



29th November 2007

Reference: NIP: 0593

Dear Pig Slaughterhouse Operator

Implementation of Food Chain Information - 1 January 2008

I am writing to inform you about the new legislative requirements for food chain information (FCI) for pigs from 1 January 2008.

From 1 January 2008 FCI must be provided for all pigs you receive for slaughter. The responsibility for receiving FCI rests with slaughterhouse operators, so you will need to make arrangements with your suppliers about how to fulfil this responsibility. To increase the awareness of pig producers we will soon be publicising the FCI requirements through the industry press.

The enclosed information paper describes the background to FCI, outlines how you can comply with the new requirements and gives draft guidance on the information you should request from suppliers.

As part of the implementation of FCI, DARD has developed the APHIS system for the collection and recording of ante- and post-mortem inspection results, which will enable this valuable information to be made available to slaughterhouse operators, producers and their veterinary practitioners after the slaughter of each batch.

If you have any queries about Food Chain Information and your responsibilities please contact Joy Cresswell, Tel: 02890 417759;
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Yours faithfully

Jim Ross

Head of Meat Hygiene & Imported Food Unit



FOOD CHAIN INFORMATION - INFORMATION FOR SLAUGHTERHOUSE OPERATORS

Background

Legislation¹ comes into force on 1 January 2008 requiring slaughterhouse operators to 'request, receive, check and act upon' food chain information (FCI) for all pigs sent to the slaughterhouse.

This requirement forms part of the whole chain, farm-to-fork approach to food safety introduced by the Hygiene Regulations from the beginning of 2006. Implementation of FCI was initially required only for poultry, with a delayed, progressive implementation of FCI for other species; pigs from 2008; cattle and sheep from 2010.

FCI contributes to slaughterhouse operators' HACCP-based food safety management systems by providing information about animals procured for slaughter. Many FBOs will already require much of this information from their pig suppliers as part of their commercial relations with them, and may have little more to do to comply.

Contents of Food Chain Information

FSA has worked with the industry and other stakeholders to provide the enclosed draft guidance on the components of FCI which are laid down in the legislation. This draft guidance has been developed with the aims of ensuring that FCI is restricted to information that can be used directly by the operator or DARD staff at the slaughterhouse, and of adding no unnecessary burden on the industry. The guidance should be taken as minimum requirements – ultimately it is for slaughterhouse operators to dictate the information they require from suppliers.

The provision of FCI can be simplified by dividing it into two parts:

- information concerning the holding (likely to remain constant and require only occasional updating)
- information about the specific batch of pigs

Once you have the necessary holding information for your regular suppliers, they will need to provide you only with the information relating to each consignment.

Currently slaughterhouse operators should require information about all pigs showing signs of abnormality (equivalent to the old Schedule 18 declaration). FCI extends this information requirement to all pigs – where pigs are showing signs of abnormality, information about this should be included in the FCI for the batch.

¹ Regulation (EC) No. 853/2004 laying down specific rules for food of animal origin

Use of Food Chain Information

Slaughterhouse operators should use FCI to inform their HACCP-based food safety management systems and to make decisions about accepting animals and any special arrangements e.g. slaughter at the end of a run, additional dressing requirements. The FCI must then be passed to the OV who must be informed of any health concerns about the pigs before ante-mortem inspection.

The OV will use FCI to determine any special ante- and post-mortem inspection arrangements or additional actions e.g. testing for *Trichinella*.

Effective FCI provision will open the prospect of simplified, visual-only post-mortem inspection systems. The Hygiene Regulations permit the use of such inspection for pigs under certain conditions and on the basis of epidemiological data from the holding. Once reliable FCI systems, which enable the OV to assess the eligibility of batches of pigs for simplified inspection, are in place, consideration can be given to applying visual only post-mortem inspection in UK.

Timing

For the time being, there is a relaxation of the requirement for FCI to be received by slaughterhouse operators at least 24 hours in advance of receipt of animals. Although this means that FCI may be sent with the pigs, it will not give operators time to check and act on it. Most pig slaughterhouses schedule the delivery of pigs from specific suppliers well in advance of slaughter. FSA recommends that slaughterhouse operators ask suppliers to provide FCI long enough before delivery to the slaughterhouse to enable them and the OV to take any necessary action.

FCI – practicalities

Requesting and receiving FCI is the responsibility of slaughterhouse operators, as is the means by which this is done. Paper-based systems may be adequate for small slaughterhouses but will present difficulties for larger establishments dealing with large numbers of suppliers, and for producers who frequently send consignments of pigs for slaughter. Producers may wish to consider submitting this information electronically.

DARD Collection and Communication of Inspection Results (CCIR)

DARD has developed the APHIS system to collect ante- and post-mortem inspection results on line and correlate them with each batch of pigs. This system allows direct accessibility to these results by the food business operator, producer and their veterinary practitioner.

Future developments

The guidance on FCI is presented in draft form and may require amending as experience is gained. The FSA wishes to continue to work closely with all stakeholders to ensure that FCI is useful, practical and does not impose disproportionate burdens on industry, and invites your comments to achieve these aims. Similarly, DARD is open to views on how its CCIR system can be improved for the benefit of stakeholders.

Contact points for further information or comments are:

Food Chain Information: Joy Cresswell, Meat Hygiene & Imported Food Unit, FSA
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