CCTV IN SLAUGHTERHOUSES

Report by Andrew Rhodes, Director of Operations

1 SUMMARY

1.1 The Board is recommended to endorse the actions taken by the Executive in encouraging the installation by Food Business Operators of CCTV in slaughterhouses as a tool to help protect animal welfare.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Undercover filming taken by animal rights group Animal Aid over the past year has identified breaches of animal welfare at slaughter legislation. Slaughterhouse operators are responsible for ensuring that their staff comply with the legislation and kill animals humanely through effective training and supervision of their staff.

2.2 Defra and the devolved administrations have the policy lead on animal welfare at slaughter. FSA enforces the relevant legislation on behalf of Defra and the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales under a Service Level Agreement.

2.3 Breaches of animal welfare at slaughter legislation are wholly unacceptable, and FSA has been striving to improve industry compliance. As part of this, FSA believes that voluntary installation of CCTV would be a useful tool in deterring non-compliance with animal welfare legislation.

3 STRATEGIC AIMS

3.1 This work supports the strategic outcome that regulation is effective, risk-based and proportionate, is clear about the responsibilities of food business operators and protects consumers and their interests from fraud and other risks.

4 DISCUSSION

Regulatory requirements

4.1 Regulation (EC) 853/2004 requires the Food Business Operator to have procedures in place to ensure the welfare of each animal on arrival at the slaughterhouse.

4.2 The Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations 1995 (as amended) (WASK) set welfare standards that must be achieved by the FBO and the checks to be undertaken by the OV. WASK also sets out the requirements for the licensing of slaughterers. FSA administers the licensing of slaughters on behalf of Defra, including an assessment of competence.
4.3 Regulation (EC) 854/2004 requires a risk based audit of the FBO’s controls by the OV to monitor FBO compliance and consider whether FBO procedures in relation to public health and animal welfare are adequate. In addition, the OV inspects all live animals presented for slaughter.

4.4 EU Regulation 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing came into force on 8 December 2009 and will come into effect in all Member States on 1 January 2013. The new regulation will introduce a number of welfare improvements, including the need to appoint a specific person responsible for animal welfare in all slaughterhouses above a minimum size. The new Regulation also allows Member States to make national rules to maintain existing measures to protect welfare, where the existing national rules are stricter than those in the Council Regulation. Defra is currently considering how Regulation 1099/2009 will be implemented in the UK.

Animal Aid campaign

4.5 FSA was first contacted by Animal Aid in late August 2009 when they published a report entitled ‘The Humane Slaughte...’ The report was based on undercover filming of pre-slaughter handling, stunning and sticking of animals in three slaughterhouses taken between January and June 2009.

4.6 Between November 2009 and May 2010, Animal Aid brought five further cases of undercover filming to the attention of the FSA. In one of these cases, filming took place outside the boundary of the approved premises where slaughter was taking place under the small scale poultry exemption; FSA referred this footage to the Local Authority.

4.7 Generally, the breaches observed on the Animal Aid footage were of four types:

- Clear breaches of the WASK Regulations that have resulted in animal suffering – for example insufficient stunning and significant delays in sticking after stunning;
- Technical breaches of WASK that did not result in immediate animal suffering – for example the lack of a head restraint and delays in stunning;
- Procedures that would be considered best practice that have not been followed but are not a breach of WASK – for example stunned and bled pigs falling off the line and being dragged back into the stunning pen;
- Matters that Animal Aid consider undesirable, but not covered by legislation or best practice – for example use of a wheelbarrow to take a casualty sheep into the stunning pen, graffiti in the lairage and swearing.
**Action taken by FSA**

4.8 In all cases, FSA vets viewed the footage, suspended slaughtermen where appropriate, and formally investigated the breaches. FSA vets also recommended improvements to slaughterhouse operators, including refresher training for their slaughtermen.

4.9 An animal welfare survey was completed by Official Veterinarians for all GB slaughterhouses in May 2010. Our preliminary results indicate that standards of animal welfare met or exceeded legislative requirements in 94% of premises. At the time of the audit welfare practices were noted as failing to meet legislative requirements (although were not causing direct harm) in 5% of premises, with practices or structures considered to result in direct harm in 1% of premises. Enforcement action has been ongoing in these premises, with FBOs needing to take corrective action to address non-compliances. Additional controls are in place to safeguard animal welfare where concerns remain.

4.10 The results of a further survey show that only 7% of slaughterhouses have CCTV for monitoring animal welfare in the stunning/slaughter area and only 8% have CCTV for monitoring animal welfare in other areas. In those multi-species slaughterhouses with CCTV for animal welfare monitoring, use of CCTV for this purpose may not extend to all species. Based on throughput figures for the first quarter of this year (April to June) the slaughterhouses which have CCTV installed slaughtered approximately 13% of cattle, 16% of sheep, 42% of pigs and 40% of poultry during this period.

4.11 FSA has met with Animal Aid three times to discuss their concerns – October 2009, and June and September 2010. Discussions have included the role of retailers in securing compliance. FSA met with RSPCA in July. FSA confirmed its support for the use of CCTV in slaughterhouses. The RSPCA’s Freedom Food assurance scheme was also discussed.

4.12 The Animal Aid campaign was discussed by FSA and industry representatives at a meeting on 10 May 2010. FSA highlighted its support for the use of CCTV in slaughterhouses and its desire to encourage voluntary installation as best practice.

4.13 Industry generally does not support the concept of CCTV as a means to protect animal welfare. Its position is that visual checks by FSA staff should be sufficient. Our argument is that FBOs are responsible for the activities undertaken by their staff through effective training and supervision, and if this is demonstrated at all times then CCTV would not be necessary as a deterrent. However there is clear evidence that some FBOs are not meeting their responsibilities, and therefore CCTV is a useful additional tool in securing compliance and provides assurance for their management, the FSA as regulator and ultimately consumers.

4.14 The Veterinary Public Health Association [part of the British Veterinary Association] has also been contacted by Animal Aid and was concerned about
the breaches identified in their footage. VPHA chaired a meeting in June 2010 with FSA, Defra and industry representatives. Issues discussed included layout and structure of slaughterhouses and how easily FBOs and vets could view inside the stun pen unobserved. The group agreed that FBOs must have effective procedures in place either to constantly monitor stunning and slaughter operations or to enable the FBO or Animal Welfare Officer to inconspicuously observe the process at any time. The group also agreed that OVs should have access to FBOs welfare monitoring procedures. The group will continue working together to find solutions to the problems identified.

Future action

4.15 Where CCTV is voluntarily installed by FBOs, there are a number of issues to be overcome in the use of CCTV footage. These include:

- How will the footage be monitored and by whom:
  - Monitored for a set length of time each day?
  - Monitoring based on a set percentage of animals stunned?
  - Filming displayed constantly and monitored intermittently?
- How does the FBO demonstrate at audit that monitoring and corrective action have taken place?
- Will the FBO be legally obliged to give the OV access to view the recordings or on a voluntary basis?
- How long should images be kept?
- How will the FBO ensure that the recordings are secure?
- Will CCTV footage of breaches be legally admissible evidence?

FSA will be working with Defra and industry to address these questions.

4.16 Defra is currently considering how Regulation 1099/2009 will be implemented in the UK. This will include a review of the procedures undertaken before a certificate of competence for slaughterers is issued. Furthermore, Defra will consider the standards that existing licence holders will need to meet before their current licence is reissued as a certificate of competence under the new Regulation. Defra will be consulting widely before any final decisions are taken. However, while the Regulation allows existing stricter national rules to be maintained, it does not permit the introduction of new national measures such as compulsory installation of CCTV.

4.17 CCTV installation needs to continue on a voluntary basis but FBOs may find additional pressure being applied by retailers.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 If FBOs are unable to prevent breaches of animal welfare legislation and are unwilling to take proactive corrective action, for example voluntary installation of CCTV with active monitoring, or additional training of FBO staff, then FSA will consider putting in additional staff to observe slaughter practices. The FBO
would be charged for such staff until compliance could be satisfactorily demonstrated.

6. LEGAL

6.1 There is no legal requirement to install CCTV cameras.

6.2 Defra and the rural affairs departments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are the enforcement authority for animal welfare issues at slaughterhouses. Prosecution decisions in Scotland are taken by the Procurator Fiscal.

6.3 Where the evidence justifies it, all breaches of animal welfare legislation will be investigated thoroughly and where appropriate referred with a view to prosecution.

6.4 Undercover filming is relevant and in principle admissible but may not be admitted in a particular case if the Court thinks that it was obtained unfairly.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

7.1 Breaches of animal welfare legislation will not be tolerated. The FSA is working with industry to ensure operators comply with the legislation, but where operators are unable to demonstrate compliance, the FSA will vigorously enforce the legislation on behalf of Defra.

7.2 The Board is recommended to endorse the actions taken by the Executive in encouraging the installation by Food Business Operators of CCTV in slaughterhouses, and active monitoring of footage, as a tool to help protect animal welfare.

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