

Annual Animal Welfare Report 2023/24

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FSA 24/09/08 - Report by Junior Johnson and Kevin Maher

1. Summary

1.1 This paper provides an update on FSA animal welfare delivery in 2023/24 with the objective of making ongoing improvements to animal welfare in England and Wales. The paper highlights an 11.8% reduction in animals that experienced an impact on their welfare at slaughter and an 8% reduction in animal welfare farm and transport non-compliance cases that we refer to other enforcement bodies.

1.2 The Board is asked to:

1.3 Consider, discuss, and comment on:

- Work and progress since the 2022/23 update to the Board.

1.4 Put on record its support for:

- Accomplishments and ongoing work to improve animal welfare at slaughter, on farm, and during transport.
- The FSA position on taking proportionate enforcement action towards breaches of animal welfare and working collaboratively with other animal welfare enforcement bodies.

2. Introduction

2.1 This paper provides the annual report to the Board on the FSA's animal welfare delivery on behalf of the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and Welsh Government as policy holders in England and Wales, respectively.

2.2 The paper covers:

- Section 3 – Background and context.
- Section 4 – Summary of data on animal welfare compliance in slaughterhouses, on farm and in transport.
- Section 5 – Progress of in year activities.

- Section 6 – Consumer and stakeholder interest in animal welfare.
- Section 7 – Policy activity and forward look.
- Section 8 – Conclusions.

3. Background and Context

3.1 Defra and Welsh Government have policy responsibility for animal welfare controls within approved slaughterhouses. Application of the controls and enforcement of animal welfare breaches are carried out by the FSA in England and Wales under a Service Level Agreement with funding provided by Defra and Welsh Government. In Northern Ireland, the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has the policy and delivery responsibility for animal welfare. The FSA animal welfare team regularly liaise with DAERA on animal welfare related matters.

3.2 In September 2016, the FSA Board approved the FSA animal welfare Deter, Prevent, Detect, Enforce programme to deliver improvements to animal welfare standards in slaughterhouses in England and Wales. The programme is managed under a dedicated Animal Welfare Action Plan which complements the official controls in ensuring slaughterhouse Food Business Operators (FBOs) responsibility in producing safe food and animal welfare standards. The Animal Welfare Action Plan supports other FSA, government, and industry governance on animal welfare through oversight of a dedicated Animal Welfare Steering Group. Progress of activities delivered under the Animal Welfare Action Plan is detailed at section 5.

3.3 Animal welfare in the FSA is monitored by Official Veterinarians (OVs) that are based in approved slaughterhouses and supported by the Welfare Assurance Team (WAT) who are a specifically trained team of Meat Hygiene Inspectors that conduct additional annual animal welfare assurance visits. They ensure that businesses are compliant with requirements in animal welfare legislation and animals are spared avoidable suffering, distress, or pain during the slaughter process. FSA staff are instructed to take prompt and proportionate enforcement in response to animal welfare breaches. We apply an enforcement hierarchy that allows us to take informal enforcement where breaches are minor, and we believe it will be effective in avoiding future non-compliance. We also take formal action such as serving of notices, suspending or revoking Certificates of Competence, or referring a matter for formal investigation in cases where non-compliance falls into the most severe categories which may have caused pain or suffering or where informal enforcement has not resulted in subsequent compliance by the business.

3.4 Full responsibility for animal welfare and food safety in slaughterhouses rests with slaughterhouse FBOs who must meet legislative requirements in terms of slaughterhouse design, layout, equipment, and operation.

3.5 Defra and Welsh Government have policy responsibility for animal welfare controls on farm or during transportation. The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) and Local Authorities (LAs) animal welfare teams are responsible for enforcement. Where checks by the OV at the slaughterhouse identify breaches, they are referred to APHA and the LA to investigate.

3.6 The FSA animal welfare team have established and lead a regular Animal Welfare Referral Working Group with Defra, Welsh Government, APHA, and LA representatives with the aim of improving animal welfare standards on farm and during transport by providing the best possible evidence to enable APHA and LAs to take appropriate action. The decision on subsequent

enforcement is made by APHA and LAs.

4. Summary of Data on Animal Welfare Compliance in Slaughterhouses, On Farm and in Transport

4.1 In 2023/24 there were over 1 billion animals (1,009,052,611) processed in approved slaughterhouses in England and Wales. For 99.99% of animals no breaches of animal welfare standards were detected. 44,015 animals experienced an impact to their welfare, which equates to 0.0044% of all animals processed. When compared with 2022/23 (49,898 animals), this is an 11.8% reduction.

4.2 The number of slaughterhouse non-compliance cases increased from 354 cases in 2022/23 to 362 in 2023/24 (2% increase). Appropriate rectification through enforcement action was taken in all cases. Over the last three years, slaughterhouse non-compliances have averaged 363 cases per year, which indicates that 2023/24 cases (362) are broadly in line with the three-year average.

4.3 Enforcement data indicates that 87% of major and critical slaughterhouse non-compliances were identified by our officials in person, with 13% identified either by live or retrospective CCTV viewing in 2023/24 (this was 85% and 15% respectively in 2022/23). CCTV is routinely used as evidence to support enforcement action. CCTV also plays an important role in the suspension and revocation of Certificates of Competence (CoCs) in appropriate circumstances. There were 12 CoCs revoked and 27 CoCs suspended in 2023/24 (7 and 43 respectively in 2022/23). 90% (35 of 39) of all suspensions and revocations were supported by CCTV evidence (84% in 2022/23). The suspensions and revocations in 2023/24 equate to fewer than 0.3% of all CoCs held.

4.4 Compared to 2022/23 transport non-compliances reduced in 2023/24 by 16% (from 3344 to 2822), farm non-compliances increased by 36% (from 538 to 734). Part of the increase is due to several lameness non-compliances being registered in FSA systems as farm non-compliances. The evidence confirmed that the lameness had occurred prior to transportation. Prior to 2023/24 these cases would have been registered as transport non-compliances. This makes it difficult to make direct yearly comparisons for each category.

4.5 There were 3556 combined farm and transport non-compliance cases in 2023/24 and 3882 cases in 2022/23, which equates to an 8% reduction. We have continued to increase engagement and data sharing with APHA and LAs through our Animal Welfare Referrals Working Group and subgroups to improve the quality of referrals we make, to highlight repeat offences and offenders, and to secure improved enforcement outcomes, with the aim of improving animal welfare standards and reducing the number of non-compliances that occur.

5. Progress of In Year Activities

5.1 The Animal Welfare Action Plan is managed by the FSA and is monitored and approved by the Animal Welfare Steering Group comprised of representatives from FSA, Defra, Welsh Government, and other government departments. The Animal Welfare Action Plan seeks to improve and strengthen animal welfare controls through enhancing:

- verification and compliance.
- accountability and collaboration.

- education and instructions.
- the quality of our analysis and reporting.

5.2 In 2023/24 the FSA worked closely with Welsh Government to prepare for the implementation of **Mandatory CCTV in Slaughterhouses in Wales Regulations**, which came into force on 1 June 2024. The Regulations include a six-month period where the FSA will work with slaughterhouse FBOs to ensure they are compliant with the requirements, ahead of the Regulations being enforced from 1 December 2024. During 2023/24 the FSA conducted field surveys to assess the status of CCTV facilities in all 22 slaughterhouses in Wales. We communicated with industry representatives and slaughterhouse FBOs about the forthcoming new regulations, and we provided advice to Welsh Government during their production of Guidance for Operators which was published in May 2024.

5.3 In quarter 4 of 2023/24 the FSA animal welfare team led our sixth **animal welfare themed audit**. 30 slaughterhouses were audited during the period, 19 producing red meat and 11 producing poultry meat. The audit found that slaughterhouse FBO systems are broadly implemented in compliance with the legislation and provide a good level of assurance that the animal welfare legislative requirements are fulfilled. The audit was categorised into the following themes (with recommendations):

- Theme: CCTV (requirements, maintenance, and access).
 - Recommendation: Slaughterhouse FBOs to be reminded of their legal obligations under CCTV regulations, namely the installation and operation of the CCTV system, including the retention of images and information.
 - Recommendation: FSA to work with our veterinary service delivery partner to ensure that OV's understand their enforcement obligations when there has been a breach of CCTV legislation.
- Theme: Operation and maintenance of back up stunning equipment.
 - Recommendation: Slaughterhouse FBOs to be reminded to retain records of maintenance and calibration of back-up stunning equipment.
- Theme: Lairage (including water and feed provision).
 - Recommendation: Slaughterhouse FBOs and OV's should review all Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to ensure the content includes comprehensive detail of the provision of water, feed, and bedding, including out of hours where appropriate.
- Theme: Prioritising killing of animals unfit upon arrival.

- Recommendation: Slaughterhouse FBOs to ensure that their SOP procedures for prioritising and killing unfit animals reflects the legislative requirements of Assimilated Regulation No (EC) 1099/2009, Annex 3, 1.5.
- Theme: Handling and restraint.
 - No recommendations.
- Theme: Stun to stick time (duration from stunning to bleeding of animals).
 - Recommendation (best practice): Slaughterhouse FBOs to be reminded that their SOP should specify time limits from bleeding to dressing.
- Theme: Monitoring of unconsciousness/death.
 - Recommendation: Slaughterhouse FBOs to be reminded that their SOP should set out the frequency of their routine checks for signs of unconsciousness between stunning and death.

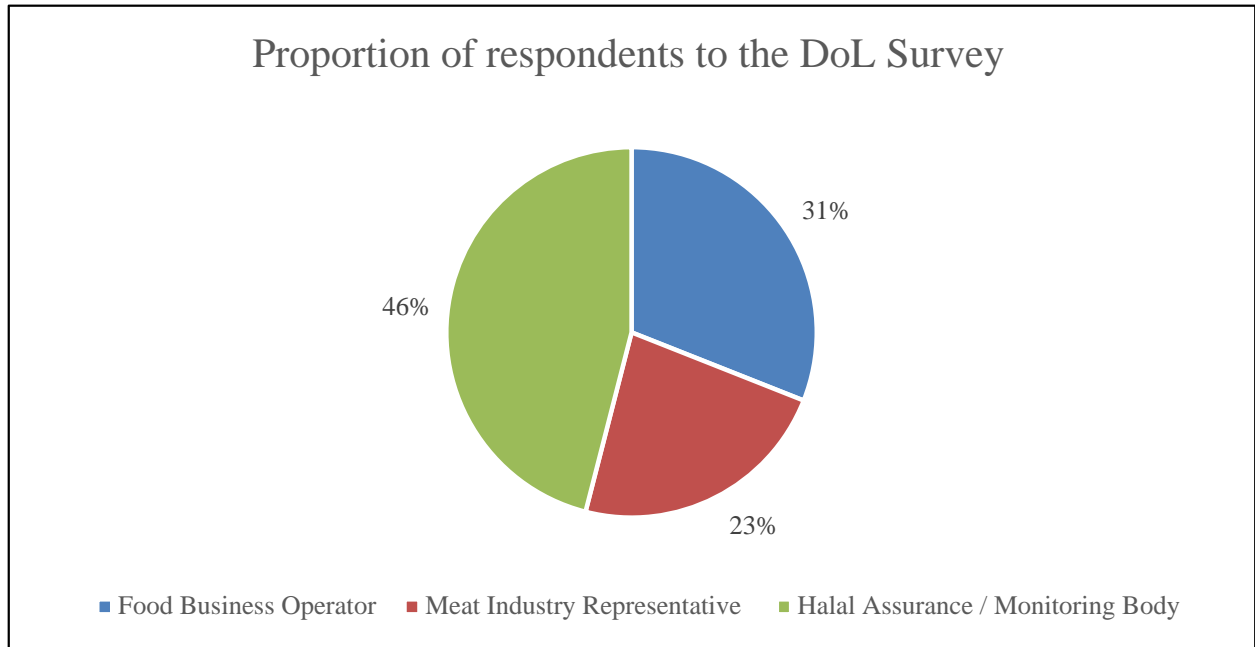
5.4 The FSA animal welfare team wrote to operational staff, slaughterhouse FBOs and industry representatives to advise them of the findings and to remind them of their responsibility to implement the recommendations. We will validate whether the recommendations are having the desired impact through reviews of slaughterhouse FBO inspection data, non-compliance data, and by conducting follow-up audits in 2024/2025.

5.5 The FSA animal welfare team developed an online facility in partnership with Government Digital Service for individuals to apply for a **Temporary Certificate of Competence (TCoC)** to slaughter or kill animals in approved slaughterhouses. A TCoC is required by a training slaughterhouse operative prior to qualifying for a full CoC. The online system received support from industry and was implemented on 5th February 2024. The system allows individuals to apply online. It is more accurate than the paper-based system it replaced, which enables FSA to process applications more quickly and make more efficient use of resources. There were 258 TCoC applications processed between 5th February and 31st March 2024.

5.6 The **Demonstration of Life (DoL)** protocol is available to all slaughterhouses processing sheep and goats. DoL is a voluntary scheme which provides assurance to Muslim consumers that stunning is compatible with halal slaughter requirements through assessment of an approved stunning procedure prior to slaughter. The scheme has had limited take-up by industry, with 3 slaughterhouse FBOs (approximately 23% of those performing non-stun slaughter in the 2022 slaughter sector survey) having adopted the scheme. In 2023/24 the FSA animal welfare team ran a stakeholder survey to determine if there are any barriers to take-up and to improve scheme awareness. Following the survey a further 2 slaughterhouse FBOs expressed an interest in the scheme with a likelihood that they will take part from 2024/25. The survey was issued to 29 recipients, across businesses categorised as slaughterhouses performing non-stun, meat industry representatives, and halal assurance / monitoring bodies. The results of the survey are shown in graph 2 below.

5.7

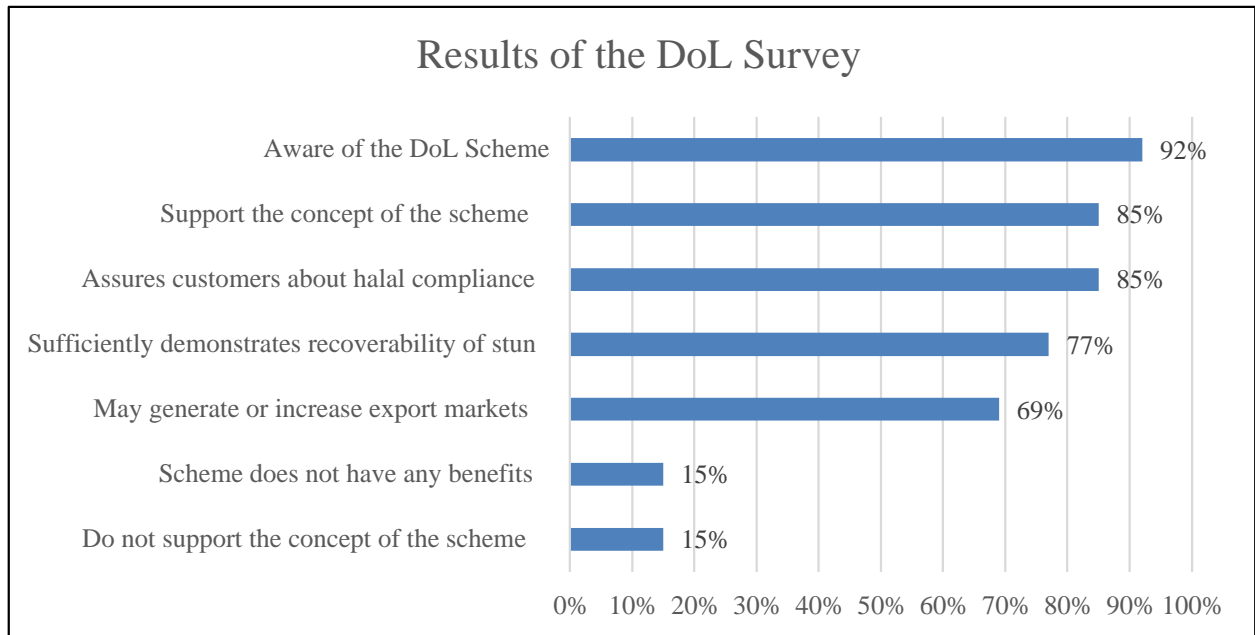
Proportion of respondents to the DoL Survey



5.8 Graph 1 – who responded to the DoL survey

5.9

Results of the DoL Survey



5.10 Graph 2 – Summary of results of the DoL survey

Although 85% of respondents supported the concept of DoL, it is not reflected by the number of non-stun slaughterhouses that have adopted the scheme. Five recommendations were identified and have been completed based on the survey results:

- Provide more information about DoL to those surveyed.
- Encourage use of the scheme on the FSA website.

- Encourage use of the scheme at industry meetings.
- Encourage stakeholders to promote the scheme via their own channels.
- Temporarily remove the FSA fee.

5.11 A Slaughter Sector Survey was conducted by the FSA in March 2022 on behalf of Defra and Welsh Government and was published in August 2022.

5.12 [Farm animals: slaughter sector survey 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/farm-animals-slaughter-sector-survey-2022)

5.13 The survey found there was a 2% decrease in the levels of slaughter without stunning of sheep from the 2018 survey, from 25% to 23% (61,120 animals to 49,450 animals) but a large increase from 7.5% to 25% for goats (from 30 to 92). The FSA, whilst acknowledging that non-stun slaughter is legally permissible, will continue to work with slaughterhouses to promote the use of the DoL scheme. There is no mandatory requirement for meat to be labelled according to production method, for example stunned or non-stunned. We will continue to liaise closely with Defra and Welsh Government on this and any other work related to non-stun slaughter.

5.14 In February 2024 we conducted a **slaughter sector survey** in all slaughterhouses in England and Wales on behalf of Defra and Welsh Government and presented the draft findings to them in June 2024. The survey scope was the same as in 2022. Defra and Welsh Government are responsible for publishing the final report and we will use the data to make comparisons to previous surveys.

5.15 Following the extreme heat in July and August 2022, the FSA animal welfare team developed a new **extreme weather incident reporting** protocol, in which actions are triggered by amber or red weather alerts. During 2023/24 the team led on delivering enhancements such as a change of trigger system (automated UKHSA alerts for earlier notifications), improved reporting, and revised template letters for distribution to operational staff, transporters, and industry representatives. These translate into business operators being sooner and better informed so that they can adjust their operations to safeguard animal welfare. The extreme weather incident reporting protocol has not been invoked since the enhancements were made because there have been no triggering weather alerts.

5.16 The reporting year did not include any incidents of **undercover filming** in slaughterhouses; however, the FSA animal welfare team have continued to proactively monitor the social media content from known activist groups which has identified some content relating to farm welfare issues. We have engaged with other enforcement bodies and industry stakeholders to ensure they are aware of the content and can investigate any allegations.

5.17 The FSA supported a successful Local Authority **animal welfare prosecution** in March following evidence gathered in August 2023 under The Welfare of Animals (Transport) (England) order 2006. The plant OV identified inappropriate handling of pigs during unloading and provided exceptional evidence to the local authority who in turn investigated and took appropriate action. Evidence included CCTV footage and delivery documentation. The case led to two guilty pleas being entered on separate charges. The sentence included financial penalties and costs exceeding £800. All operational staff involved in the evidence collection received positive feedback in securing this result.

5.18 Defra launched the **Smaller Abattoir Fund (SAF)** in December 2023, which is a grant scheme to support smaller businesses in England. Fund eligibility requires applicants to demonstrate improvements to animal health and welfare. FSA Operations teams ensured this

information reached all eligible slaughterhouse FBOs and engaged with them to support animal welfare improvement projects. Projects receiving financial support have included new stunning equipment and animal lairage facilities.

5.19 In 2023/24 we produced new **guidance** or enhanced existing guidance relating to:

- Processes for sharing evidence with APHA and LA.
- OV liaison with hauliers and slaughterhouse FBOs.
- Required OV actions when referring incidents to LA/PHA.
- Dead on arrival, lame, heavily pregnant animals, and foot pad dermatitis.
- Animals that are unfit for human consumption.
- Slaughterhouse FBO standard operating procedures.
- The movement of animals.
- Use of back-up stun devices, and the interpretation of stunner data records.
- Applications for certificates of competence (CoC) to slaughter animals.
- The scope of CoCs pertaining to non-stun religious slaughter.
- Enforcement of CoC holders.
- Clarification on the period of retention of CCTV, and on OV checks on the functionality of CCTV systems.

6. Consumer and Stakeholder Interest in Animal Welfare

6.1 Latest insights from [Wave 7](#) of FSA's **Food and You 2** survey (conducted Apr-Jul 2023) reveal the extent to which consumers are concerned about animal welfare in the food production process. A third of respondents (33%) reported that they were 'highly concerned' and 42% were 'somewhat concerned'. This is unchanged from the previous survey, conducted between October 2022 and January 2023 (32% and 42% respectively).

6.2 There were 15 Freedom of Information requests processed by the FSA animal welfare team during 2023/24. This figure represents 6.5% of the total received by the agency (231). The most common FOI themes were enquiries about slaughterhouse operations, FSA enforcement, and the death of animals during transport. We welcome the opportunity to respond and explain the information that we share.

7. Policy Activity and Forward Look

7.1 Defra published its Post Implementation Review of the Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015 and the Mandatory Use of Closed-Circuit Television in Slaughterhouses (England) Regulations 2018, in 2021 and 2023, respectively. The FSA animal welfare team will continue to work closely with Defra and Welsh Government to consider the conclusions from these reviews.

7.2 The FSA animal welfare team has worked successfully with counterparts in Defra and Welsh Government by providing operational insight into delivery of animal welfare policy and associated controls. Following a change of UK Government, the FSA animal welfare team have contributed to communications with new Ministerial teams including offers to host field visits to demonstrate frontline delivery and controls.

7.3 The introduction of mandatory CCTV in slaughterhouses in Wales is detailed at section 5.2. Future work will establish a consistent approach to application of the legislation in parallel with the English legislation. This will include gathering and acting on compliance data and supporting Field Operations teams with any necessary enforcement action.

7.4 We will work with Defra and Welsh Government to agree how the 2025/26 delivery of animal welfare controls will be funded and monitored and to consider the results from the Slaughter Sector Survey 2024.

8. Conclusions

8.1 This paper provides an update on animal welfare activities in England and Wales. The Board is asked to note:

- The progress made in delivering activities of the Animal Welfare Action Plan and to enhance delivery of animal welfare policy in slaughterhouses that has resulted in an 11.8% reduction in the number of animals that experienced an impact to their welfare.
- The progress made relating to farm and transport activity resulting in an 8% reduction in non-compliances.
- The ongoing activities by the FSA to improve animal welfare implementation and assurance in slaughterhouses in England and Wales, particularly in the areas of farm and transport referrals to APHA and LAs, and religious slaughter.
- The FSA position on taking proportionate enforcement action towards breaches of animal welfare and working collaboratively with other animal welfare regulators.

Animal Welfare - Annex 1

FSA 24/09/08 - Report by Junior Johnson and Kevin Maher

Animal Welfare Action Plan – actions completed 01/04/23 to 31/03/24

The Animal Welfare Steering Group is comprised of representatives from the FSA, Defra, Welsh Government, and Devolved Administrations. The Steering Group monitor progress of activities on the Animal Welfare Action Plan and identify and agree new activities to be added to the Animal Welfare Action Plan.

Strengthening verification and compliance

Action	Description
<p>Conduct Animal Welfare themed audit.</p>	<p>Between January and March 2024, the FSA animal welfare team conducted an animal welfare themed audit, which looked at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCTV (requirements, maintenance, and access) • Back up stunning equipment (operation and maintenance) • Lairage (water, feed, and provision) • Prioritising unfit animals (provision and killing) • Handling and restraint (suitability and operation) • Stun to stick time (operation and governance) • Monitoring of unconsciousness/death (protocols and governance) <p>The audit found that Food Business Operator (FBO) systems are broadly implemented in compliance with the legislation and provide a good level of assurance that the animal welfare legislative requirements are fulfilled.</p>
<p>Develop an online facility for applying for a Temporary Certificate of Competence (TCoC).</p>	<p>During 2023-2024 we developed an online TCoC form for applicants to slaughter or kill animals in approved slaughterhouses. The online system was tested extensively and communicated to the meat industry before being implemented on 5 February 2024.</p>

Action	Description
<p>Conduct a Demonstration of Life (DoL) survey.</p>	<p>In 2023-2024 we ran a halal industry stakeholder survey to investigate why take-up of DoL had been lower than anticipated, and whether there were any barriers. The survey was issued to 29 recipients and five recommendations were developed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more information about DoL to those surveyed. • Encourage use of the scheme on the FSA website. • Encourage use of the scheme at industry meetings. • Encourage stakeholders to promote the scheme. • Temporarily remove the FSA fee.
<p>Support mandation of CCTV in Wales.</p>	<p>In 2023-2024 we have supported Welsh Government in their progression toward introducing mandatory CCTV in slaughterhouses regulations. This included running a field survey to assess the levels of CCTV already voluntarily in operation and assisting Welsh Government with the production of guidance.</p>

Clarifying accountability and improving collaboration

Action	Description
<p>Enhance our extreme weather animal welfare reporting.</p>	<p>In 2023-2024 we liaised with other government stakeholders to review the extreme weather animal welfare reporting process that we introduced in 2022-2023. This led to several enhancements to the process, such as a change the trigger system (using UKHSA alerts) and revised template letters for distribution to operational staff and industry representatives.</p>

Action	Description
<p>Agree 2023-2024 Animal Welfare Service Level Agreement (SLA).</p>	<p>We agreed funding of the 2023-2024 animal welfare S LA with Defra and Welsh Government and we developed and agreed Key Performance Indicators.</p>
<p>Deliver improvements under the animal welfare referrals joint working group.</p>	<p>We improved guidance and procedure and we continued to enhance data sharing on repeat offences and offenders to support enforcement decision making by APHA and LAs.</p>

Improving education and instruction

Action	Description
<p>Produce referrals guidance.</p>	<p>We worked with Local Authorities and APHA to produce and refine a process flow to improve consistency of actions following a non-compliance referral to them.</p>
<p>Produce technical guidance.</p>	<p>We produced new technical guidance or enhanced existing guidance relating to liaison with APHA, LAs, hauliers, and FBOs. Referring of incidents to LA / APHA. Various animal conditions, and animals that are unfit for human consumption. FBO standard operating procedures. The movement of animals. The use of back-up stun devices, and stunner records. Certificate of competence (CoC) applications. CoC enforcement. The period of retention of CCTV, and on checks of the functionality of CCTV systems.</p>

Action	Description
Develop guidance for applicants of a TCoC.	We designed and published revised guidance to assist those intending to apply for a TCoC using the online application process.

Better analysis and reporting

Action	Description
Produce a Board report.	We produced 2022/23 Animal Welfare board paper.
Run and report on a 2024 slaughter sector survey.	In February 2024 we ran the biennial slaughter sector survey in all slaughterhouses in England and Wales on behalf of Defra and Welsh government.
Enhanced data reporting.	We continued to refine our publicly open data, as well as data tailored for FBOs and other regulators.

Animal Welfare - Annex 2

FSA 24/09/08 - Report by Junior Johnson and Kevin Maher

Total throughput and non-compliances

This data shows the total annual throughput and incidences of major and critical animal welfare related non-compliances in slaughterhouses. The table below summarises the figures from 2018/19 to 2023/24. It shows that since 2018 the proportion of animals detected being involved in major and critical incidents has remained very low, at a fraction of 1% of all animals.

Note, for comparison purposes we can only use the data from 2020/21 onwards because legacy systems did not routinely capture the number animals processed not in compliance with welfare.

Level 3 (major) and level 4 (critical) slaughterhouse animal welfare non-compliances

	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/21	2021/22	2022
Total number of animals processed (throughput)	1,045,801,000	1,055,611,000	1,038,234,124	1,036,098,739	1,011,000,000
Animals processed in compliance with welfare	1,045,790,000	1,055,592,000	1,038,194,198	1,036,047,607	1,011,000,000
Animals processed not in compliance with welfare	11,000	19,000 (A)	39,926 (B)	51,132 (C)	49,800
Percentage of animals processed compliantly	99.99895%	99.99820%	99.99615%	99.99506%	99.99999%
Percentage of animals involved in noncompliance	0.00105%	0.00180%	0.00384%	0.00494%	0.00001%

(A) includes a single incident involving 10,000 birds "Gas stunning equipment not optimised" scored as level 3 for potential to cause animal suffering.

(B) includes three instances, totalling 20,573 birds of mechanical breakdowns that delayed processing. There was no evidence that the birds experienced suffering or distress.

(C) includes three instances, totalling 46,281 birds where food / water / ventilation was not adequately provided. There was no evidence that the birds experienced suffering or distress.

(D) 40,089 of the 49,898 animals were scored at level 3 (potential for suffering). Of that, there was an incident of 17,400 birds in which unloading was delayed, however the birds were prioritised for slaughter and did not suffer from the delay.

(E) Includes a batch of 30,000 birds and a batch of 10,650 birds where slaughter was delayed due to plant breakdowns and feed/water was not provided.

Animal Welfare - Annex 3

FSA 24/09/08 - Analysis of animal welfare trends for major and critical non-compliances in England and Wales FY – 2023

Management summary

Analysis of non-compliance numbers for the FY 2023 by location indicate that, slaughterhouse related non-compliances increased by 2% compared with previous year, on farm by 36% and transport reduced by 16%. Over the last 3 years, slaughterhouse non-compliance numbers have averaged 363 per year, which indicates that FY 2023 (362) is in line with recent trends.

The average non-compliance numbers over the last 3 years for transport and on farm have been 3090 and 702 per year respectively. Comparing the respective 3-year average numbers for transport and on farm with FY 2023, indicate below average numbers in FY 2023 for transport (2522) and above average numbers for on farm in FY 2023 (734). Over the last 3 years the combined transport and on farm non-compliances have averaged 3793, which indicates that FY 2023 (3556) is below the average.

1. Throughout this report 'FY 2023' refers to the year from April 2023 to March 2024.
2. The number of CCTV non-compliances identified by live viewing of CCTV decreased from 16 to 3 cases, and the number of non-compliances identified by retrospective viewing of CCTV increased from 37 to 45 cases. The number of non-compliances of CCTV regulations reduced from 18 to 14 cases. The number of non-compliances identified in person increased from 270 to 282 cases.
3. Lairage remains the process point with the highest number of non-compliance cases (112 i.e., 1 less than FY 2022) at 31% of the total number of non-compliances for FY 2023.
4. The process points that recorded increases in FY 2023 are bleeding 48 (change +7), stunning 65 (change +15) and management 59 (change +4). Lairage 112 (change -1), unloading 12 (change -13) and movement 66 (change -3) recorded decreased levels over their FY 2022 cases.
5. Lairage (31%), movement (18%) and stunning (18%) were the top 3 locations for non-compliances, accounting for 67% of all cases.
6. Poultry related breaches accounted for more than a third (34%, change -3) of all cases, cattle (29%, change +2), sheep (24%, change -1) and pigs at 11% (+2).
7. Cattle and Pigs related non-compliances increased by 11% and 21% respectively in FY 2023, but poultry and sheep recorded decreases of 6% and 3% respectively.

Section 1: Analysis of non-compliance by location

Figure 1 illustrates the comparative change in non-compliance levels for the respective animal welfare locations over the last 3 financial years: FY 2020 to FY 2023. This shows that, transport related non-compliances decreased by 16% in FY 2023, on-farm non-compliances increased by 36% and slaughterhouse increased by 2%.

Figure 1: Changes in non-compliances by financial years and location.

Figures in brackets denote the absolute change in the number of cases from FY 2022 to FY 2023.

Figure 2 shows the comparative trends in non-compliance levels for the respective locations from FY 2020 to FY 2023.

Figure 2: Trends in non-compliances per location.

Table 1 below is a summary of non-compliances by severity (level 3 and 4) and location (transport, on farm, and slaughterhouse) for the last 3 financial years (FY 2021 to FY 2023). Compared with other locations, slaughterhouse non-compliances are relatively split between major and critical cases, whereas in the other locations the number of critical cases far outweighs that of major non-compliance cases.

Table 1: Number of non-compliances by financial years and location.

Table showing the number of non-compliances by financial years				
		All animal welfare breaches: April 2021 - Mar 2022		
FY 2021	Severity	Transport	On Farm	Slaughterhouse
Major	Level 3	38	10	192

Critical	Level 4	3067	825	180
		3105	835	372
		All animal welfare breaches: April 2022 - Mar 2023		
FY 2022	Severity	Transport	On Farm	Slaughterhouse
Major	Level 3	21	8	198
Critical	Level 4	3323	530	156
		3344	538	354
		All animal welfare breaches: April 2023 - Mar 2024		
FY 2023	Severity	Transport	On Farm	Slaughterhouse

Major	Level 3	29	6	193
Critical	Level 4	2793	728	169
		2822	734	362

Section 2: Slaughterhouse only analysis

Figure 3 illustrates the composition of total non-compliances in FY 2021 to FY 2023 by different categories i.e., CCTV related and regular cases.

In this chart 'Regular' means non-compliances identified by or reported to the FSA Official. 'CCTV (live and retrospective)' means non-compliances identified via CCTV review by the FSA Official. 'CCTV regulation' means breaches of CCTV regulations, for example degradation of cameras. 'No SOP' although a Regular non-compliance is shown separately due to its prominence of occurrence historically.

In FY 2023, the proportion of CCTV (live and retrospective) non-compliances decreased by 2ppts from 15% of total non-compliances to 13%. The proportion of CCTV regulation non-compliances decreased by 1ppts from 5% in FY 2022 to 4% in FY 2023. The proportion of No SOPs non-compliances increased by 1ppts from 4% in FY 2022 to 5% in FY 2023.

Comparing the number of actual cases for FY2022 and FY 2023, CCTV (live and retrospective) breaches decreased by 9% (from 53 cases to 48), and CCTV regulation non-compliances by 22% from 18 to 14. Recorded incidents of No SOPs increased from 13 cases in FY 2022 to 18 in FY 2023, and the number of regular non-compliances increased by 4% from 270 to 282 cases.

Overall, recorded incidents of slaughterhouse non-compliances increased by 2% in FY 2023 (from 354 cases to 362). Total numbers of non-compliances have remained stable over the last 3 years, with a peak in CCTV live numbers in FY 2022.

Figure 3: Breakdown of slaughterhouse non-compliances by financial year.

Figure 4 highlights the total non-compliance comparison between FY 2022 and FY 2023 by quarters. The comparison shows increased levels of non-compliances in Q2, and Q3 of FY 2023 compared with the same period in FY 2022. Compared with FY 2022, there were increases of 4% (92 to 96) and 24% (76 to 94) in Q2 and Q3 respectively in FY 2023. These increases were almost offset by comparative declines of 2% and 11% respectively in Q1 and Q4 of FY 2023.

Increased levels of non-compliances in Q3 were mainly due to increased levels of stunning and bleeding non-compliances in comparison with the same period in FY 2022. Their combined totals trebled from 5 cases in November 2022 to 15 cases in November 2023.

Figure 4: Change in slaughterhouse non-compliances by financial year quarters FY 2022 vs FY 2023.

Figures in brackets indicates the proportional change in non-compliance compared with the same quarterly level in FY 2022. Note: Q1 relates to April-June; Q4 relates to Jan-Mar.

Figure 5 shows non-compliances by process points within the slaughterhouse. Sheep related lairage cases account for 11% of all slaughterhouses non-compliances (a decrease of 1ppts) followed by cattle lairage with 10% of the total breaches in FY-2023. In terms of the actual number of non-compliances, sheep related lairage decreased from 43 cases in FY 2022 to 38 cases in FY 2023, and cattle related lairage increased from 39 cases to 37 in FY 2023.

There were changes in the level of cattle related management breaches, which have increased from 3 cases in FY 2022 to 17 cases in FY 2023, and cattle related stunning cases from 8 cases to 22 cases in FY 2023.

Figure 5: Number of non-compliances by animal species and process point – FY 2023.

Figure 6 illustrates the comparative change in the non-compliance numbers for FY 2022 and FY 2023 by process types per animal species in slaughterhouses. It captures changes across animal species year on year. For example, it highlights the increased numbers in management and stunning of cattle discussed in the previous paragraph. This chart also highlights the significant decrease in the number of management related cases in poultry from 32 cases in FY 2022 to 21 cases in FY 2023.

Figure 6. Comparison of FY 2022 and FY 2023 slaughterhouse non-compliances by animal species.

Figure 7 shows the trends in recorded slaughterhouse breaches split by severity over the past four years. The number of recorded level 3 non-compliances decreased by 3% in FY 2023 from 198 cases in FY 2022 to 193, while recorded level 4 non-compliances increased by 8% (from 156 to 169) over the same period.

Levels of non-compliance severity:

Level 3 (MAJOR non-compliance) – Potential risk to welfare.

Level 4 (CRITICAL non-compliance) – Poses a serious and imminent risk to animal welfare.

Figure 7: Trends in slaughterhouse non-compliances – FY 2020 to FY 2023

Figure 8 illustrates the change in numbers of non-compliances across all animal species in FY 2023 in comparison with FY 2022. Cases involving cattle have increased by 11% (95 to 105), pigs by 21% (34 to 41), sheep decreased by 3% (90 to 87) and poultry by 6% from 132 to 124 cases. Cattle account for 29% of total non-compliances a decrease of 2ppts from FY 2022, pigs 11% (+2), poultry 34% (-3) and sheep 24% (-1). Other animal species make up the remaining 2%.

Figure 8. Change in the number of non-compliances per financial year by animal species.

****Figures in brackets represent proportion of FY 2023 total. Other species make up the remaining 2%.***

Figure 9 shows the split by severity of cases for each of the slaughterhouse process points. Lairage has 112 total cases with 64% and 36% level 3 and 4 respectively. Bleeding (48 total cases) has the highest proportion of level 4 cases (77%), followed by movement (66 cases) with 62% being level 4 cases and stunning (65 total cases) with 49% level 4.

Figure 9: Slaughterhouse non-compliances by process point – FY 2023.

****Figures in brackets represent proportion of FY 2023 total.***

Figure 10 illustrates the changes in non-compliances by process point between FY-2022 and FY-2023. The chart shows increased (blue bars) cases in bleeding, management and stunning process points, compared with FY 2022 and decreases (orange bars) in lairage, movement, unloading and other.

Figure 10: Change in number of slaughterhouse non-compliances by process point – FY 2022

Figure 11 also highlights the increases in non-compliances across all the identifiable categories of animal species in FY 2023. Cattle, pigs and other species had increases of 10, 7 and 2 cases respectively. Poultry and sheep recorded decreases of (-8) and (-3) respectively.

Figure 11. Change in number of slaughterhouse non-compliances by animal species – FY 2022.

Section 3: Analysis of Transport and On Farm non-compliances

Figure 12 illustrates changes in the number of on-farm and transport related non-compliances for FY 2022 and FY 2023. There has been a reduction in transport non-compliances across all animal species except sheep. In general, transport non-compliances have reduced by 16% in FY 2023. Most of the major sources of non-compliances in transport have recorded decreases in cases, particularly cases of Death on Arrival (DOA) – multiple deaths have declined by 71% from 350 cases in FY 2022 to 101 in FY 2023.

On farm non-compliances on the other hand have increased by 36% in FY 2023 compared with FY 2022, but back to the levels in FY 2021. These changes have been driven by steep increases in cases of pododermatitis, mastitis, arthritis, broken horns and hernias (see table 3).

Figure 12. Non-compliances in Transport and On-farm by animal species.

Tables 2 and 3 illustrate the major sources of On-farm and transport non-compliances in FY 2023 and compares with their previous levels in FY 2022. Dead on arrival (DOA) remains the leading source of transport related non-compliances but declined by 14% in FY 2023. The category which experienced the highest rate of increase for transport was unloading causing injury, from 3 to 14 cases.

Table 2. Major causes of Transport non-compliances - FY 2022 v 2023.

Type	FY 2022	FY 2023	Change
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Dead On Arrival (DOA)	1223	1056	-14%
Trapping	953	857	-10%
Late stages of pregnancy - Identified at PM	279	243	-13%
Incoordination/unable to walk/unable to stand	182	237	30%
Dead On Arrival (DOA) - Multiple deaths	350	101	-71%
Dead On Arrival (DOA) - suspected cold/heat stress	-	67	-
Broken Leg	44	65	48%
Lameness score of 3	52	32	-38%
Late stages of pregnancy - Identified at AM	26	30	15%
Lameness score of 2	18	29	61%
Crates/modules poorly maintained	-	18	-

Lameness score of 4	35	18	-49%
Unloading causing injury	3	14	367%
Other*	179	29	-84%
Total	3344	2796	-16%

Other – the sum of all the remaining 28 minor categories in FY 2023.*

Table 3. Major causes of On Farm non-compliances – FY 2022 v 2023.

Type	FY 2022	FY 2023	Change
Pododermatitis	57	115	102%
Mastitis	8	84	950%
Bruising	72	77	7%
Open Wounds	48	75	56%
Broken limbs	71	61	-14%
Prolapse	35	31	-11%

Type	FY 2022	FY 2023	Change
Tail bites	68	31	-54%
Broken horns	1	27	2600%
Lameness score of 3	-	24	-
Arthritis	8	22	175%
Hernias	8	17	113%
Eye infection	9	16	78%
Lameness score of 2	-	12	-
Overgrown/Ingrown horn	24	10	-58%
Other*	129	132	2%
Total	538	734	36%

Other* – the sum of all the remaining 26 minor categories in FY 2023.

Lameness scores would usually fall under transport regulations; however, the OV's have been providing greater detailed evidence of the origin of these conditions. We have identified a number of older, partially healed lameness cases which occurred on farm in FY 2023.

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