

Auditing approved meat establishments

How we audit your meat premises and what you need to know as a food business owner.

The audit process

Our audits focus on the effectiveness of food safety management systems implemented by the Food Business Operator (FBO) during the audited period.

Audit arrangements apply to all meat establishments approved in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and under veterinary control. These are:

- red meat / farmed game slaughterhouses
- poultry meat slaughterhouses
- cutting plants
- game establishments
- minced meat, meat preparations and mechanically separated meat establishments co-located with slaughterhouses or cutting plants
- meat product plants and 'ready to eat' establishments co-located with slaughterhouses and cutting plants
- co-located cold stores

The audit sections in the audit report are based on the priorities set for the FSA that have been agreed between the FSA, Defra and industry stakeholders.

The audit covers:

- controls in place to minimise potential spread of animal diseases
- animal welfare safeguards
- controls ensuring hygienic production
- environmental hygiene and good hygienic practices
- effectiveness of food safety systems based on the principles of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP)
- handling of animal by-products and waste
- effectiveness of controls and removal of specified risk material (SRM) from cattle, sheep and goats

Not all the sections need to be completed for every establishment. This will depend on the type of establishment and the activities it carries out.

Audits are done by government Veterinary Auditors (VA) and are intended to ensure that:

- FBOs comply with food law requirements
- FBOs meet regulatory standards in relation to public health and, in slaughterhouses, animal health and welfare

Full details of the audit process and instructions to our officials are in chapter 4 of the [Manual for Official Controls](#).

Scoring of audits

Our audits are risk based. Each section of the audit checklist is fully assessed during the audit process. Scoring of the audit questions are based on objective evidence.

Compliant

An audit question is assessed as compliant if it:

- is found to be in accordance with the Food Business Operator (FBO) food safety management system
- meets the requirements of the regulations

In the case of slaughterhouses, they need to meet the requirements of animal and welfare laws, too.

Minor non-compliance

Minor non-compliances are low risk situations which don't prevent an establishment from achieving the control measures of their food safety, animal health and welfare programmes.

When there are a number of related minor non-compliances, it may become a major non-compliance.

Major non-compliance

If no action is taken to resolve non-compliant incidents, they can become major non-compliances. This happens when a non-compliance is likely to compromise public or animal health and welfare or may lead to the production and handling of unsafe or unsuitable food.

When there are a number of related major non-compliances, it may become a critical non-compliance.

Critical non-compliance

An assessment of non-compliant incidents, where there is a serious risk to public health, animal health or welfare.

Audit outcome and compliance ratings

There are four compliance ratings for England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Compliance ratings

Good - no issues of significance for public health, animal health or animal welfare during the entire audit period.

Generally satisfactory - no immediate issues of significance for public health, animal health or animal welfare identified on the day of the audit. Any non-compliances identified during the audit period have been corrected promptly.

Improvement necessary - major non-compliances identified at audit and/or non-compliances during the audit period not always responded to and corrected promptly.

Urgent Improvement necessary - multiple major non-compliances or critical non-compliance identified during audit visit or interim audit period. Official intervention required to ensure public health safeguards.

When audits are carried out

Audits will commence three months after full approval has been granted.

When determining how often we audit a business, we look at the overall compliance rate. We audit slaughterhouses and cutting plants every two, three, 12 or 18 months depending on the potential risks identified in the previous full audit. Full audits and follow-up partial audits are carried out on an announced basis.

Timings of audits

Audit outcome	Follow-up Partial Audit	Full Audit frequency
Good	0	18 months (sl) / 12 months (cp)
Generally Satisfactory	Within 3 months	12 months
Improvement Necessary	Within 1 month	3 months
Urgent Improvement Necessary	Within 1 month	2 months

In cutting plants, unannounced inspections (UAs) happen in between scheduled audits.

Publication of audit reports

[We publish the most recent audit scores for our approved meat establishments in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.](#) These scores are updated on a monthly basis. As FBOs can appeal the audit outcome, the audit outcome will not be published until the end of the appeals process.

Appealing an Audit Outcome

A food business operator who wishes to request a review of the most recent audit report must complete the audit appeal form and return it to approvals@food.gov.uk within 14 calendar days of the receipt of the initial audit report.

WORD

[View Request for a Review of Full Audit as Word\(Open in a new window\)](#) (241.5 KB)

Scotland

In Scotland these audits are carried out by [Food Safety Scotland \(FSS\)](#).

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, these audits are carried out by the [Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs \(DAERA\)](#) on behalf of us in Northern Ireland.