
RESULTS OF THE 2011 FSA ANIMAL WELFARE SURVEY IN GREAT BRITAIN

Report by Andrew Rhodes, Director of Operations

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1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The protection of animal welfare prior to and during slaughter and killing is one of the key functions of the FSA in approved slaughterhouses in England, Scotland & Wales (GB). The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) undertake this function in Northern Ireland.
- 1.2 Defra in England, the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer in Wales, and the Scottish Government Rural Affairs Directorate are the competent authorities for implementing domestic and European animal health and animal welfare legislation. In England, the FSA carries out work on Defra's behalf, and similarly for the Welsh and Scottish Governments, through Service Level Agreements.
- 1.3 The FSA carried out a survey from 19 to 25 September 2011 in slaughterhouses in GB to provide assurance that:
 - food business operators are taking active steps to comply with legal requirements and achieve necessary animal welfare standards, and
 - Official Veterinarians (OVs) and frontline teams are carrying out their roles effectively, with appropriate monitoring and relevant enforcement action being taken in the event of food business operator (FBO) non-compliance.

The survey also gathered information on the number of premises with CCTV in place for monitoring animal welfare and availability of footage to the OV. An update on CCTV monitoring was previously provided to the FSA Board in November 2011 [FSA 11/11/09].¹

- 1.4 In Northern Ireland, DARD undertook a similar survey in February/March 2012 at slaughterhouses. The results of this survey will allow a comparative assessment of the data with GB. DARD intends to use the results to target any follow-up action as required.
- 1.5 This paper highlights the results from the GB survey and the Board is asked to:
 - **Note** the results and findings

¹ <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/board/fsa111109.pdf>

- **Note** that we will share results with Defra and the Welsh and Scottish Government to help inform future policy making and implementation of the welfare at killing regulations
- **Note** plans to repeat the survey following implementation of the welfare at killing regulations Council Regulation (EC) 1099/2009², which will be directly applicable in all Member States from 1 January 2013.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The FSA is responsible for the enforcement in GB of those sections of the Welfare of Animals (Slaughter and Killing) Regulations 1995, and subsequent amendments, applicable in approved slaughterhouses. It also has responsibilities under Council Regulation (EC) 854/2004 of 'The Hygiene Package' to verify that food business operators (FBOs) take 'Corrective Measures' and 'Prevent Recurrence' when welfare rules at the time of slaughter are not followed.
- 2.2 Whilst the OV has overall responsibility for monitoring compliance with animal welfare controls on a daily basis, FSA teams collectively undertake checks in every slaughterhouse whilst slaughtering is being undertaken. They report their findings on a series of reports, including a daily animal welfare report, and the audit of food business operator compliance.
- 2.3 The OV must take proportionate enforcement action to protect the welfare of animals prior to and during slaughter and killing. The OV must use his or her professional judgment to assess if what has been observed is a 'prosecutable' non-compliance before referring the matter for investigation.
- 2.4 Historically, the Meat Hygiene Service undertook a bi-annual welfare survey, the last being in 2003, and it was agreed in 2011 to undertake a new survey to assess compliance, and set some benchmarks in anticipation of Council Regulation (EC) 1099/2009 which comes into force in 2013.
- 2.5 The survey was designed to establish the level of compliance with the Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations (WASK) and data for slaughter capacity and methods of slaughter over a typical week in GB. It is a snapshot of activity during the week of the survey, but OVs in GB undertake this type of monitoring on a daily basis.
- 2.6 In developing the survey, the FSA consulted with a variety of stakeholders, including: the RSPCA; Humane Slaughter Association; Defra, and officials from the devolved Governments within the UK. Bristol University provided guidance on questions relating to use of the "Jarvis" electric stun box for slaughter of cattle. Consideration was also given to the requirements of Council Regulation (EC) 1099/2009, to help with implementation of these new requirements, and to allow comparison of results in future surveys.

² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2009:303:0001:0030:EN:PDF>

3 STRATEGIC AIMS

- 3.1 The Animal Welfare Survey contributes to the FSA's strategic outcome that regulation is effective, risk-based and proportionate, is clear about the responsibilities of businesses and protects consumers and their interests from fraud and other risks.
- 3.2 The survey provides additional assurance for our commitment to safeguard animal welfare at the point of slaughter through enforcement of animal welfare legislation.

4 DISCUSSION

Information returns

- 4.1 Assessments were undertaken by OV's at 328 approved establishments across GB, including 253 red meat slaughterhouses and 75 poultry slaughterhouses, during the week 19 to 25 September 2011.
- 4.2 Results were verified by Lead Veterinarians prior to being submitted for collation and analysis.

Summary of key findings

- 4.3 The survey included a series of questions on the processes and facilities at each establishment, in particular animal handling, slaughtermen licensing, lairage facilities, stunning and bleeding processes.
- 4.4 OV's were asked to make an assessment of compliance. Any areas of non-compliance were categorised, either as minor deficiencies (not causing any harm to the animals or birds), or major deficiencies (a risk of causing harm or suffering to the animals or birds).
- 4.5 Routinely, OV's make these assessments daily and when problems arise, the outcomes of these assessments are acted upon in accordance with the enforcement hierarchy. They are also recorded on the enforcement programmes at each slaughterhouse. The survey allows us to see activity for GB for the week in question.
- 4.6 A selection of the questions are summarised in **Annexe A** to give an overview of the general levels of compliance, and the more detailed breakdown of all questions and responses is included at **Annexe B**. The responses for each question are provided as a total for GB and broken down by the number of returns for England, Scotland and Wales.
- 4.7 In addition, the survey also included a breakdown of the number of animals subjected to specific slaughter processes (included at **Annexe C**).

4.8 To summarise, the data shows that:

- 324 of the 328 (99%) FBOs included in the survey were fully compliant or demonstrated minor deficiencies with the requirements of WASK (99% of FBOs in England, 97% of FBOs in Scotland and 100% of FBOs in Wales).
- Only 4 of the 328 (1%) FBOs demonstrated major deficiencies in compliance with WASK (1% of FBOs in England, 3% of FBOs in Scotland and none in Wales).
- Lead Veterinarians supported OV actions to ensure FBO compliance with WASK for 323 (98.5% of the returns). Corrective action was taken where necessary.

4.9 The minor deficiencies identified included: no back up stunner available on the day of the survey; the food business operator being reminded to provide water for pigs; sheep being held in pens allocated for cattle; stocking densities being temporarily exceeded; maintenance records not available; some poorly maintained poultry crates, and an audible warning device needed on a poultry gas killing apparatus. Action was taken in all of these instances to the satisfaction of the Lead Veterinarian.

4.10 A major deficiency identified included a horned bovine trapped in a pen; an instance of pigs held in the lairage overnight without water; a breach of the specific rules for religious slaughter, and isolated incidents of birds not being bled properly. All the major deficiencies identified have been resulted in appropriate enforcement action ranging from referral for investigation to immediate rectification.

CCTV

4.11 Following the FSA Board paper in November 2011 [FSA 11/11/09], the survey provided updated figures on the number of approved establishments operating CCTV facilities for animal welfare monitoring, and includes additional detail on the areas covered by the CCTV:

- For red meat slaughterhouses, 96 of 253 establishments (38%) were operating CCTV, with 59 of these using CCTV to cover the stunning area, 49 to cover the bleeding area and 85 to cover the lairage and unloading areas
- For poultry slaughterhouses, 42 of 75 establishments (56%) were operating CCTV, with 21 of these using CCTV to cover the stunning area, 18 to cover the bleeding area and 39 to cover the lairage and unloading areas
- There was no significant variation in compliance levels with WASK identified between those premises with or without CCTV.

- The survey identified that in 134 (53%) of red meat slaughterhouses and 33 (44%) of poultry slaughterhouses it was not possible to observe the practice of slaughterers without the slaughterer being aware they were under observation. Given that there is often limited space in the stunning pen for OV's or Animal Welfare Officers to have a clear view, use of CCTV in these instances may therefore provide a useful monitoring tool.

Slaughter by religious methods

- 4.12 Non stun slaughter methods are subject to additional OV checks. These include specific checks on timings required by the law for religious slaughter, which are calculated based on throughput. Cattle restraint pens for non stun slaughter are subject to approval by Defra.
- 4.13 The FSA does not regularly collect data on the method of animal slaughter at an aggregated level. Detailed breakdown of specific slaughter processes and methods through the survey has allowed identification of the proportion of animals subject to slaughter by religious methods in that week.
- 4.14 A total of 43,772 cattle / calves were slaughtered at 194 establishments, of which:
- 1,314 (3%) were slaughtered by the Shechita (Jewish) method at 4 establishments, with 10% of these were stunned immediately after bleeding.
 - 1,727 (4%) were slaughtered by the Halal (Muslim) method at 16 establishments. 84% of these were stunned before slaughter, and less than 1% stunned after bleeding.
- 4.15 A total of 307,512 sheep and goats were slaughtered at 202 establishments, of which:
- 1,917 (less than 1%) were slaughtered by the Shechita (Jewish) method (all not stunned) at 4 establishments
 - 154,795 (50%) were slaughtered by the Halal (Muslim) method at 39 establishments. 81% of these were stunned before slaughter and less than 1% stunned after bleeding.
- 4.16 A total of 16,101,844 poultry were slaughtered at 73 establishments, of which:
- 71,236 (less than 1%) were slaughtered by the Shechita (Jewish) method (all not stunned) at 5 establishments
 - 4,766,237 (30%) were slaughtered by the Halal (Muslim) method at 29 establishments. 88% of these were stunned before slaughter.
- 4.17 The results indicate that the number of animals not stunned prior to slaughter

is relatively low, accounting for 3% of cattle, 10% of sheep and goats and 4% of poultry. They also show that the majority of animals destined for the Halal trade in both the red and white meat sectors are stunned before slaughter.

5 IMPACT

- 5.1 The protection of animal welfare is one of the key reasons for FSA presence in approved meat establishments, and the publication of these results highlights and provides assurance about this work to our stakeholders.
- 5.2 The data is likely to be used by a number of organisations interested in animal welfare, including other government departments and external consumer based bodies.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A particular focus of the survey was to identify compliance with the WASK regulations, and results indicate where legislation has been breached, and action taken.

7 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The results of the survey provide a good level of assurance that food business operators are taking active steps to comply with legal requirements and achieve necessary animal welfare standards. 99% of all food business operators were fully compliant or demonstrated only minor deficiencies with the requirements of WASK and only 1% demonstrated major deficiencies during the week of the survey.
- 7.2 Survey returns have been completed by the OV at the relevant establishment, shared with and confirmed by the Lead Veterinarian for the area, and in cases of serious or significant breaches of WASK, subjected to further checks by the relevant managers. In all cases, appropriate action has been taken.
- 7.3 Lead Veterinarian's supported OV actions to ensure FBO compliance with WASK for 98.5% of the returns, providing confidence in the survey results, with follow up action taken where necessary.
- 7.4 Where there were serious breaches of WASK, further analysis of these cases has demonstrated that enforcement action had been taken and was appropriate. In addition, any breaches of WASK identified in the course of the survey have been highlighted to the relevant managers to ensure that action taken was appropriate.
- 7.5 The level of detail and information in the results of the survey has provided a useful evidence baseline in assessing compliance with WASK. It is recommended that the survey is repeated in September 2013, following implementation of Council Regulation (EC) 1099/2009 on 1 January 2013.

7.6 The Board is asked to:

- **Note** the results and findings of the GB 2011 animal welfare survey
- **Note** that we will share results with Defra and the Welsh and Scottish Governments to help inform future policy making and implementation of the welfare at killing regulations
- **Note** plans to repeat the survey in September 2013.