



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

**WRITTEN STATEMENT
BY
THE WELSH GOVERNMENT**

TITLE **Safeguarding animal welfare at slaughter**
DATE **8 October 2015**
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The safeguarding of the health and welfare of all animals kept in Wales throughout their lives - up to and including the point of slaughter - is a priority for the Welsh Government. I launched the Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework in July last year, and the Implementation Plan 2015-16 this year. They describe the approach we are taking to ensure animals in Wales are healthy and have a good quality of life. The documents set some specific milestones for the Welsh Government, Local Authorities, the Food Standards Agency and Food Business operators.

The Codes of Recommendations for the Welfare of Livestock are produced to encourage livestock keepers to adopt the highest standards of animal husbandry. Good husbandry practices on our farms ensure that the welfare of our livestock is promoted and protected from birth throughout the production chain.

However, good animal welfare does not begin and end on farm.

While there have been no reported cases in Wales, the reports earlier this year about animal welfare abuses in slaughterhouses in England should be of concern to all of us.

In Wales, we have already put in place additional welfare safeguards that improve the welfare of animals produced for food. The Welfare of Animals at Time of Killing (Wales) Regulations 2014 implemented the provisions of EC Regulation 1099/2009. These Regulations apply to slaughter and related operations in slaughterhouses, and also to seasonal slaughter and related

operations outside a slaughterhouse in Wales. The provisions place greater responsibility on the slaughterhouse operator relating to the welfare of the animals, including a standard operating procedure for killing and handling. They also require the appointment of an Animal Welfare Officer at slaughterhouses operating at throughputs of 1,000 livestock units or 150,000 birds per year.

From May 2014, enhanced training requirements have been in place for new entrants to the industry in Wales. These include supervised courses in respect of the slaughter operation, the species of animal, and the equipment used before a Certificate of Competence is issued.

Those permitted to exercise transitional provisions during the implementation of the Welfare of Animals at Time of Killing (Wales) Regulations 2014 (WATOK) have been reminded of the need to convert to the Certificate of Competence or appropriate WATOK licence before the 8 December by the Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales to ensure full compliance with the EU Regulations.

There is always more that we can do, although the reports by the Food Standard Agency (FSA) do present some encouraging trends. The FSA's 2013 Animal Welfare Survey of slaughterhouses in Britain published earlier this year shows an improving picture compared to the 2011 survey. 96 percent of slaughterhouses were compliant with regulations compared to only 86 percent of red meat, and 84 percent of white meat abattoirs, in 2011. The FSA carried out an unannounced inspection programme of slaughterhouses in Great Britain in the spring of 2015 which included 26 Welsh premises. 23 were fully compliant with welfare requirements and there were no urgent improvements required in any of the Welsh slaughterhouses. 12 of the 26 had CCTV systems installed.

In 2013, the Welsh Government commissioned the Farm and Animal Welfare Committee (FAWC) to provide independent and impartial advice about the methods and effectiveness of CCTV used in slaughterhouses. The FAWC report strongly recommends that all Food Business Operators should install CCTV in all areas where live animals are kept and where animals are stunned and killed. FAWC sees CCTV as an important safeguard and a part of a holistic approach to high standards of animal health and welfare.

There are a number of safeguards in place to assure the welfare of all livestock, before slaughter. The FSA monitors, delivers and enforces the welfare provisions at all slaughterhouses in Wales on behalf of the Welsh Government. The role of FSA Official Veterinarians includes the monitoring of provisions in place to ensure that animals are spared unnecessary suffering, distress or pain from their arrival in the lairage and throughout the slaughter process.

Under EU regulations full responsibility for animal welfare and food safety in slaughterhouses rests with food business operators who must meet legislative requirements in terms of slaughterhouse design, layout and equipment. Slaughterers must be competent and appropriately trained and licensed to slaughter all species presented to them.

A properly trained workforce will be most influential in safeguarding animal welfare at slaughter but it is not an absolute guarantee. Accurate monitoring and record keeping is an essential part of the controls. Alongside the important work of Official Veterinarians and Animal Welfare Officers it is encouraging to note that the use of CCTV at slaughterhouses is considered as being a useful means of monitoring animal welfare standards.

I am pleased that there have been no reports of animal welfare abuses in slaughterhouses in Wales during the round of media stories earlier this year and I want to ensure that we maintain the highest possible welfare standards at slaughter in Wales. However we must not be complacent. My firm belief is that every slaughterhouse in Wales should have CCTV installed in line with the FAWC recommendations. I am determined to make this happen. I sincerely hope that this can be achieved with the full support of the industry in Wales. It is for this reason that I am inviting Food Business Operators to participate in a task and finish group with Government to take this agenda forward and identify what else could be done to enhance standards. I will be asking the group to engage with key questions such as how the footage should be monitored and stored. This is in line with the key delivery milestone in the Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework Implementation Plan 2015-16 mentioned above.

It is important for Food Business Operators (FBOs) to take a lead alongside Government on this matter. The task and finish group will be able to link directly into the work of the Wales Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group.

There are currently 25 slaughterhouses operating in Wales, 21 of which are red meat plants, three of this total are large scale plants and the majority are small operations. These small abattoirs are an essential part of the meat processing landscape and provide a local outlet for farmers; they reduce the transport time for livestock, and also provide jobs in rural communities. I will be writing to all FBOs to invite them to participate in the group's work.

In the interests of maintaining the reputation of the industry in Wales I will be expecting urgent progress on this matter but if required I would consider other means for implementing the FAWC recommendation. However, it is reassuring that slaughterhouses in Wales do maintain high standards, and greater partnership working will enable all FBOs to improve and attain the highest standards possible.

I will be monitoring progress on this key area and my officials will be in touch with all FBOs to take forward this strand of work. I will be monitoring progress on this key area and my officials will be in touch with all FBOs to take forward this strand of work.