businesscompanion
trading standards law explained

Animals and agriculture

In the guide

Animal health
Animal welfare
Animal feed
Authorities and enforcement

Before you start, make sure you choose your location by using the drop-down list at the top of the page and then clicking on the arrow.

For more detailed information, please see the In-depth Guides below. Some laws are different in England, Scotland and Wales, and some are enforced differently, so the In-depth Guides provide country-specific information.

Once you've finished, make sure you look at the full range of Quick Guides to see whether there are any other areas of law that affect your business.

If you keep livestock, the law covers the health and well-being of your animals, as well as animal feeding stuffs.

Animal health controls protect you, your animals, the consumer and the livestock industry. The law sets out responsibilities for transport, disease, welfare, animal by-products and disposal of fallen stock, for example.

These rules apply whether you keep the animals for pleasure or for profit.

There are strict laws on animal feed too, which mostly apply to farmed livestock. However, horses, pets, farmed fish, zoo and circus animals are also covered, as are animals living in the wild.

Animal health

The law helps prevent and trace the spread of disease by regulating the registration and identification of livestock, and control of their movements. These rules apply to everyone that plays a role in animal health; this includes animal keepers, hauliers, market operators and abattoirs.

In addition to the above legislation, there are controls on fallen stock, veterinary medicines and the slaughter and killing of livestock.

Animal welfare

General rules make owners and keepers responsible for the welfare needs of all their animals. Detailed legislation and codes of practice exist to protect animal welfare on farms, in transit, at markets and at slaughter or killing. These include the need:

- For a suitable environment (place to live)
- For a suitable diet
- To exhibit normal behaviour patterns
- To be housed with, or apart from, other animals (as appropriate)
- To be protected from pain, injury, suffering and disease

Animal feed

Controls on animal feed protect human and animal health, and set out rules for traceability and documented controls within the feed chain. Other legal requirements that cover animal feed (labelling, for example) are designed to help buyers make informed choices.

The rules on animal feed include:

- Feed hygiene
- Feed composition
- Measures relating to feed safety
- GM-derived ingredients
- Imports and exports, and associated official controls

Legal responsibilities apply across a range of animal species and types, from farmed animals and pets to those living freely in the wild. If you use, manufacture or sell animal feed, you must be registered or approved, and must comply with standards that cover facilities, storage, personnel and record-keeping.

> In addition to these legal requirements, codes of practice and assurance scheme standards may also apply to you, depending upon your activity and industry sector.

Authorities and enforcement

Responsibility for animal health and welfare lies with Defra (the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) and its equivalent agencies in Scotland and Wales.

Enforcement of animal health and welfare legislation is split between these Government agencies and local authorities, normally Trading Standards services. In practice, day-to-day responsibility for official controls is split between central and local government.

At local level, the monitoring and enforcement of feed law is carried out by local authorities, usually

Trading Standards services, and Government agencies.

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