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**Home slaughter  
of livestock:**

**A guide to the law in  
England and Wales**

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Revision 10 May 2013

**For all queries about this guidance — including if you require the information in an alternative format such as audio, large print or Braille — please use the number below.**

**CONTACT TELEPHONE 0207 276 8369**

## Summary

<b>Intended audience:</b>	Who is this guidance for? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keepers of livestock</li> <li>• Local Authorities</li> </ul>
<b>Which UK nations does this cover?</b>	England and Wales only. Parallel guidance applies in Scotland and Northern Ireland.
<b>Purpose:</b>	To provide information on the law covering the home slaughter of livestock.
<b>Legal status:</b>	This guidance is intended to explain clearly the legal requirements of EU and national legislation relating to TSEs and meat hygiene.
<b>Key words</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food law, monitoring and controls</li> <li>• Hygiene and food safety</li> <li>• Meat and livestock</li> </ul>
<b>Review date</b>	ongoing
<b>Sunset date</b>	Not applicable

## 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 [betterregulation@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:betterregulation@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk). If you have any comments on the guidance itself, please call us using the contact number on page 2 or complete our ongoing [Guidance survey](#): <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/55QQDCG>

Revision No.	Revision date	Purpose of revision and paragraph number	Revised by
1	30 November 2012	Merged England and Wales versions and transferred into new FSA guidance template.	Tolu Odeleye
2	25 March 2013	Clarification of paragraph 28	Tolu Odeleye
3	10 May 2013	To reflect the changes to requirements for BSE Testing and changes to Animal Welfare Regulations	Tolu Odeleye

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## **Introduction**

1. “Home slaughter” is the slaughter of a livestock animal by its owner on their property for their own personal consumption or that of members of their immediate family living there. Home slaughter cannot take place in an approved slaughterhouse.
2. “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.
3. It should be noted that home slaughter is likely to carry a greater human health risk than slaughter that takes place in approved premises.

## **Intended audience**

4. Livestock<sup>1</sup> owners considering slaughter on farm<sup>2</sup> for their own personal consumption or that of members of their immediate family living there.
5. Local Authorities<sup>3</sup> which are responsible for the enforcement of Animal Welfare and the domestic Food Hygiene and Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy (TSE) Regulations on farm.

## **Purpose of guidance**

6. To provide advice on the conditions that must be met to allow the legal home slaughter of livestock.
7. To minimise any potential risks to human health.

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<sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this guide, ‘farm’ is defined as any premises where livestock are kept

<sup>3</sup> To find your Local Authority go to <http://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/yourarea/>

## Legal status of guidance

8. These guidance notes have been produced to explain clearly the legal requirements of the EU Food Hygiene Regulation (EC) No. 853/2004<sup>4</sup>, EU Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies Regulation (EC) No. 999/2001 (as amended)<sup>5</sup>, Food Hygiene (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended)<sup>6</sup>/Food Hygiene (Wales) Regulations 2006 (as amended)<sup>7</sup> and Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (England) Regulations 2010<sup>8</sup>/Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (Wales) Regulations 2008 (as amended)<sup>9</sup>. They cannot cover every situation and you may need to consider the relevant legislation itself to see how it applies in your circumstances. If you do follow the guidance notes they will help you to comply with the law. Businesses with specific queries may wish to seek the advice of their local enforcement agency, which will usually be the trading standards/environmental health department of the local authority.

## Food Hygiene Regulations

9. The Food Hygiene Regulations (EC) No 853/2004 indicate that in most cases meat sold for human consumption must be from animals slaughtered in an approved slaughterhouse.
10. The legality of slaughter outside approved premises depends on whether it is intended the carcase or meat from the carcase will be sold or “*placed on the market*”. “Placing on the market” is defined as “the holding of food or feed for the purpose of sale, including offering for sale or any other form of transfer, whether free of charge or not, and the sale, distribution and other forms of transfer themselves” (Regulation (EC) No. 178/2002, Article 3). For example,

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<sup>4</sup> OJ L 139, 30.04.2004

<sup>5</sup> OJ L 147, 31.05.2001

<sup>6</sup> SI 2006 No. 14, amended by SI 2027/56 and SI 2010/534

<sup>7</sup> SI 2006/31(W.5), amended by SI 2007/373(W.33) and SI 2010/893(W.92)

<sup>8</sup> SI 2010 No. 801

<sup>9</sup> WSI 2008/3154(W.282), amended by WSI 2009/192 (W.24) and WSI/2010/1822 (W.179)

the supply of a carcass back to the owner by an approved slaughterhouse or slaughterman amounts to placing on the market under this definition because:

- a. There is supply of food in the course of a business; and
- b. Supply occurs, because the product returned after slaughter (i.e. the dressed carcass or meat) is fundamentally different in kind to what was delivered to the slaughterhouse or slaughterman (i.e. the live animal).

11. Therefore, for home slaughter to be legal and exempt from the Hygiene Regulations, the owner must only supply his immediate family who share the household. If the owner does supply others this is illegal under the Food Hygiene (England) Regulations/ Food Hygiene (Wales) Regulations and local authority officers may certify that meat has not been produced, processed or distributed in accordance with those Regulations. Such meat would then be treated as failing to comply with food safety requirements under section 9 of the Food Safety Act 1990. An order for its condemnation could then be obtained from a Magistrates' Court. In carrying out this enforcement role, local authorities may on occasion need to liaise with the Food Standards Agency. A list of contact points is at Annex A.

## **TSE Regulations**

12. The European Commission considers that the EU TSE Regulations apply wherever a TSE susceptible animal is slaughtered (**including home slaughter**).

That means that after slaughter of cattle, bison, buffalo, sheep or goats, specified risk material (SRM) must be removed, stained and disposed of in accordance with both the EU TSE Regulation (EC) No. 999/2001 and Regulation (EC) No. 1069/2009 on animal by-products. SRM is those parts of the animal most likely to contain BSE infectivity in an infected animal. A full list of SRM and details of the staining requirements are at Annex C.

13. From 1 March 2013 healthy cattle born in the UK or any other EU Member State other than Romania or Bulgaria that are slaughtered for food do not need to be tested for BSE.
14. The following cattle must still test negative for BSE prior to consumption of the meat:

- Healthy cattle aged over 30 months slaughtered for human consumption which were born in Romania, Bulgaria and all non-EU countries
  - Emergency slaughter cattle (with a broken leg slaughtered on welfare grounds, for example).
15. Testing involves taking a sample of brain stem and sending it to an approved laboratory. This task should only be undertaken as follows:
- a. Via delivery of the head to a VLA Regional Laboratory (see Annex A) or by arranging for a suitably trained person to take a sample and sending it to a VLA Regional Laboratory or to a private approved laboratory. There would be a charge for these services; or
  - b. Via delivery of the head to an approved BSE sampling site for fallen cattle, where the operator of the site will collect a sample and send it to an approved laboratory. A movement card from the passport (with the holding barcode label stuck on the card) should accompany the carcass and it must be clearly marked "home slaughter". Further information detailing all approved BSE sampling sites, is available from local Animal Health Offices and on the Animal Health website:  
  
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/ahvla-en/tests-and-services/bse-test-lab-approval/>
16. When the sample is supplied for BSE testing, the sample pot should be clearly marked 'Home Slaughter with an indelible marker. The accompanying submission form should clearly state 'Home Slaughter' as the reason for death.
17. Meat from the animal should only be consumed if the BSE test is negative. If the test is positive, the carcass and all parts of the body must be disposed of as a category 1 animal by-product. Contacts to advise on BSE testing and the disposal of animal by-products are listed at Annex A
18. The domestic TSE Regulations in England and Wales make provision for the enforcement of the EU TSE Regulation in England and Wales respectively. Like all EU Regulations, the EU TSE Regulation is "directly applicable" in all Member States (i.e. it is automatically the law in those States with effect from the date from which it applies).



19. The domestic TSE Regulations allow local authorities to appoint inspectors to enforce the legislation and provide powers for inspectors to enter premises, seize any carcase or part carcase and dispose of it as necessary. Alternatively, an inspector may serve a notice on the owner requiring disposal.

## **Animal Welfare Regulations**

20. There is also legislation to protect the welfare of livestock animals<sup>10</sup> (both red meat animals and poultry) during the slaughter or killing process. Whenever livestock is slaughtered (stunning, causing unconsciousness and the subsequent death of an animal by an approved means) or killed (intentionally induced process which causes the death of an animal), it must be carried out in accordance with the requirements of Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009<sup>11</sup> on the Protection of Animals at the Time of Killing which came into effect on 1 January 2013 as well as the Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations 1995 (as amended), known as “WASK”<sup>12</sup>. These Animal Welfare Regulations are enforced by the FSA in approved slaughterhouses. Outside approved premises (**i.e. home slaughter**) the Regulations are enforced by Animal Health Veterinary Laboratories Agency with the involvement of the local authority as required.
21. The Animal Welfare Regulations require that an animal is spared any avoidable pain, distress or suffering during their slaughtering or killing process. Only permitted methods laid down in Annex I of Council Regulations (EC) No 1099/2009 should be used. The Animal Welfare Regulations require everyone carrying out such operations to have a Certificate of Competence which indicates that they have the knowledge and skill necessary to perform the tasks humanely and efficiently, however, where an animal is slaughtered or killed by its owner for his/her private consumption, there are certain exemptions from the provisions of the Animal Welfare Regulations regarding the killing or slaughtering process.

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<sup>10</sup> For further information, please go to: <http://ww2.defra.gov.uk/food-farm/animals/welfare/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2009:303:0001:0030:EN:PDF>

<sup>12</sup> These domestic Regulations are awaiting amendment following the coming into effect of Council Regulations 1099/2009.

22. These exemptions include:

Article 10 allows the slaughtering of animals outside the slaughterhouse by the owner for their private domestic consumption provided they comply with the requirement to spare the animal avoidable pain, distress or suffering during the process.

23. Religious slaughter is only permitted in approved slaughterhouses.
24. The Humane Slaughter Association has published a leaflet entitled *On-farm slaughter of Livestock for Consumption*, which provides detailed information on legislation and best practice for farmers on humane slaughtering on farm. The leaflet can be found at [www.hsa.org.uk](http://www.hsa.org.uk). A point of contact is also provided at Annex A.

## **examples**

25. The following examples illustrate the consequences of the application of the legal requirements in practical terms.

*Home slaughter by the farmer for his own consumption and/or that of his immediate family living in the same household*

26. This is **lawful**. As the farmer does not, in these circumstances, act as a food business operator, the EU Food Hygiene Regulations do not apply. However home slaughter does fall within the scope of the WASK (please note that a new domestic Regulations is due to come into effect before the end of 2013), the TSE and animal by-products (ABP) Regulations. So animals must be slaughtered humanely, SRM must be removed, stained and disposed of as a category 1 animal by-product. Cattle requiring BSE testing must test negative before consumption.

*Home slaughter by the farmer for consumption by bed and breakfast guests*

27. This is **unlawful**. The farmer would be supplying the meat in the course of a business i.e. carrying out the slaughter of his animal with the intention of supplying it to the guests staying at the farm's bed and breakfast business. This would contravene the Food Hygiene Regulation (EC) No. 853/2004. Meat supplied to bed and breakfast guests must be from animals slaughtered in an approved slaughterhouse.

*Slaughter on-farm by an itinerant slaughterman*

28. An itinerant slaughterman can neither slaughter a farmer's animal nor dress it. It is **unlawful** for a farmer to use the services of an itinerant slaughterman to do so because the slaughterman would be supplying goods (i.e. a dressed or undressed carcase) in the course of his business.

*Slaughter in someone else's unapproved premises*

29. This is **unlawful**. Unapproved premises include any place used for slaughtering animals other than an approved slaughterhouse (e.g. field, barn, warehouse, vehicle, unapproved slaughterhouse). The operator of the unapproved premises would be supplying goods (i.e. meat) back to the farmer in the course of a business. They would therefore be placing the meat on the market. The slaughter would be an offence, as would any subsequent sale or supply of meat.

*Private Slaughter in an approved slaughterhouse*

30. This is **lawful**. Please refer to paragraph 2 for the meaning of "private slaughter".

## **Annex A**

### **USEFUL CONTACTS**

#### **Food Standards Agency**

##### **Home slaughter, Private slaughter, Emergency slaughter and related issues**

Tolu Odeleye    Aviation House    T 020 7276 8369  
                         125 Kingsway    E [tolulope.odeleye@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:tolulope.odeleye@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)  
                         London WC2B 6NH

#### **SRM Controls**

Chris Walding    Aviation House    T 020 7276 8334  
                         125 Kingsway    E [chris.walding@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:chris.walding@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)  
                         London WC2B 6NH

#### **FSA Operations Group**

Operational Veterinary Services Help Desk    T 01904 455 774

#### **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs – For England**

##### **Disposal of Animal By-products (including SRM)**

Jon Rouse    T 020 7238 6508  
                         E [jonathan.rouse@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:jonathan.rouse@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/food-farm/byproducts/>

##### **Animal Welfare Issues**

Sue Whitehead    T 0207 238 5755  
                         E [sue.whitehead@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sue.whitehead@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

##### **BSE testing**

Animal Health    <http://animalhealth.defra.gov.uk/about/contact-us/index.htm>

## Welsh Assembly Government, Department for Rural Affairs – For Wales

### Disposal of Animal By-products (including SRM)

Amy Byrne T 01267 245007  
E [amy.byrne@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:amy.byrne@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

### Animal Welfare Issues

Gareth Jones-Beili T 029 20823059  
E [gareth.jones-beili@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:gareth.jones-beili@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

### Animal Health and BSE testing

Chris Hale T 029 20825996  
E [Christopher.hale@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Christopher.hale@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

### Animal Health Offices in Wales

<http://animalhealth.defra.gov.uk/about/contact-us/northwales.html>

<http://animalhealth.defra.gov.uk/about/contact-us/southwales.html>

### Private Laboratories Approved for BSE Testing (England & Wales)

[http://vla.defra.gov.uk/services/ser\\_bse\\_lab\\_approvals.htm](http://vla.defra.gov.uk/services/ser_bse_lab_approvals.htm)

### Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA) regional laboratories (England & Wales)

[http://vla.defra.gov.uk/vla/vla\\_contacts.htm](http://vla.defra.gov.uk/vla/vla_contacts.htm)

### Humane Slaughter Association

#### 'On-Farm Slaughter of Livestock for consumption'

Charlie Mason	HSA The Old School Brewhouse Hill Wheathampstead Hertfordshire AL4 8AN	T 01582 831919 F 01582 831414 E <a href="mailto:Charlie@hsa.org.uk">Charlie@hsa.org.uk</a> <a href="http://www.hsa.org.uk">www.hsa.org.uk</a>
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### Question & Answer Brief Farmers/Keepers

#### ***Q1. I do not have a cattle passport for my animal. Can I carry out a home slaughter?***

There is nothing in the Cattle Identification Regulations 2007 (as amended) preventing you from carrying out a home slaughter without a cattle passport.

#### ***Q2. Can I eat any meat from my own animals?***

Yes. However, you must ensure that your animal is slaughtered and prepared lawfully (see below).

#### ***Q3. How should I have my own animals slaughtered for my own consumption?***

There are two lawful ways in which to have your animals slaughtered and prepared for your own consumption:

- (a) in an approved slaughterhouse; or
- (b) on your farm by *you*.

The Food Standards Agency advises that option (a) would generally carry a lower risk to your health than option (b).

It would be unlawful in all cases to employ anyone else - including a slaughterman to slaughter the animal on your property. It would also be unlawful to have the animal slaughtered anywhere else away from your property other than in an approved slaughterhouse.

#### ***Q4. What should I do with the waste material?***

If you slaughter the animal yourself on your farm, any part of the carcase you do not consume would be classed as animal by-products under the EU Animal By-Products Regulation (EC) No.1069/2009. The waste material would have to be disposed of in line with the Regulation, for example by arranging for the material to be rendered or incinerated. Your local Animal Health Office or local authority trading standards department (or, in some cases, environmental health department) can advise on what your options would be. SRM must be removed from cattle, sheep and goats and must not be consumed. SRM must be stained and disposed of as Category 1 animal by-product.

#### ***Q5. Can I sell the meat from my own animals?***

Only if the animal has been slaughtered at an approved slaughterhouse would it be lawful for you to place the meat on the market. For example by offering it for sale in your farm shop or serving it to guests of your bed and breakfast enterprise.

***Q6. Does the restriction on supplying home slaughtered meat apply to partnerships or joint owners?***

Yes, unless the partner or joint owners are family members living as part of the household. It is unlikely that a Court would decide that supplying meat from a home slaughter would be rendered lawful simply because the supply was carried out within a partnership or to a co-owner.

***Q7. What about TSE controls for home slaughtered pigs, poultry, farmed game or rabbits?***

The TSE Regulations do not apply to pigs, poultry, farmed game and rabbits.

***Q8. How do I get a BSE test done for my home-slaughtered cattle?***

BSE testing should only be undertaken as follows:

- a. Via delivery of the head to a VLA Regional Laboratory (see Annex A) or by arranging for a suitably trained person to take a sample and sending it to a VLA Regional Laboratory or to a private approved laboratory. There would be a charge for these services; or
- b. Via delivery of the head to an approved BSE sampling site for fallen cattle, where the operator of the site will collect a sample and send it to an approved laboratory. A movement card from the passport (with the holding barcode label stuck on the card) should accompany the carcass and it must be clearly marked 'home slaughter'. Further information detailing all approved BSE sampling sites, is available from local Animal Health Offices and on the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency website:

[http://animalhealth.defra.gov.uk/about/publications/managing-disease/TSE\\_approved\\_plants.pdf](http://animalhealth.defra.gov.uk/about/publications/managing-disease/TSE_approved_plants.pdf)

***Q9. Can I eat my home-bred cow which was born before 1 August 1996?***

No. Domestic TSE Regulations prohibit the slaughter of cattle born or reared in the UK before 1 August 1996 for human consumption. It is also an offence to send cattle born or reared in the UK before 1 August 1996 to an approved slaughterhouse.

***Q10. Can an approved slaughterhouse undertake a private slaughter for me?***

Yes, if the slaughter takes place in an approved slaughterhouse. A private slaughter would be subject to exactly the same rules and procedures as a conventional (commercial) slaughter.

***Q11. Can I have an animal privately slaughtered other than in an approved slaughterhouse?***

No. Except by yourself on farm (see Q3 above), bison (in exceptional circumstances) and in an emergency following an accident where the animal is unable to be moved to the slaughterhouse for welfare reasons. There is also an exemption which allows the slaughter of small quantities of poultry or lagomorphs<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/migpartone.pdf#page=30>



### DEFINITION OF SPECIFIED RISK MATERIAL

<b>Cattle</b>	<b>All ages</b> The tonsils, the intestines, from the duodenum to the rectum, and the mesentery.
	<b>Over 12 months</b> Skull excluding the mandible but including the brains and eyes, and spinal cord.
	<b>Over 30 Months</b> Vertebral column, excluding the vertebrae of the tail, the spinous and transverse processes of the cervical, thoracic and lumbar vertebrae, the median sacral crest and the wings of the sacrum, but including the dorsal root ganglia.
<b>Sheep and goat</b>	<b>All ages</b> The spleen and the ileum
	<b>Over 12 months (or permanent incisor erupted)</b> Skull including the brains and eyes, tonsils and spinal cord

### Staining requirements for SRM

Staining involves treating the material (whether by immersion, spraying or other application) with:

- a 0.5% weight/volume solution of the colouring agent Patent Blue V (E131, 1971 Colour Index No. 42051(a));
- or
- such other colouring agent as may be approved in writing by the Secretary of State or the Food Standards Agency.

The stain must be applied in such a way that the colouring remains clearly visible;

- over the whole of the cut surface and the majority of the head in the case of the head of a sheep or goat, and
- in the case of all other specified risk material, over the whole surface of the material.