

# Rural Development sub-Committee

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## Evidence from Welsh Lamb and Beef Producers Ltd ""

### Rural Development Sub-Committee Inquiry into Animal Welfare and Meat Hygiene at Abattoirs and Slaughterhouses in Wales

1. Welsh Lamb & Beef Producers Ltd (WLBP) is an agricultural co-operative of 7,500 Welsh livestock farmers.
2. WLBP operates the Farm Assured Welsh Livestock Scheme in Wales, which accounts for around 75% of all Welsh livestock.
3. The FAWL scheme is fully accredited to UKAS certification standards and compliant with EN45011 Quality Assurance protocol.
4. Animal health & welfare feature very highly in the scheme protocol. WLBP is confident that the health & welfare of its members stock is of a very high standard (FAWL protocol available on request)
5. The majority of UK abattoirs (particularly the larger ones) check the assurance status of Welsh livestock via WLBP's on line status checker on the web. WLBP monitors the checks made which amount to tens of thousands annually. WLBP is confident that the Red Meat Supply Chain takes farm assurance (including animal health & welfare) very seriously.
6. WLBP has recently launched an "on line Animal Health Planning Tool" which is available, free of charge to its 7.500 members. WLBP is working very closely with the veterinary profession and Farming Connect in Wales to improve animal health planning.
7. WLBP is aware of the discussions and debate over the change in the MHS cost structure and that this could impose additional costs on the Welsh slaughter industry. The financial well being of this industry is of great importance to the Welsh livestock industry, as it is vital to maintain livestock slaughter capacity in Wales.
8. Wales is fortunate to have several large abattoirs that service multiple retail outlets. It is important to note the critical mass of Welsh stock slaughtered in these large plants. The new MHS charge could result in these large plants having to finance increased statutory levels of MHS inspectors even though their standards are very high.
9. To mitigate these costs to the industry WLBP would support a Risk Based System of MHS audits to ensure that the efforts of audit and inspection are concentrated where it is most needed. WLBP would support greater scrutiny of high risk plants.
10. Due to the rigour of the Farm Assurance Scheme with regard to animal health and welfare WLBP would wish to see a more rigorous enforcement of MHS audit breaches, which would fit in well with a Risk Based System.
11. Animal health, welfare and meat hygiene are all paramount to consumer confidence in the industry therefore any compromise or derogations to the high standards should be minimised.