

## Humane disposal of infant calves

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### This guidance is for England

When dispatching on-farm, infant calves must be killed humanely and without avoidable distress, pain and suffering. If dispatching on-farm you must have the relevant skills, training and equipment.

Calves killed on-farm within the requisite timescales are exempt from ear tag and passport requirements; however, if they have been tagged but are unregistered their births and deaths must be reported to the British Cattle Movement Service (BCMS). The deaths of untagged calves must be recorded in your on-farm records.

A number of firearms are suitable for the on-farm killing of calves and there are also various outlets for off-farm slaughter. Either way, the carcasses must be disposed of in accordance with the Regulations.

### Can I kill the calves myself?

The Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing Regulations 2015 and EU Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 *on the protection of animals at the time of killing* create offences for failing to comply with provisions relating to restraining, stunning and killing of animals.

The Regulations also make it an offence to cause or permit any avoidable distress, pain or suffering to any animal during the killing process.

Under these Regulations, religious slaughter is only permitted in approved slaughterhouses.

You need to have the necessary skills and training to ensure that you kill the animals humanely. You need to have the necessary equipment and be sure that you can use it competently. You also need a certificate of competence (CoC) if you cull animals on-farm (except when an animal is killed in an emergency - that is, when it is injured). More information on obtaining a CoC can be found on the GOV.UK website.

More information on the legal requirements you will need to comply with for on-farm slaughter can be found on the GOV.UK website.

It is an offence under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 to cause unnecessary suffering to any animal.

## Methods of killing

Two methods of killing are permitted:

- free bullet - that is, rifle, shotgun or humane killer
- captive bolt followed by bleeding and pithing

Operators must be in possession of a current firearms certificate (sometimes known as a firearms licence). Shotguns and rifles should not be used in enclosed spaces or on hard surfaces. The physical appearance of the calf after being shot can be distressing.

More information about how to obtain a firearms certificate can be obtained from the GOV.UK website.

It is not necessary to have a firearms certificate to use captive bolt equipment.

Certain operations, both in slaughterhouses and when carried out on farms, for the purpose of killing animals for food require a CoC. One such operation is killing animals by free bullet.

More information about how to obtain a CoC or licence to slaughter animals can be found on the GOV.UK website.

Detailed information relating to the practical considerations of captive bolt stunning of livestock, equipment, restraint, and bleeding and pithing can be found on the Humane Slaughter Association website. Information on the humane killing of livestock using firearms is also available.

## Possible outlets

Rather than an on-farm kill, the following outlets could be considered:

- **markets**
- **direct to slaughter.** Calves must be double-tagged and have a passport in accordance with the Cattle Identification Regulations 2007
- **free collection service.** A number of calf dealers are operating a free collection service (no cash paid for calf). Calves must be ear-tagged and have a passport in accordance with the Cattle Identification Regulations 2007
- **hunt kennels.** Will shoot on-farm (a nominal charge may be incurred). Removal to a hunt kennel alive, for slaughter, will require calves to be ear-tagged and have a cattle passport

Clves less than 10 days old may not be transported further than 100 km (approximately 62 miles). Any journeys made over 65 km (approximately 40 miles) will require the transporter to hold a certificate of competence and transporter authorisation. For more information please see 'Farm animal transport journey times'.

## Identification and record keeping

The keeper must notify BCMS of the death within seven days by one of the following methods:

- CTS Online (Cattle Tracing System)
- CTS Web Services from some farm software packages
- CTS self-service phone line (0345 011 1212)
- completing the death details in the animal's passport and/or registration certificate and returning it to the Secretary of State (via BCMS)

Whichever method of notifying BCMS of a death is chosen, the cattle passport must be returned to BCMS within seven days. Deaths must also be recorded in the on-farm register.

Dairy calves killed on-farm within 36 hours of birth (20 days of birth for non-dairy calves) do not require ear tags or passports; however, their births and deaths must be notified to BCMS if the calf has been tagged but is unregistered.

A dead calf's ear tag must not be used to identify another animal.

You do not need to report the deaths of calves that die before they have been tagged but you must record this in your records. Tagging and passport rules apply to live farm-to-farm movements.

## Disposal of carcasses

Please note that carcasses must be disposed of in accordance with the Animal By-Products (Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2013. General provisions are as follows:

- any person who has in their possession, or under their control, any animal by-products, including the carcasses of fallen farm animals (includes stillborn) and beef bones must arrange for them to be consigned for or disposed of without undue delay
- the routes available for the disposal and use of animal by-products vary with the category and are listed in Articles 12, 13 and 14 of EU Regulation (EC) No 1069/2009 *laying down health rules as regards animal by-products and derived products not intended for human consumption*. In general, the higher the risk category the fewer options there are for use
- animal by-products must be transported in covered leakproof containers / vehicles, which must be maintained in a clean condition

For more information please see 'Fallen stock and the disposal of animal by-products'.

## Further information

For guidance on the correct use and maintenance of firearms and captive-bolt equipment contact the Humane Slaughter Association.

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (defra) codes of practice are available by telephoning 03459 335577 and further information on on-farm killing and slaughter can be found on the GOV.UK website.

You should also note that the food hygiene regulations may apply to on-farm killing. Guidance on home slaughter can be found on the Food Standards Agency (FSA) website or in 'Home slaughter for private consumption'.

## Penalties

Failure to comply with trading standards law can lead to enforcement action and to sanctions, which may include a fine and/or imprisonment. For more information please see 'Trading standards: powers, enforcement and penalties'.

## Key legislation

Animal Welfare Act 2006

Cattle Identification Regulations 2007

EU Regulation (EC) No 1069/2009 *laying down health rules as regards animal by-products and derived products not intended for human consumption*

EU Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 *on the protection of animals at the time of killing*

Animal By-Products (Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2013

Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015

Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (England) Regulations 2018

Last reviewed / updated: March 2020

## In this update

General detail added

## 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 may only show the original version of the legislation, although some amending legislation is linked to separately where it is directly related to the content of a guide. Information on amendments to legislation can be found on each link's 'More Resources' tab.

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