



HOME SLAUGHTER OF LIVESTOCK: A GUIDE TO THE LAW IN ENGLAND

Revision 1 July 2011

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Summary

Intended audience:	<p>This guidance is applicable to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keepers of animals who slaughter livestock¹ on farm² for their own consumption or that of members of their household living there. • Local Authorities which are responsible for the enforcement of Animal Welfare, Food Hygiene and Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy (TSE) Regulations on farms.
Regional coverage:	England only. Parallel guidance applies in other parts of the UK.
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.
Essential actions to comply with regulation(s):	<p>Animals must be slaughtered humanely.</p> <p>Specified risk material must be removed, stained and disposed of as category 1 animal by product.</p> <p>Cattle requiring BSE testing must test negative for BSE.</p>

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 purposes of this guide, 'farm' is defined as any premises where livestock are kept

REVISION HISTORY

This Guide follows the Government [Code of Practice on Guidance](#). If you believe this Guide breaches the Code for any reason or have any other comments, please contact us using the number on the front page.

Revision No.	Revision date	Purpose of revision	Revised by
1	December 2003	To reflect the change in the EU TSE Regulation	Meat Hygiene and Veterinary Division
2	March 2006	To reflect the new EU Food Hygiene Regulations	Meat Hygiene and Veterinary Division
3	June 2009	To reflect the Commission's interpretation of the EU TSE Regulation.	Meat Hygiene and Veterinary Division
4	November 2010	To reflect coming into force of TSE (England) Regulations 2010 and organisational changes in the FSA.	Hygiene and Microbiology Division
5	March 2011	To reflect alternative arrangements for BSE Testing	FSA: TSE Policy
6	July 2011	To reflect revised requirements for BSE Testing	FSA: TSE Policy

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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 carcase 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 owners considering slaughter on farm for their own personal consumption or that of members of their immediate family living there.
5. Local Authorities³ which are responsible for on-farm enforcement of the domestic Food Hygiene and TSE Regulations.

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.

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, EU Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies Regulation (EC) No. 999/2001 (as amended)⁵, Food Hygiene (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended)⁶ and Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (England) Regulations 2010⁷. They

³ To find your Local Authority go to: www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/enforceessential/yourarea/

⁴ OJ L 139, 30.04.2004

⁵ OJ L 147, 31.05.2001

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

⁷ SI 2010 No. 801

cannot cover every situation and you may need to consult the relevant legislation 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 or Environmental Health department of their local authority.

FOOD HYGIENE REGULATIONS

9. The Food Hygiene Regulation 853/2004 states 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, Art. 3). For example, the supply of a carcase 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 carcase 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 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 is at Annex C.

13. In addition, cattle aged over 72⁸ months of age at slaughter must be test negative for BSE prior to consumption of the meat. 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://animalhealth.defra.gov.uk/about/publications/managing-disease/TSE_approved_plants.pdf
14. 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.
15. 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.

⁸ Healthy cattle born in Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden or the United Kingdom or over 48 months if subject to emergency slaughter. Imported cattle not born in one of these countries must be tested at over 30 months of age, or over 24 months if subject to emergency slaughter.

16. The domestic TSE Regulations make provision for the enforcement of the EU TSE Regulation in England. 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).
17. 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

18. There is also legislation to protect the welfare of livestock animals⁹ (both red meat animals and poultry) during the slaughter or killing process. Whenever livestock is slaughtered (death caused by bleeding after stunning) or killed (immediate death), it must be carried out in accordance with the Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations 1995 (as amended), known as “WASK”. The WASK Regulations are enforced by the FSA in approved slaughterhouses. Outside approved premises (**i.e. home slaughter**) the Regulations are enforced by Animal Health with the involvement of the local authority as required.
19. The WASK Regulations make it an offence to cause or permit any avoidable excitement, pain or suffering to any animal or bird during the slaughter or killing process. The WASK Regulations also require everyone carrying out such operations to have the knowledge and skill necessary to perform the tasks humanely and efficiently. Only the permitted stunning and killing methods laid down in the Regulations may be used. However where a bird, rabbit, pig, sheep or goat is slaughtered or killed by its owner for his private consumption, there are certain exemptions from the provisions of the Regulations regarding the killing or slaughtering process. These exemptions do not apply to cattle.
20. The WASK Regulations require most people directly involved in the slaughter or killing process to be licensed, although there are a number of exemptions from this requirement. These exemptions include:
 - a. the slaughtering or killing of an animal or bird by the owner for his/her private consumption;
 - b. the slaughtering or killing of any animal other than for a commercial purpose;

⁹ For further information, please go to: <http://ww2.defra.gov.uk/food-farm/animals/welfare/>

- c. the use of a free bullet to kill an animal in the field; and
 - d. the killing of a bird by dislocation of the neck on premises on which the bird was reared.
21. Religious slaughter is only permitted in approved slaughterhouses.
22. 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 Annex A.

EXAMPLES

23. 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

24. 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, 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

25. 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

26. It is **unlawful** for a farmer to use the services of an itinerant slaughterman both to slaughter his animal and to dress it. This is because the slaughterman would be supplying goods (i.e. a dressed carcass) in the course of his business.

Slaughter in someone else's unapproved premises

27. 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

28. This is **lawful**.

29. For further information, see contacts at Annex A. There is also a Question and Answer brief attached at Annex B.

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
London WC2B 6NH

SRM Controls

Chris Walding Aviation House T 020 7276 8334
125 Kingsway E 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**Disposal of Animal By-products (including SRM)**

Jon Rouse T 020 7238 6508
E jonathan.rouse@defra.gsi.gov.uk

www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/byproducts/wastefood/collectors.htm

Animal Welfare Issues

Geoff Webdale T 0207 238 5755
E geoff.r.webdale@defra.gsi.gov.uk

BSE testing

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

Private Laboratories Approved for BSE Testing

http://vla.defra.gov.uk/services/ser_bse_lab_approvals.htm

Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA) regional laboratories

http://vla.defra.gov.uk/vla/vla_contacts.htm

Humane Slaughter Association**'On-Farm Slaughter of Livestock for consumption'**

Charlie Mason HSA T 01582 831919
The Old School F 01582 831414
Brewhouse Hill E charlie@hsa.org.uk
Wheathampstead www.hsa.org.uk
Hertfordshire AL4 8AN

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 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 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 website:

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 lagomorphs¹⁰.

¹⁰ See Meat Industry Guide Part 1, Section 7.9, Text box B “Poultry slaughter and cutting on farm” available at <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/migpartonenov10.pdf>

DEFINITION OF SPECIFIED RISK MATERIAL

Cattle	<p>All ages</p> <p>The tonsils, the intestines, from the duodenum to the rectum, and the mesentery.</p> <p>Over 12 months</p> <p>Skull excluding the mandible but including the brains and eyes, and spinal cord.</p> <p>Over 30 months</p> <p>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.</p>
Sheep and goats	<p>All ages</p> <p>The spleen and the ileum</p> <p>Over 12 months (or permanent incisor erupted)</p> <p>Skull including the brains and eyes, tonsils, spinal cord.</p>

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.