeout rate.

Underworked time

Underworked time includes any hours during the normal working week where the level of DAERA service has been agreed in the SOR but subsequently has not been required.

If sufficient notice (at least two clear working days) of the revised arrangements has been provided to DAERA by the FBO, it may be possible to re-deploy DAERA officers elsewhere without any cost to the original FBO. However, if officers cannot be utilised or re-deployed elsewhere as a result of insufficient notice, then the hours as agreed in the SOR will be charged to the original FBO.

Hence the need for continuous review of the SOR to ensure that the service required for the charging period ahead is as accurate as possible.

All charges for underworked time are levied at core rates.

Shift Allowance

DAERA officials who are required to work unsociable hours¹ and/or irregular patterns are entitled to salary allowances. These are included in the hourly rates for the relevant grades of staff. Any time booked, agreed and worked within the definition of 'unsociable hours' will be recorded on HOMIF by the individual DAERA official and will be included in the monthly invoice.

Overtime

Hours worked by any Authorised Officer in excess of their weekly contractual hours (42) will be charged at the hourly overtime rate appropriate to that grade (see Annex A for full list of overtime rates).

Hourly overtime rates are based on average salary costs for the grade multiplied by the applicable premium which are shown in table 2 below:

Table 2: hourly overtime rates per grade:

¹ 'Unsociable hours' = Before 06:00 or after 20:00

Job role	Mon-Fri (> contracted hours)	Saturday	Sunday and bank holidays
OV	Single time	Time and a half	Double time
SMI	Single time	Time and a half	Double time
MI	Time and a third	Time and a third	Double time

Where overtime has been accrued at more than one establishment in any week each FBO will only be charged at the overtime rate on a pro-rata basis eg if 70% of an Authorised Officers total weekly hours were worked in establishment A, then 70% of the overtime cost for that week will be charged to that FBO. In order to minimise overtime charged on this basis, DAERA will deploy officials to provide relief cover at establishments other than their headquarters using the most efficient and effective option available.

Force majeure and other situations where time based charging might not apply

This section sets out the circumstances when official controls charges to approved meat businesses would be waived under the time-based charging mechanism.

It relates to the waiving of charges due to unforeseen events affecting your business that are caused by exceptional circumstances, including those that it would not be reasonable to view as commercial risks to be accepted by your business as part of your business practices.

The FSA in NI waives certain charges in recognition of the particular difficulties that some businesses face in planning regular working hours. In view of this, charges will not be made for downtime that is due to:

- Force majeure;
- Or
- any other reason, for up to two hours on any two occasions in any four/five week charging period² where downtime has resulted from contractual or customary practices or where circumstances were outside of FBOs'

² 'Charging period' refers to the 4 or 5 week period which commences on the Sunday prior to the 1st of the month.

control and written notification is provided to the DAERA meat inspection team. NB: Where this flexibility is required on a regular basis the Statement of Resources will be reviewed to assess whether it could more accurately reflect the working times and practices of the establishment.

The flexibility above will be limited to the members of the DAERA team present on site at the time. You will be required to declare in writing at the time (within one working day of the occasion the downtime occurs) that you are exercising one of the two instances of flexibility above. Once the FBO has declared that they are exercising this flexibility you will not be able to retrospectively change the instances to which the flexibility will be applied.

Examples of force majeure

It is not possible to definitively list all events that would be considered as force majeure, but the list below provides guidance:

- Electricity, gas or water failure as a result of activities on or off-site not in the control of the FBO;
- Protest or civil disturbance delaying the arrival of stock;
- Emergency disease / public health restrictions and/or controls;
- Severe adverse weather resulting in the late delivery of stock;
- Premises evacuated as a result of an incident in neighbouring premises;
and
- Closure of livestock markets due to sudden severe adverse weather conditions

Examples of events for which **charges would not be made for unproductive time** for up to two hours on any two occasions in any one month

As above, it is not possible to definitively list all events that would be applicable, but the list below will provide some guidance:

- Sudden unexpected breakdown of machinery that has been properly maintained, as evidenced by maintenance records;

- Planned repairs to essential equipment where reasonable notice is given to DAERA;
- Markets have no suitable stock;
- The FBO considers that:
 - i. The price of stock is unacceptably high or;
 - ii. Stock is not of an appropriate quality
- The FBO loses an order;
- The FBO cannot predict when stock will arrive or its quantity (e.g. game); and
- Traffic accident resulting in the late delivery of stock.

Examples of events within your responsibility or due to market forces and which **charges would be made for unproductive time**

As above, it is not possible to definitively list all events that would be applicable, but the list below will provide some guidance:

- On-site failures due to the activities/decisions of the FBO, including:
 - i. Incidents caused by contractors,
 - ii. Failure of machinery / equipment due to poor maintenance,
 - iii. Maintenance, repair or replacement of machinery / equipment without sufficient prior notice,
 - iv. Failure of electricity, gas or water supply due to non-payment of the utility;
- Events for which it would be reasonable for the business to seek redress from a third party
- Events against which it would be reasonable to expect the business to be insured.
- A market is closed unexpectedly, other than for sudden severe adverse weather conditions.
- Delayed working because of insufficient staff.
- Late delivery of stock, for example due to the breakdown of a delivery vehicle;

Efficiency – Ways to reduce your charges

To ensure your charges are kept to a minimum you can do the following:

- **Make sure that your operating hours and working**

practices are agreed with DAERA and are accurately documented in the SOR. These should represent your normal practices and should be reviewed on a regular basis. DAERA may be able to contribute positively when considering your operating patterns, by suggesting ways in which changing your patterns slightly could reduce the level of resource required therefore reducing your time costs.

- **Give DAERA as much notice as possible when there are temporary changes to your operating hours and working practices.** Where you plan to make longer term changes eg extended periods of closure, the more notice you give provides a better opportunity to re-organise staff without incurring additional costs. NB: FBOs need to notify FSA at least 30 days before major or permanent changes are intended
- **Ensure that your food safety and management practices are of a good standard.** This will reduce the likelihood of line stoppages and other enforcement action that may lead to additional costs. For cutting establishments, this will improve your audit score and may reduce your audit frequency leading to reduced time costs for your establishment.
- **Ensure that all equipment is properly maintained.** This will reduce the likelihood of machine and equipment breakdowns that can lead to additional costs.
- **Make sure that you keep in regular contact with DAERA management team.** They will be able to advise you on any issue that may impact your charges, keep you informed of future changes and can help you make the best use of their resources.
- **Check the EU regulations for flexibilities.** Some EU regulations allow for flexibility eg Regulation (EU) 2019/624 where the requirements of 'low capacity' establishments are met.

When you will be required to pay

Charges are due to be paid on receipt of the FSA invoice.

Payments can be made by bank transfer to –

- Bank Name - Nat West
- Sort Code **60 70 80**
- Account Number **10001441**
- Payee Name - **Food Standards Agency**
- Swift/Bic **NWBKGB2L**

To make debit card payments please call **03300 880633**. You will need to quote your FSA Account Number and Invoice Number.

What if I have a query with my invoice?

If you have a query regarding your invoice, you should contact the FSA Finance Team using the details below.

- NI.Debt.Recovery@food.gov.uk
or
- Finance Department
- Food Standards Agency Northern Ireland 10a-c Clarendon Road
- Belfast BT1 3BG
- Telephone 028 90 417700

Overdue Invoices

Existing rules will apply regarding overdue invoices. Where court action is required to recover outstanding debts, the court may be asked to award the FSA with the total debt, court costs and interest. Successful court action will enable FSA to use enforcement action to obtain payment.

Withdrawal of official controls due to unpaid bills

If you fail to pay for your official controls charges FSA in NI may be entitled to request DAERA to withdraw their services from your establishment – this would prevent you from producing meat for human consumption. These powers are set out in the Charges Regulations and will only be used as a last resort ie after all other means of debt recovery

have been tried and have proved ineffective.

What do I do if I have a complaint?

In the first instance you should direct your complaint to the FSA Finance Team using the details below.

- NI.Debt.Recovery@food.gov.uk
or
- Finance Department

Food Standards Agency Northern Ireland 10a-c Clarendon
Road

Belfast BT1 3BG

Telephone 028 90 417700

If this does not resolve your complaint, please refer to the FSA complaints procedure on food.gov.uk.

Annex A

Annex A: Hourly chargeout rates

Applicable from 29th March 2026

DAERA VPHP HOURLY RATES

APPLICABLE FROM 29TH MARCH 2026			
GRADE	Official Veterinarian*	Official Auxiliary**	Senior Meat Inspector
CORE RATE	£63.4659	£40.1194	£42.2591
OVERTIME RATE (MON-FRI)	£63.4659	£47.1266	£42.2591
OVERTIME RATE (SUNDAY & PUBLIC HOLIDAYS)	£116.1245	£69.4316	£73.7109
OVERTIME RATE (SATURDAY)	£87.0934	£47.1266	£55.2832

*Includes veterinary officer and agency veterinary officer

**Includes meat inspector, poultry meat inspector and agency inspectors

Out of hours one off charges for PM inspection of on-farm emergency slaughter animals

Saturday – 3 OV hours @ £87.0934 per hour = £261.28

Sunday / bank holiday – 3 OV hours @ £116.1245 per hour = £348.3735

Annex B: Monthly accounting timetable 2026-27

Month / Period	Week Number	Week commencing (Sunday)
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Apr/Period 1	1	29/03/25
Apr/Period 1	2	05/04/25
Apr/Period 1	3	12/04/25
Apr/Period 1	4	19/04/25

May/Period 2	5	26/04/26
May/Period 2	6	03/05/26
May/Period 2	7	10/05/26
May/Period 2	8	17/05/26
May/Period 2	9	24/05/26

Jun/Period 3	10	31/05/26
Jun/Period 3	11	07/06/26
Jun/Period 3	12	14/06/26
Jun/Period 3	13	21/06/26

Jul/Period 4	14	28/06/26
Jul/Period 4	15	05/07/26
Jul/Period 4	16	12/07/26
Jul/Period 4	17	19/07/26

Aug/Period 5	18	26/07/26
Aug/Period 5	19	02/08/26
Aug/Period 5	20	09/08/26
Aug/Period 5	21	16/08/26
Aug/Period 5	22	23/08/26

Sep/Period 6	23	30/08/26
Sep/Period 6	24	06/09/26
Sep/Period 6	25	13/09/26
Sep/Period 6	26	20/09/26

OFFICIAL

Oct/Period 7	27	27/09/26
Oct/Period 7	28	04/10/26
Oct/Period 7	29	11/10/26
Oct/Period 7	30	18/10/26
Oct/Period 7	31	25/10/26

Nov/Period 8	32	01/11/26
Nov/Period 8	33	08/11/26
Nov/Period 8	34	15/11/26
Nov/Period 8	35	22/11/26

Dec/Period 9	36	29/11/26
Dec/Period 9	37	06/12/26
Dec/Period 9	38	13/12/26
Dec/Period 9	39	20/12/26

Jan/Period 10	40	27/12/26
Jan/Period 10	41	03/01/27
Jan/Period 10	42	10/01/27
Jan/Period 10	43	17/01/27
Jan/Period 10	44	24/01/27

Feb/Period 11	45	31/01/27
Feb/Period 11	46	07/02/27
Feb/Period 11	47	14/02/27
Feb/Period 11	48	21/02/27

Mar/Period 12	49	28/02/27
Mar/Period 12	50	07/03/27
Mar/Period 12	51	14/03/27
Mar/Period 12	52	21/03/27

Annex C: Discount/Subsidy rates and bands and the hierarchy of hours

Annual Hours Bands and Discounts/Subsidies 2026-27

Discount/Subsidy Band	Poultry Slaughter (annual hours available)	Red Meat Slaughter and Game Handling Establishments (annual hours available)	Discount/Subsidy rates (%) (2026-27)
1	Up to 675	Up to 240	90
2	675-1947	240-792	75
3	1947-4050	792-3021	31
4	4050-7608	3021-7428	0
5	7608-17888	7428-15396	0
6	more than 17880	more than 15396	0

Note: One twelfth of the annual hours in each band will be available for each charging period.


Hierarchy of Hours

1. OV Core > OV Overtime (Mon-Fri) > OV Saturday > OV Sunday > OT Bank holiday
2. SMI Core > SMI Overtime (Mon-Fri) > SMI Saturday > SMI Sunday > SMI Bank holiday
3. PMI Core > PMI Overtime (Mon-Fri) > PMI Saturday > PMI Sunday > PMI Bank holiday
4. MI Core > MI Overtime (Mon-Fri) > MI Saturday > MI Sunday > MI Bank holiday

Annex D: Glossary of terms

Term	Description
Meat hygiene official controls	activities performed by the competent authorities in order to verify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • food business operator compliance with EU food safety and hygiene rules • that animals or goods meet the requirements laid down in EU food safety and hygiene rules
Other official activities	activities, other than official controls, which are performed by the competent authorities aimed at verifying the presence of animal diseases, preventing or containing the spread of such animal diseases, eradicating those animal diseases, granting authorisations or approvals and issuing official certificates or official attestations.
Inspection activities	Inspection of animals or goods by the competent authority to verify fitness for human consumption
Verification activities	Activities carried out by the competent authority which verify the FBO has complied with EU food law regarding the processing of products to be placed on the market
SRM controls	Activities carried out by the competent authority to verify the removal, handling and disposal of SRM by the FBO
Emergency slaughter	The slaughter of an animal outside an approved slaughterhouse which has sustained an injury which, for welfare reasons, prevents the transport of the live animal to the slaughterhouse
Official veterinarian	A veterinarian appointed by the competent authority, either as staff or otherwise, and appropriately qualified to perform official controls and other official activities
Official auxiliary	A representative of the competent authorities trained in accordance with the requirements established under Article 18 Regulation (EU) 2017/625 and employed to perform certain official control tasks or certain tasks related to other official activities
Senior Meat Inspector	The Senior Meat Inspector is directly responsible for the management of Official Auxiliaries in one or more establishments. This will include both resource planning and technical delivery.
Statement of Resources	A detailed account of the service required to deliver meat hygiene official controls for a given charging period at a given establishment
Charging period	A time period (typically one month) where charges are levied for the exercising of meat hygiene official controls
Unexpended lunch	Any part of the lunch hour that DAERA officials are entitled to but prevented from taking

Annex E: Statement of Resources



STATEMENT OF RESOURCES

Section A: To be completed by Food Business Operator

SOR Period Effective from Effective until

OPERATIONAL DETAILS									
	Type/Sequence	Number	Line speed	At MI	Past MI		A/M from	Last intake	Rectif until
Sunday									
Monday									
Tuesday									
Wednesday									
Thursday									
Friday									
Saturday									

Additional Information (free text)

Daily Production break times

Start time							
Finish time							
Duration	00:00	00:00	00:00	00:00	00:00		
						Total	00:00



Section B: To be completed by VPHP

	Grade:	OV	SMI	OA					
	FSA FTE			Carcass inspection	Green offal inspection	Red offal inspection	Rotation	Offline support	Udder inspection
Sunday	Start								
	Finish								
	Unexpended lunch								
	Daily Total								
Monday	Start								
	Finish								
	Unexpended lunch								
	Daily Total								
Tuesday	Start								
	Finish								
	Unexpended lunch								
	Daily Total								
Wednesday	Start								
	Finish								
	Unexpended lunch								
	Daily Total								
Thursday	Start								
	Finish								
	Unexpended lunch								
	Daily Total								
Friday	Start								
	Finish								
	Unexpended lunch								
	Daily Total								
Saturday	Start								
	Finish								
	Unexpended lunch								
	Daily Total								
	Weekly Gross	0.00		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Unexpended lunch	0.00		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Total								

Grade	Total Hours	FSA %	SRM %	DAERA %	Total Chargeable Hours
OV					#VALUE!
SMI	0.00				0
MI	0.00				0
TOTALS	0.00				#VALUE!

Appeal procedure

FBO Challenge

Step 1 – The FBO does not agree the SOR resource requirement as proposed by the OV. Provided the FBO has supplied the necessary information FSA official controls will be performed using the resource proposed by the OV. The FBO has **15 working days** from the date they receive the SOR from the OV to challenge the resource allocation in the SOR.

The challenge must be made in writing laying out the grounds for disagreeing with the resource allocation. A **£250 fee** will be payable on lodging a challenge, this fee is refundable if the challenge by the food business operator is upheld. No review will be commenced until the written grounds are received and the £250 fee has been paid.

Step 2 – Investigation following a challenge

The investigation will be conducted by a DAERA officer nominated by the DAERA VPHP SPVO and an independent industry representative nominated by FSA in NI.

Within **5 working days** of receipt of the challenge the investigating team will be given a copy of the disputed SOR and the OV's written justification for the resource allocation. They may request any other information they consider relevant. Copies will also be provided to the food business operator.

The investigating team will consider the information supplied to them. The team may seek appropriate advice from other parties as they deem necessary. The team will prepare a report with recommendations for consideration by the FSA in NI within **15 working days**. A copy will also be sent to the food business operator and DAERA VPHP SPVO.

Step 3 – Consideration by FSA in NI

The FSA in NI will consider the investigating team's report and recommendations and will make a decision on the appropriate level of resources for the establishment and the food business will be charged accordingly for time spent carrying out FSA official controls. Any charges that have been overpaid will be reimbursed. Overpaid charges are those determined by the FSA in NI to be in excess of those necessary to ensure compliance with the OCR regarding FSA official controls

FBO right of appeal

Where the FBO is dissatisfied with a challenge outcome he has the right of appeal which is outlined in the following paragraphs.

Step 1 – FBO disagrees with the FSA in NI determination

If the food business operator disagrees with the outcome of the internal review process, which includes the decision of the FSA in NI, it can appeal against it provided that the operator of the business has complied with the most recent request by the OV to provide details of the working hours and practices. The appeal must be requested within **5 working days** of being notified of the FSA in NI decision.

Step 2 – The independent appeal process

The appeal will be determined within **20 working days** by an independent person nominated by the FSA.

The Nominated Person:

- Will give the food business, DAERA and the FSA an opportunity to make representations on the matter to be determined;
- Will determine the matter concerned;
- Can order the food business or the FSA to pay costs;
- Will notify the food business and the FSA in NI Director of the determination and of any order for costs.

If the independent Nominated Person finds in favour of the food business the £250 fee for initiating the semi-independent review will be returned to the food business.

Step 3 – FSA and DAERA will implement the determination of the Nominated Person. This will apply from the date that the £250 fee had been received by FSA in NI.

While the appeal is being carried out, the FBO is still required to pay the FSA invoices in full. If the appeal is successful, the FBO will receive a credit on a future invoice. If the appeal is not successful, then the charges will not be credited and the charges will stand.

The FSA may in certain circumstances continue to retain the disputed resources in the establishment even after an appeal is lost by the FSA where it is considered necessary to meet the requirements of the EU Official Controls Regulation, but the operator will not be charged for the excess attendance.

Red Meat Slaughterhouse worked example of allocation of typical SOR hours on invoice for a 4 week month³

Service requirements (from Statement of Resources)			
1xOV from 06:30 until 17:00 for 5 days = (5 x 10.5 hrs) + (5 x 0.5 hrs unexpended lunch break) = 55 hrs per week	Total 220 hrs for a 4-week month		
3xMI from 07:00 until 17:00 for 5 days = (5 x 10.0 hrs) + (5 x 0.5 hrs unexpended lunch break) = 157.5 hrs per week	Total 630 hrs for a 4-week month		
1xMI from 07:00 until 17:00 for 2 days = (2 x 10.0 hrs) + (2 x 0.5 hrs unexpended lunch break) = 21 hrs per week	Total 84 hrs for a 4-week month		
1xMI from 09:30 until 17:00 for 5 days = (5 x 7.5 hrs) + (5 x 0.5 hrs unexpended lunch break) = 40 hrs per week	Total 160 hrs for a 4-week month		
Summary of FSA chargeable time per grade			
Total 220 OV hrs x 85% (chargeable FSA time) <small>%age FSA chargeable time linked to FTE required for full OCR compliance</small>	187 OV hours for a 4-week month		
Total 874 MI hrs x 77% (chargeable FSA time) <small>%age FSA chargeable time linked to FTE required for full OCR compliance</small>	670.80 MI hrs for a 4-week month		
Allocation of hours			
	%age	OV	MI
Band 1 allocation (20 hrs available each month) • 20 OV hrs allocated	90%	20.00	0.00
Band 2 allocation (46 hrs available each month) • 46 OV hrs allocated	75%	46.00	0.00

³ Facility time of up to a maximum of 30 minutes per day per officer is not included in this worked example

Band 3 allocation (185.75 hrs available each month) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remaining 121 OV hrs allocated • 64.75 MI hrs allocated 	31%	121	64.75
Band 4 allocation (367.25 hrs available each month) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 367.25 MI hrs allocated 	0%	0.00	367.25
Band 5 allocation (664 hrs available each month) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remaining 238.80 MI hrs allocated 	0%	0.00	238.80
Band 6 allocation (all remaining hrs)	0%	0.00	0.00
		187.00	670.80

Annex F: FSA Privacy Notice

The Food Standards Agency is what is known as the 'Controller' of the personal data provided to us.

What information do we hold?

The personal information we may collect from you consists of:

- Throughput information for your premises
- Names and addresses of sole traders and related billing information

Where do we get this information from?

The Food Standards Agency obtains this information from the Food Business Operator.

Disclosure of other people's personal information

You should show this notice to anyone whose personal information you provide to us. You must make sure that any information you supply is accurate and that you have obtained their consent to use their data for the purpose set out in this privacy notice.

Why do we need it?

We need to collect this information for the purpose of calculating accurate charges for official controls. We will not collect any personal data from you which we do not need.

What we do with it

We retain personal information only for as long as necessary to carry out this function, and in line with our retention policy. This means that this information will usually be retained for 6 years after the financial year end to which it relates, unless otherwise stated. All the personal data we process is located on servers within the United Kingdom / European Union. Our cloud-based services have been procured through the government framework agreements and these services have been assessed against the national cyber security centre cloud security principles. No third parties have access to your

personal data unless the law allows them to do so. In line with this commitment your information may be passed to the National Audit Office if they request the information as part of their audit of FSA processes and other government departments as required in their regulatory duties.

What are your rights?

You have a right to see the information we hold from you by making a request in writing to the email address below. If at any point you believe the information we process from you is incorrect you can request to have it corrected. If you wish to raise a complaint on how we have handled the personal data you have provided, you can contact our Data Protection Officer who will investigate the matter. If you are not satisfied with our response or believe we are not processing the personal data, you have provided, in accordance with the law you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Our Data Protection Officer at the FSA is the Information Management and Security Team Leader who can be contacted at informationmanagement@food.gov.uk

Annex G – Official Controls at approved establishments

