

# Petition P-05-916: Adequate funding to protect the welfare of farm animals in Welsh slaughterhouses

**Reference:** RS19/10865-6

**Petition Number:** P-05-916

**Petition title:** Adequate funding to protect the welfare of farm animals in Welsh slaughterhouses

**Text of petition:** We call on the Welsh Government to provide adequate funding to protect the welfare of farm animals at the time of their slaughter in Wales.

The Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (Wales) Regulations 2014 are meant to provide protection to animals at the time of their slaughter. To do so, they must be properly applied and enforced by the Food Standards Agency (FSA), and there must be sufficient funding for it to be able to carry out its duties under the Regulations.

At the moment the Welsh Government provides the FSA with only £20,000 per annum to protect animal welfare at slaughter across at least 23 Welsh slaughterhouses jointly slaughtering tens of millions of animals each year. This is a pitiful amount and entirely inadequate to cover all that is required including effective monitoring of welfare practice, investigation, enforcement, legal advice, and the staffing to do so. The amounts provided are far below what the FSA has itself indicated (in Board papers) that it needs to carry out its duties regarding welfare of animals at slaughter.

There is much evidence from undercover investigations in slaughterhouses elsewhere in the UK that welfare regulations are frequently breached and that many animals suffer abuse. There is no reason to suppose that these risks do not also arise in Welsh slaughterhouses.

The public has a right to expect that welfare regulations are thoroughly and consistently applied. The Welsh Government must urgently review its funding of the FSA for this purpose, and significantly increase funding to protect animal welfare at slaughter without delay.

## 1. Background



The ***Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (Wales) Regulations 2014*** (the 2014 regulations) make provision for the administration and enforcement of EU ***Regulation 1099/2009*** in Wales. These regulations require persons to obtain a certificate of competence or temporary certificate of competence before killing animals or carrying out related operations in a slaughterhouse. They also set out national rules to ensure more extensive protection of animals at the time of killing.

The **Food Standards Agency (FSA)** is an independent Government department working across England, Wales and Northern Ireland to protect public health and consumers' wider interests in food. Under the 2014 regulations, the FSA is a competent authority and has responsibilities which include taking action in the event of any non-compliance.

The FSA delivers animal welfare policies in approved meat establishments as part of **official controls** on behalf of the UK Government and the Welsh Government. A **manual for official controls** (Volume 1, Chapter 2.3) further describes the tasks, responsibilities and duties of the FSA's staff in relation to animal welfare in slaughterhouses. The UK Government and the Welsh Government hold the overall policy responsibility for animal welfare in England and Wales, respectively. The FSA's delivery activity is covered by a Service Level Agreement (SLA), as described in the **concordat** between the FSA and the Welsh Government. Under the SLA, the FSA carries out activities including animal welfare inspections, audits, enforcement, licencing and education.

## 2. Non-compliance with animal welfare regulations

The FSA publishes **reports** on non-compliance with animal welfare regulations in slaughterhouses, for Wales and England jointly. The **annual report on animal welfare to the FSA board** (PDF 558KB) also provides details of non-compliance. Data presented in the 2019 annual report shows that there were 386 animal welfare breaches in slaughterhouses, in England and Wales, for the 2018-2019 reporting period. This figure represents only those breaches classed as a level 3 or level 4 breach (where a level 3 breach is a major non-compliance - potential risk to welfare, and level 4 is a critical non-compliance - serious and imminent risk to animal welfare).

In September 2019, the Farmers Fresh abattoir in Wrexham was the subject of **media coverage** following an investigation by the animal rights group **Animal Aid** into animal welfare. **The BBC** has reported that a criminal investigation is under way.

## 3. Funding of the FSA

Annual animal welfare updates to the FSA's Board ([September 2017](#) and [September 2018](#)) refer to a "considerable increase in enforcement activity on animal welfare" attributed to the implementation of the 2014 regulations and the introduction of the FSA's "Deter, Prevent, Detect, Enforce" animal welfare programme in 2016.

The September 2017 board paper on annual welfare stated that (emphasis added):

...under the provisions of the Service Level Agreement with Defra and Welsh Government, FSA received a contribution of **c.£40k for animal welfare activities in 2016/17**. In 2017/18, this contribution is expected to rise to c.£50k. Although this is an increase on 2016/17, it **represents only a small proportion of the overall cost of delivering the Government's animal welfare policy in slaughterhouses**.

The September 2018 paper reiterated these concerns (emphasis added):

...in 2017/18 FSA received a contribution of c£50k which **does not meet the true costs of welfare official controls which we conservatively estimate to be in excess of £1m**, only a small proportion of which is recovered from industry. During the period we have continued our negotiations with Defra and WG for increased contributions and we are pleased to report that **for 2018/19 Defra and WG will contribute c£170k**. The increased amounts will go towards CCTV implementation and enforcement costs (**Defra contribution only**), annual welfare themed audit and OVs time for recording non-compliances, referrals for investigation and general welfare enforcement in slaughterhouses. The uplift does not cover any FSA legal team costs for appeals and investigations nor the welfare portion of inspection costs and these are areas we will be discussing with Defra and WG for the financial period 2019/20.

Whilst the figures cited in the FSA board papers represent a joint contribution from the Welsh Government and Defra, a [FOI response](#) (257 KB), previously shared with this Committee, provides information on the contributions of the Welsh Government alone. It stated that the funding provided by the Welsh Government directly to the FSA for welfare controls totalled £33,627.77 for the three year period of 2015-2017. It also stated that the Welsh Government would be providing the FSA with £20,187.00 in funding for 2018/19.

The [September 2019 annual animal welfare paper](#) does not provide an indication of the contribution for 2019/20. Furthermore, whilst the Welsh Government's [draft budget 2019-2020 expenditure lines](#) include separate references to animal welfare and the FSA, the total fund budgeted for the Welsh Government's contribution to the FSA's delivery of animal welfare services in slaughterhouses is not explicit.

## 4. Welsh Government action

On 22 March 2018, the Welsh Government **announced** a new £1.1 million Food Business Investment scheme package of grant aid for small and medium sized slaughterhouses in Wales.

The Welsh Government's **website** states that this funding:

...will include both capital investment and provide advice on animal welfare, business improvement and technical matters. Welfare friendly infrastructure and facilities will be supported and also the installation and upgrading of CCTV monitoring systems.

Lesley Griffiths, the then Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs, **said**:

The grant aid will also help these businesses install and upgrade CCTV monitoring systems. I want to assist businesses to put systems in place while legislating for CCTV in slaughterhouses is taking place in England. I want Wales' slaughterhouses to be fully prepared as I continue to explore opportunities to legislate in the longer term.

Lesley Griffiths provided an update on the scheme in a letter to this Committee on 22 October 2019. The letter highlighted that expressions of interest "are now being progressed to full applications with a January 2020 deadline". The Minister also emphasised that all applicants will be required to receive expert welfare advice on the movement and management of animals in their premises.

## 5. National Assembly for Wales action

On 3 July 2018, this Committee received **evidence** from Lesley Griffiths, the then Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs, on a previous petition (**P-04-433: CCTV in Slaughterhouses**). The petition text was:

We call on the National Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to introduce mandatory CCTV in slaughterhouses to help vets with better regulation and monitoring, to provide footage for training and retraining, to deter some of the animal welfare abuses filmed by Animal Aid, and to provide evidence for prosecutions should they be necessary.

Lesley Griffiths **told the Committee** she was "still considering whether to bring in legislation" but that her "priority at the moment is to bring forward the grant scheme". She also said:

We've got incredibly high animal welfare standards. I have not received any complaints about any of the abattoirs. I've had a bit of speculation, but what I've always said is, 'Come back to me with evidence and we'll look into this', and I

haven't had that. So, I think it's better to work in partnership with the sector. A couple of people had raised with me that funding, as is often the case, was a barrier, so take that barrier away and, as I say, we'll see how many take up the scheme when we open the window before the end of this term.

At the time of writing, CCTV is not mandatory in Welsh slaughterhouses, although, [according to the FSA \(68KB\)](#) "around 99% of animals slaughtered in Wales are killed in premises with some form of CCTV". Regulations on [mandatory use of CCTV in slaughterhouses in England](#) came into force in May 2018. Earlier this year, the Scottish Government [announced](#) that it would also make CCTV mandatory for slaughterhouses in Scotland.

Welfare in Welsh Abattoirs [was the focus of a debate](#) in Plenary on 14 November 2018. Gareth Bennett AM said:

14 slaughterhouses in Wales do not have CCTV surveillance in operation, although most of the larger ones do... according to freedom of information requests submitted to the Welsh Government, data is not held on the positioning or range of cameras that are operating in slaughterhouses or the number of animals slaughtered without the presence of CCTV. However, the British Veterinary Association estimates that 2 million birds and almost 400,000 sheep, pigs, and cattle are slaughtered without CCTV surveillance each year in Wales. The BVA stated that the potential risk of welfare harm to these animals is increased by the lack of CCTV.

In response, Lesley Griffiths, the then Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs, [said](#)

As I've stated many times... I would consider legislating to ensure CCTV is in place in all Welsh slaughterhouses. However, I will initially work with food business operators in a supportive relationship to achieve the same objective.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.