

# HOME SLAUGHTER GUIDANCE

A guide to the law in Scotland

Published: May 2024



## Version control

Version	Date	Last review carried out	Next review date	Comments
	May 2024	March 2019	May 2027	Amendment to include the use of holders of Certificate of Competence to slaughter livestock under the responsibility and supervision of the owner. This includes good practice advice that advance notice of the home slaughter is given to the local authority  Update to the useful contact list

## Contact information

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## **1. Introduction**

“Home slaughter” is the slaughter of a livestock animal by its owner or a person who holds a Certificate of Competence (CoC) on the owners property for the owners personal consumption or that of members of their immediate household living there. Home slaughter does not take place in an approved slaughterhouse. Carcasses or parts of carcasses from home slaughter livestock, other than those being disposed of as animal by-products, cannot be removed to another premises for processing.

“Home slaughter” is distinct from “private slaughter” which is when the owner of the animal sends it to an approved slaughterhouse to be slaughtered and the dressed carcass is returned to the owner.

It should be noted that home slaughter is likely to carry a greater human health risk than slaughter that takes place in an approved establishment.

## **2. Intended audience**

Livestock<sup>1</sup> owners considering slaughter on farm<sup>2</sup> for their own personal consumption or that of members of their immediate household living there.

Local Authorities<sup>3</sup> which are responsible for the enforcement of Animal Welfare and the domestic Food Hygiene and Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy (TSE) Regulations on farm.

Holders of a CoC issued by the relevant competent authority who carry out a home slaughter under the responsibility and supervision of the livestock owner for the personal consumption of the owner or that of members of their immediate household.

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<sup>1</sup> This Guide is not intended to cover all livestock species but it does cover those species for which we receive most enquiries. It is particularly applicable to cattle, sheep and goats where TSE controls apply

<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this guide, ‘farm’ is defined as any premises where livestock are kept

<sup>3</sup> To find your Local Authority go to <http://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/local-authorities>

### **3. Purpose of guidance**

To provide advice on the conditions that must be met to allow the legal home slaughter of livestock.

To minimise any potential risks to human health.

### **4. Legal status of guidance**

These guidance notes have been produced to explain clearly the legal requirements of Regulation (EC) No. 853/2004<sup>4</sup>, Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSE) Regulation (EC) No. 999/2001<sup>5</sup>, Food Hygiene (Scotland) Regulations 2006<sup>6</sup> and Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (Scotland) Regulations 2010<sup>7</sup>. The guidance should be read in conjunction with the legislation itself. It is not an authoritative interpretation of the law, as only the Courts have that power. Every effort has been made to make this guidance as helpful as possible. However, it is ultimately the responsibility of individual businesses to ensure their compliance with the law. Livestock keepers or businesses with specific queries may wish to seek the advice of their local enforcement agency, which will usually be the trading standards/environmental health department of the local authority.

### **5. Food Hygiene Regulations**

Regulation (EC) No. 853/2004 indicates that in most cases meat sold for human consumption must be from animals slaughtered in an approved slaughterhouse. Such slaughter would, amongst other things, be subject to inspection and verification by Food Standards Scotland (FSS). In limited circumstances, meat from livestock animals slaughtered on farm following an emergency may be placed on the market for sale for human consumption. Under these circumstances, the animals are subject to veterinary examination and certification on farm before slaughter and transport.

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<sup>4</sup> [Regulation \(EC\) No 853/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 laying down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Regulation \(EC\) No 999/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 May 2001 laying down rules for the prevention, control and eradication of certain transmissible spongiform encephalopathies \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> [SSI 2006 No. 3](#)

<sup>7</sup> [SSI 2010 No. 177](#)

The legality of slaughter outside an approved establishment depends on whether it is intended that the carcase or meat from the carcase will be sold or “*placed on the market*”. “Placing on the market” is defined as “the holding of food or feed for the purpose of sale, including offering for sale or any other form of transfer, whether free of charge or not, and the sale, distribution and other forms of transfer themselves” (Regulation (EC) No. 178/2002, Article 3). For example, the supply of a carcase back to the owner by an approved slaughterhouse amounts to placing on the market under this definition because:

- a. There is supply of food in the course of a business; and
- b. Supply occurs, because the product returned after slaughter (i.e. the dressed carcase or meat) is fundamentally different in kind to what was delivered to the slaughterhouse (i.e. the live animal).

Therefore for home slaughter to be legal and exempt from the Hygiene Regulations, the owner must only supply his immediate household. If the owner does supply others this is illegal under the Food Hygiene (Scotland) Regulations 2006 and local authority officers may certify the meat as not produced, processed or distributed in accordance with those Regulations. Such meat would then be treated as failing to comply with food safety requirements under section 9 of the Food Safety Act 1990. An order for its condemnation could then be obtained from a Sheriff Court. In carrying out this enforcement role, local authorities may on occasion need to liaise with FSS. A list of contact points is at Annex A.

## **6. TSE Regulations**

The TSE Regulations apply wherever a TSE susceptible animal is slaughtered (including home slaughter). That means that after slaughter of cattle, sheep or goats, the specified risk material (SRM) must be removed, stained and disposed of in accordance with the TSE Regulation (EC) No. 999/2001 and Regulation (EC) No. 1069/2009 on animal by-products (ABPs) as well as The Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (Scotland) Regulations 2010. SRM is those parts of the animal most likely to contain TSE infectivity in an infected animal.

A full list of SRM is at Annex C. SRM must be disposed of in an approved Category 1 rendering or incineration plant.

From 1 March 2013, healthy cattle born in the UK or any EU Member State, other than Romania and Bulgaria, that are slaughtered for human consumption do not need to be tested for BSE.

The following cattle must still test negative for BSE prior to consumption of the meat.

- Healthy cattle aged over 30 months slaughtered for human consumption which were born in Romania, Bulgaria and all non-EU countries.
- Emergency slaughter cattle aged over 48 months (i.e. an otherwise healthy animal that has suffered an accident that prevented its transport to the slaughterhouse).
- Emergency slaughter cattle aged over 24 months which were born in Romania, Bulgaria and all non-EU countries.

If the animal to be killed requires BSE testing, you should contact an approved BSE sampling site to make the arrangements for testing. Further information detailing all approved BSE sampling sites is available from local Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) offices and on the APHA website:

Meat from the animal should only be consumed if the BSE test is negative. If the test is positive, the carcass and all parts of the body must be disposed of as a Category 1 ABP. Contacts to advise on BSE testing and the disposal of ABPs are listed at Annex A.

The TSE (Scotland) Regulations 2010 allow local authorities to appoint inspectors to enforce the legislation and provide powers for inspectors to enter premises, seize any carcass or part carcass and dispose of it as necessary. Alternatively, an inspector may serve a notice on the owner requiring disposal.

## **7. Animal Welfare Regulations**

There is also legislation to protect the welfare of livestock animals (both red meat animals and poultry) during the killing process. The slaughter of all animals must be carried out in accordance with the Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (Scotland) Regulations 2012 known as 'WATOK(S)'. The WATOK(S) Regulations implement Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 on the Protection of Animals at the Time of Killing (PATOK) and are enforced by FSS in approved slaughterhouses. Outside approved premises (i.e. home slaughter) the Regulations are enforced by APHA with the involvement of the local authority as required.

The WATOK(S) Regulations make it an offence to cause or permit any avoidable pain, distress or suffering to any animal or bird during the killing or related operations. The loss of consciousness and sensibility shall be maintained until the death of the animal. The WATOK(S) Regulations also require everyone carrying out such operations to have the level of competence

necessary to perform the tasks humanely and efficiently. Only the permitted stunning methods laid down in the Regulations may be used. However where a bird, rabbit, pig, cattle, sheep or goat is slaughtered or killed by its owner for his private consumption, there are certain exemptions from the provisions of the Regulations regarding the killing process.

The WATOK(S) and PATOK Regulations require most people directly involved in the killing process to hold a Certificate of Competence (CoC), although there are a number of exemptions from this requirement. These exemptions include:

- a. the slaughtering or killing of an animal or bird by the owner for private consumption
- b. the use of a free bullet to kill an animal in the field; and
- c. the killing of a bird by dislocation of the neck on premises on which the bird was reared.

If there are any concerns that a home slaughter may not meet the welfare conditions required, then the animal should be consigned to an approved slaughterhouse for a private slaughter.

Religious slaughter is only permitted in approved slaughterhouses.

The Humane Slaughter Association has published a leaflet entitled [On-farm slaughter of Livestock for Consumption](#), which provides detailed information on legislation and best practice for farmers on humane slaughtering on farm. A point of contact is also provided at Annex A.

## **8. Examples**

The following examples illustrate the consequences of the application of the legal requirements in practical terms.

### **Home slaughter by the farmer for his own consumption and/or that of his immediate family living in the same household**

This is lawful. As the farmer does not, in these circumstances, act as a food business operator, Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 does not apply. However home slaughter does fall within the scope of the WATOK, the TSE and ABP Regulations. Therefore, animals must be slaughtered humanely and SRM must be removed, stained and disposed of as a Category 1 ABP. Cattle requiring BSE testing must test negative before consumption of the meat.



## **Home slaughter by the farmer for consumption by bed and breakfast guests**

This is unlawful. The farmer would be supplying the meat in the course of a business (i.e. carrying out the slaughter of his animal with the intention of supplying it to the guests staying at the farm's bed and breakfast business). This would contravene the Food Hygiene Regulation (EC) No. 853/2004. Meat supplied to bed and breakfast guests must be from animals slaughtered in an approved slaughterhouse.

## **Slaughter on-farm by a holder of a Certificate of Competence**

This is lawful. A livestock owner may use the services of a person who holds a Certificate of Competence. This is because the definition of 'placing on the market' doesn't apply to primary production for private domestic consumption, therefore Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 does not apply. The slaughterer must perform the slaughter under the responsibility and supervision of the livestock owner. As home slaughter falls within the scope of the WATOK, the TSE and ABP Regulations, the animals must be slaughtered humanely and SRM must be removed, stained and disposed of as a Category 1 ABP. Cattle requiring BSE testing must test negative before consumption of the meat. Carcasses or parts of carcasses cannot be removed from the farm for processing elsewhere. A holder of a CoC should be able to produce evidence of their certificate, however, if a livestock owner wishes to confirm a person holds such a certificate they can contact [WATOK@fss.scot](mailto:WATOK@fss.scot).

## **Good Practice**

The livestock owner should give advance notice to the local authority (LA) where the farm is located that a home slaughter is to take place. If this is not possible, then notification should be given to the LA within 5 days of the home slaughter taking place.

FSS advise both the farmer and the slaughterer to keep a record of the home slaughter taking place when an itinerant slaughterer is used.

## **Slaughter in someone else's unapproved premises**

This is unlawful. Unapproved premises include any place used for slaughtering animals other than an approved slaughterhouse (i.e. field, barn, warehouse, vehicle, unapproved slaughterhouse). The operator of the unapproved premises would be supplying goods (i.e. meat) back to the farmer in the course

of a business. They would therefore be placing the meat on the market. The slaughter would be an offence, as would any subsequent sale or supply of meat.

### **Private Slaughter in an approved slaughterhouse**

This is lawful. Please refer to paragraph 2 for the meaning of “private slaughter”.

For further information, see contacts at Annex A. There is also a Question and Answer brief attached at Annex B.

## **9. Annex A - Useful contacts**

### **Food Standards Scotland**

Meat Hygiene Policy team

Lynda McKnight: email: [lynda.mcknight@fss.scot](mailto:lynda.mcknight@fss.scot)  
David Wilkie-Thorburn: email: [david.wilkie-thorburn@fss.scot](mailto:david.wilkie-thorburn@fss.scot)

### **Local Authority Enforcement team**

Andrew Morrison: email: [andrew.morrison@fss.scot](mailto:andrew.morrison@fss.scot)

### **Scottish Government Directorate for Agriculture, Food and Rural Communities**

#### **Disposal of Animal By-Products (including SRM)**

Ian Murdoch: email: [ian.murdoch@gov.scot](mailto:ian.murdoch@gov.scot)  
Animal Welfare Issues email: [richard.holburn@gov.scot](mailto:richard.holburn@gov.scot)

#### **Guidance on BSE testing and fallen stock disposal**

[Bovine spongiform encephalopathy \(BSE\): how to spot and report the disease - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot/publications/animal-by-products-disposal-guidance)

#### **Guidance on remote area derogation**

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/animal-by-products-disposal-guidance>

#### **Disposal of Animal By-Products (including SRM)**

[Animal by-products: disposal guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot/publications/animal-by-products-disposal-guidance)

## Humane Slaughter Association – ‘On-Farm Slaughter of Livestock for Consumption’

email: [info@hsa.org.uk](mailto:info@hsa.org.uk)  
[Humane Slaughter Association](http://www.hsa.org.uk)

### 10. Annex B – Home slaughter Question & Answer

#### Farmers/Keepers

Q1. I do not have a cattle passport for my animal. Can I carry out a home slaughter?

There is nothing in the Cattle Identification (Scotland) Regulations 2007 preventing you from carrying out a home slaughter without a cattle passport.

Q2. Can I eat any meat from my own animals?

Yes. However you must ensure that your animal is slaughtered and prepared lawfully (see below).

Q3. How should I have my own animals slaughtered for my own consumption?

There are three lawful ways in which you can have your animals slaughtered and prepared for your own consumption\*:

- (a) in an approved slaughterhouse
- (b) on your farm by you
- (c) on your farm by a holder of a Certificate of Competence under the responsibility and supervision of the livestock owner

\* for animals with no passport, they will be restricted to remain on farm under a Notice of Registration (NOR), so the only available options are (b) and (c) on farm slaughter.

Food Standards Scotland advises that option (a) would generally carry a lower risk to your health than options (b) and (c).

It would be unlawful in all cases to employ anyone other than a holder of a Certificate of Competence to slaughter an animal on your property. It would also be unlawful to have the animal slaughtered anywhere else away from your property other than in an approved slaughterhouse.

Q4. What should I do with the waste material?

If you or the holder of a Certificate of Competence slaughter an animal on your farm, any part of the carcass you do not consume would be classed as animal by-products under the EU Animal By-Products Regulation (EC) No 1069/2009. The waste material would have to be disposed of in line with the Regulation, for example by arranging for the material to be rendered or incinerated. Your local APHA<sup>8</sup> or local authority trading standards department (or, in some cases, environmental health department) can advise on what your options would be. SRM must be removed from cattle, sheep and goats and must not be consumed. In addition, SRM must be stained and disposed of as a Category 1 ABP.

Q5. Can I sell the meat from my own animals?

Only if the animal has been slaughtered at an approved slaughterhouse would it be lawful for you to place the meat on the market. For example, by offering it for sale in your farm shop or serving it to guests of your bed and breakfast enterprise. However, in order to do this, you would require to register as a food business under Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 with your Local Authority Environmental Health Department.

Q6. Does the restriction on supplying home slaughtered meat apply to partnerships or joint owners?

Yes, unless the partner or joint owners are family members living as part of the household. It is unlikely that a Court would decide that supplying meat from a home slaughter would be rendered lawful simply because the supply was carried out within a partnership or to a co-owner.

Q7. What about TSE controls for home slaughtered pigs, poultry, farmed game or rabbits?

The TSE Regulations do not apply to pigs, poultry, farmed game and rabbits.

Q8. How do I get a BSE test done for my home-slaughtered cattle?

You should contact an approved BSE sampling site to make the arrangements for testing. Further information detailing all approved BSE sampling sites is available from local Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) offices and on the APHA website: [TSE testing of fallen cattle: approved premises.](#)

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/animal-and-plant-health-agency/about/access-and-opening#field-service-offices-animal-health--welfare>

Q9. Can I eat my home-bred cow which was born before 1 August 1996?

No. Domestic TSE Regulations prohibit the slaughter of cattle born or reared in the UK before 1 August 1996 for human consumption. It is also an offence to send cattle born or reared in the UK before 1 August 1996 to an approved slaughterhouse.

Q10. Can an approved slaughterhouse undertake a private slaughter for me?

Yes, if the slaughter takes place in an approved slaughterhouse. A private slaughter would be subject to exactly the same rules and procedures as a conventional (commercial) slaughter.

Q11. Can I have an animal privately slaughtered other than in an approved slaughterhouse?

No. Except by yourself or the holder of a Certificate of Competence on farm (see Q3 above). An animal may be slaughtered on farm in an emergency following an accident where the animal is unable to be moved to the slaughterhouse for welfare reasons (see paragraph 5 above). There is, however, an exemption which allows you to slaughter on your holding small quantities of poultry or lagomorphs reared there and place them on the market for human consumption, subject to certain conditions<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> See On farm slaughter of small quantities of poultry and lagomorphs in Part 1, Section 7.8, paragraph B of the Meat Industry Guidance available at

<http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/meat/guidehygienemeat>

## 11. Annex C – Definition of Specified Risk Material

<b>CATTLE</b>	<b>All ages</b> The tonsils, the last four metres of the small intestine, the caecum and the mesentery.
	<b>Over 12 months</b> The skull excluding the mandible and including the brain and eyes, and the spinal cord.
	<b>Over 30 Months</b> The vertebral column, including the dorsal root ganglia but excluding: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the vertebrae of the tail;</li><li>• the spinous and transverse processes of the cervical, thoracic and lumbar vertebrae; and</li><li>• the median sacral crest and wings of the sacrum.</li></ul>
<b>SHEEP and GOATS</b>	<b>Over 12 months (or permanent incisor erupted)</b> The skull including the brain and eyes, and the spinal cord.

### Staining requirements for SRM

Indelible staining must involve treating the material (whether by immersion, spraying or other application) with a blue colouring agent using a solution of such a strength that the staining is clearly visible and remains visible after the specified risk material (SRM) has been chilled or frozen.

The stain must be applied in such a way that the colouring is and remains clearly visible -

- over the whole of the cut surface and the majority of the head in the case of the head of a sheep or goat, and
- in the case of all other specified risk material, over the whole surface of the material.