businesscompanion
trading standards law explained

Casualty slaughter for farmers and hauliers

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Although the United Kingdom left the European Union (EU) in 2021, certain pieces of legislation (known as 'assimilated law') continue to apply until such time as they are replaced by new UK legislation, revoked or permitted to expire. This means that our guidance still contains references to legislation that originated from the EU.

In this guide, the words 'must' or 'must not' are used where there is a legal requirement to do (or not do) something. The word 'should' is used where there is established legal guidance or best practice that is likely to help you avoid breaking the law.

This guidance is for England

Casualty animals must not be transported unless they are fit for the intended journey. In the case of doubt, veterinary advice should be sought.

A live animal (if fit to be transported) known or suspected to be injured, or showing signs of abnormality, must be accompanied to a slaughterhouse by a food chain information declaration, completed by the owner or person in charge of the animal.

Where an otherwise healthy animal, fit for human consumption, has had an accident rendering it unfit for transport, it may be possible to slaughter outside of a licensed slaughterhouse and then move the carcase directly to a licensed slaughterhouse. To do this, you will need an ante-mortem veterinary inspection and declaration; however, in the case of fractious bovine animals a separate certificate must now be used.

Transporting of casualty animals

Under the Welfare of Animals (Transport) (England) Order 2006 you must not transport an animal unless it is fit for the intended journey and suitable provision has been made for its care during the journey and on arrival at its destination.

In particular, an animal is not considered fit for its intended journey if it is ill, injured, infirm or fatigued. However, where its condition is only 'slight' the animal may be transported, providing the intended journey is not likely to cause unnecessary suffering.

No animal may be loaded by dragging or pushing by any means, or lifted by a mechanical device, except under direct veterinary supervision for transport to the nearest available place for veterinary treatment.

For more information, please see 'Welfare of animals during transport'.

If in any doubt about fitness to travel, always consult a veterinary surgeon.

Note: there is no obligation for a slaughterhouse to accept casualty animals; always check with the slaughterhouse prior to transporting any animal.

Documentation required

The Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013 and assimilated Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 *on the hygiene of foodstuffs* require the following documentation to be held.

Food chain information declaration

All cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry and horses moving to a slaughterhouse must be accompanied by a completed food chain information (FCI) declaration. A live casualty animal (if fit to be transported) known or suspected to be injured or showing signs of abnormality must be accompanied to a slaughterhouse by an FCI declaration, completed by the owner or person in charge of the animal. This declaration identifies the animal and any veterinary medicinal products or other treatments administered to it within the last six months, including dates of administration and withdrawal periods. The disease status of the holding must also be declared.

You must confirm with the slaughterhouse operator your intention to send them a live casualty animal prior to transporting it; this is to ensure that the slaughterhouse operator will accept the animal and that an Official Veterinarian (OV) will be available to carry out the relevant ante-mortem and post-mortem examinations. The food chain information declaration must be handed to the OV on arrival at the slaughterhouse.

In April 2022, LIS (Livestock Information Service) replaced ARAMS for recording / notifying sheep and goat movements. Live casualty sheep / goats must also be accompanied by a fully completed movement document for sheep and goats (either a paper copy LIS-1* form or electronic copy using the LIS system that can be printed by the haulier if requested to do so by an inspector).

[*The LIS-1 form can be downloaded from the Livestock Information website (scroll down the linked web page to access the form).]

Live casualty pigs must also be accompanied by a haulier summary for pigs (using the eAML2 system).

Cattle and horses must be accompanied by a valid passport.

All livestock species must be correctly identified in accordance with the relevant legislation. This is the responsibility of the keeper.

See 'Food chain information' for more information. The slaughterhouse operator may also be able to help.

Emergency slaughter declaration

Animals slaughtered outside a licensed slaughterhouse may be eligible for human consumption if they were otherwise healthy animals that have suffered an accident and are unable to be transported live to a slaughterhouse for welfare reasons. Such animals must be examined by a veterinary surgeon ante-mortem and must then be accompanied by an emergency slaughter declaration completed by the animal owner (or their agent) and the veterinary surgeon that examined the animal subject to emergency slaughter.

A template emergency slaughter declaration is attached.

You must confirm with the slaughterhouse operator your intention to send them an animal subject to emergency slaughter; this is to ensure that it will be accepted and that an OV will be available to carry out the post-mortem examination. The emergency slaughter declaration must be handed to the OV upon arrival at the slaughterhouse. An emergency slaughter declaration provides no guarantee that the OV will not identify any deficiencies that would make the meat unfit for human consumption.

Removal of the stomach and intestines, but no other dressing, may take place at the point of slaughter in the presence of, and under the supervision of, the veterinarian. Any viscera removed must accompany the slaughtered animal to the slaughterhouse and be identified as belonging to that animal.

The slaughtered animal must be transported to the slaughterhouse hygienically and without undue delay. If it is likely that more than two hours will elapse between slaughter and arrival at the slaughterhouse, the body must be transported in a refrigerated vehicle or climatic conditions must be appropriate.

Depending on their age, bovine animals that have undergone emergency slaughter must have a brain stem sample (BSS) taken for BSE testing purposes in accordance with the Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (England) Regulations 2018 (see 'BSE testing of cattle' for more information). Care should be taken to ensure that severe damage to the brain stem is avoided, as failure to obtain a suitable BSS will render the animal ineligible for the food chain.

Fractious bovines

Fractious bovine animals subject to emergency slaughter must be accompanied by a different health certificate, specifically for fractious bovines that are slaughtered at the holding. This can only be completed by an FSA-approved vet. The certificate can be found in annex 7 to chapter 2.2 of the Manual for Official Controls.

Cattle born before 1 August 1996

Cattle born in the UK before 1 August 1996 do not have passports, only certificates of registration, and they may not be slaughtered for human consumption. All cattle of this age have been restricted under the Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (England) Regulations 2018 to the premises where they were located due to the consequent TSE risk.

Keepers of these cattle have been issued with restriction notices detailing the affected animals. Keepers wishing to move such animals must submit a movement licence application form, completed by both parties involved in the movement, to the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) One Health Customer Service Centre in Worcester. If you need help completing the form, please contact customeradvice@apha.gov.uk.

Further information can be found in the cattle without passports section of the GOV.UK website.

Trading Standards

For more information on the work of Trading Standards services - and the possible consequences of not abiding by the law - please see 'Trading Standards: powers, enforcement and penalties'.

In this update

No major changes.

Last reviewed / updated: July 2025

Key legislation

- assimilated Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 *on the hygiene of foodstuffs*
- assimilated Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 *laying down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin*
- Welfare of Animals (Transport) (England) Order 2006
- Cattle Identification Regulations 2007
- Sheep and Goats (Records, Identification and Movement) (England) Order 2009
- Pigs (Records, Identification and Movement) Order 2011
- Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013
- assimilated Regulation (EU) 2015/262 *laying down rules pursuant to Directives 90/427/EEC and 2009/156/EC as regards the methods for the identification of equidae (Equine Passport Regulation)*
- Equine Identification (England) Regulations 2018
- Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (England) Regulations 2018

Please note

This information is intended for guidance; only the courts can give an authoritative interpretation of the law.

The guide's 'Key legislation' links go to the legislation.gov.uk website. The site usually updates the legislation to include any amendments made to it. However, this is not always the case. Information on all changes made to legislation can be found by following the above links and clicking on the 'More Resources' tab.

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