



Home slaughter of livestock:

A guide to the law in Northern Ireland

Revision March 2018

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 028 9041 7700

Summary

Intended audience:	Who is this guidance for? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keepers of livestock • Enforcement Authorities
Which UK nations does this cover?	Northern Ireland only. Parallel guidance applies in England, Wales and Scotland.
Purpose:	To provide information on the law covering the home slaughter of livestock.
Legal status:	This guidance is intended to explain clearly the legal requirements of EU and national legislation relating to TSEs and meat hygiene.
Key words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food law, monitoring and controls • Hygiene and food safety • Meat and livestock
Review date	December 2019
Sunset date	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. If you have any comments on the guidance itself, please call us using the contact number on page 1.

Revision No.	Revision date	Purpose of revision and paragraph number	Revised by
1	September 2016	Update legislative references and contact details	Joy Cresswell
2	March 2018	Update TSE testing, SRM details and contact details	Billy Armstrong

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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 fit meat 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. Livestock¹ owners considering slaughter on farm² for their own personal consumption or that of members of their immediate family living there.
5. Enforcement Authorities³ 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.

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.

³ To find your District Council go to <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/local-councils-in-northern-ireland>. DAERA is responsible for the enforcement of TSE and Welfare Regulations in N.I. <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/>

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. 853/2004⁴ as amended, EU Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies Regulation (EC) No. 999/2001 (as amended)⁵, Food Hygiene Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 (as amended)⁶ and Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2010⁷. The guidance 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. Livestock keepers or businesses with specific queries may wish to seek the advice of their local enforcement authority, which will usually be the environmental health department of their District Council (DC) or Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), Divisional Veterinary Office (DVO).

Food Hygiene Regulations

9. The Food Hygiene Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 indicate that in most cases meat sold for human consumption must be from animals slaughtered in an approved slaughterhouse. Such slaughter would, amongst other things, be subject to inspection and verification by DAERA VPHTP on behalf of the Food Standards Agency (FSA). Only in very limited circumstances may meat from livestock animals slaughtered on-farm in an emergency be placed on the market for sale for human consumption. This guide explains what “placing on the market” means in the context of home kills and how Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy (TSE) controls affect lawful options.
10. DCs are responsible for enforcing on farm the domestic Food Hygiene Regulations. DAERA Veterinary Service (VS) is responsible for enforcing on farm the domestic TSE Regulations. These domestic Regulations provide for the enforcement of the EU Food Hygiene Regulations and the EU TSE Regulations.

⁴ OJ L 139, 30.04.2004

⁵ OJ L 147, 31.05.2001

⁶ Food Hygiene Regulations (NI) 2006, SR 2006 No 3 as amended.

⁷ Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies Regulations (NI) 2010, SR 2010 No 406

11. The legality of slaughter outside approved establishments depends on whether it is intended that the resulting meat 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, the supply of a carcass back to the owner by an approved slaughterhouse operator 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).

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 Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 and DC 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 8 of the Food Safety (Northern Ireland) Order 1991. An order for its condemnation could then be obtained from a Justice of the Peace.

In carrying out this enforcement role, enforcement authorities will 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 EUTSE Regulations apply wherever a TSE susceptible animal is slaughtered (**including home slaughter**).

That means that after slaughter of cattle, bison, buffalo, sheep or goats, the 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. SRM

must be disposed of in an approved category 1 rendering or incineration plant.

13. From 1 March 2013 healthy cattle born in the UK or any other EU Member State other than Romania or Bulgaria and any third country 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:
 - Emergency slaughter cattle aged over 48 months (i.e. an otherwise healthy animal that has suffered an accident that prevented its transport to the slaughterhouse.)
 - Cattle over 48 months of age showing certain health conditions in the live animal
 - Healthy cattle aged over 30 months slaughtered for human consumption which were born in Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia and all non-EU countries
 - Emergency Slaughter Cattle aged over 24 months which were born in Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia and all other non-EU countries
15. Testing involves taking the identified head (the eartags must remain attached) to an approved laboratory (e.g. Agri-Food and Bioscience Institute) under licence or a DAERA approved TSE sampling site.
16. Meat from the animal should only be consumed if the BSE test is negative. If the test is positive, the carcass, the hide, 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
17. The domestic TSE Regulations in Northern Ireland make provision for the enforcement of the EU TSE Regulation in Northern Ireland. 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).
18. The domestic TSE Regulations allow DAERA to appoint inspectors to enforce the legislation and provide powers for inspectors to enter premises, seize any carcass or part carcass and dispose of it as necessary. Alternatively, an inspector may serve a notice on the owner requiring disposal.

Welfare at the Time of Killing Regulations

19. There is also legislation to protect the welfare of livestock animals⁸ when they are killed. Killing must be carried out in accordance with the requirements of Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009⁹ on the Protection of Animals at the Time of Killing and The Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (WATOK). The Regulations are enforced by DAERA in approved slaughterhouses. Outside of approved establishments (**i.e. home slaughter**) the Regulations are enforced by DCs with the support of DAERA as required.
20. Where animals are home killed they must be spared any avoidable pain, distress or suffering during their killing process. Home killed animals may only be killed after stunning in accordance with the methods and specific requirements in Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 and The Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing Regulations and the loss of consciousness and sensibility of the animal must be maintained until the death of the animal.
21. The methods most commonly available for home kills are captive bolt or firearm with free projectile followed by immediate bleeding by severance of the carotid arteries or the vessels from which they arise.
22. Anybody who kills an animal or handles it immediately before killing must be sufficiently competent to conduct the operation without causing the animal any avoidable pain, distress or suffering.

⁸ For further information, please go to: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/animal-health-and-welfare/animal-welfare>
⁹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2009:303:0001:0030:EN:PDF>

23. Slaughter of animals by methods prescribed by religious rites 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. A point of contact is also provided at AnnexA.

Practical 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 WATOK, 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 in someone else's unapproved premises

28. This is **unlawful**. Unapproved premises include any place used for slaughtering animals other than an approved slaughterhouse (e.g. field, barn, warehouse, vehicle, and 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

29. This is **lawful**. Please refer to paragraph 2 for the meaning of “private slaughter”.

Annex A

Northern Ireland Contact Points

FSA – Food Hygiene

Food Standards Agency NI	Food Standards Agency NI 10a-10c Clarendon Road Belfast, BT1 3BW	Telephone: 028 9041 7700 Fax: 028 9041 7726 Email: executive.support@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk
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DAERA Veterinary Service Animal Health – Welfare at time of killing

DAERA Direct Regional offices	https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/daera-direct-regional-offices
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DAERA Veterinary Service Animal Health – Disposal of Animal By-Product Issues

Gerry McElvogue	Room 806 Dundonald House Upper Newtownards Road Belfast BT4 3SB	Telephone: 028 9075 8969 Email: gerry.mcelvogue@daera-ni.gov.uk
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Humane Slaughter Association – On-Farm Slaughter of Livestock for Consumption

Humane Slaughter Association	The Old School Brewhouse Hill Wheathampstead Herts, AL4 8AN	Telephone: 01582 831 919 Fax: 01582 831 414 Email: info@hsa.org.uk
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Approved Laboratories in Northern Ireland

(For TSE Brainstem Sampling)

TSE Surveillance	AFBI 12 Stoney Road, Stormont, Belfast, Co Antrim Northern Ireland, BT4 3SD	Telephone: 028 9052 5813 Fax: 028 9052 5750 Email: info@afbini.gov.uk
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Slaughterhouses Approved To Slaughter OTM Cattle:

A list can be obtained from the Operational Policy & Delivery Team at the email address below executive.support@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Cutting Plants Authorised To Process Carcasses Of OTM Cattle:

www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/meat/meatplantsprems/otmplants

Annex B

Question & Answer Brief

Q1. My bovine animal is restricted on farm by IRM restrictions (such as NNO, IDQ or DOBQ). Can I carry out a home kill?

Yes. The Cattle Identification legislation does not prohibit cattle keepers from slaughtering their cattle on farm for their own consumption even if they are restricted due to non-compliance with identification, registration and movement rules, subject to the normal rules for home kills.

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).

Q4. What should I do with the waste material?

If you slaughter the animal yourself on your farm, any part of the carcass 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 DAERA DVO or District Council 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. 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.

Q9. 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.

Q10. 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.¹⁰

¹⁰ <http://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/multimedia/pdfs/oppolicy-meatestablishments.pdf>

Annex C

DEFINITION OF SPECIFIED RISK MATERIAL

Cattle	All ages The tonsils, the last four meters of the small intestine, the caecum and the mesentery in cattle with controlled or undetermined BSE risk status. Over 12 months The skull excluding the mandible and including the brain and eyes, and the spinal cord of cattle of any BSE risk status. Over 30 Months 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 in cattle with controlled or undetermined BSE risk status.
Sheep and goat	All ages The spleen and the ileum Over 12 months (or permanent incisor erupted) Skull including the brains and eyes, tonsils and spinal cord

Staining requirements for SRM

Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 Schedule 7, paragraph 16.

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.