businesscompanion
trading standards law explained

Food chain information

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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.

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.

This guidance is for Scotland

The food chain information (FCI) declaration is a document that is required to accompany cattle, calves, pigs, poultry, horses, sheep, goats and farmed game to slaughter at an abattoir for entry into the food chain.

Assimilated Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 *laying down hygiene requirements for the production of food of animal origin* requires slaughterhouse operators to request FCI declarations in order to ensure that animals entering the food chain are safe for human consumption. Slaughterhouse operators must request, receive, check and act upon any information recorded on the FCI declaration as part of their HACCP ('hazard analysis and critical control points') plan. This helps to ensure that certain veterinary medicines or animals affected by disease do not enter the food chain.

Declarations from all previous keepers must be obtained if you have bought animals at market for onward consignment to a slaughterhouse.

Contents of food chain information

Information that must be confirmed on the FCI declaration includes:

- **Health status of the farm.** That the holding is not under any movement restrictions for animal disease or public health reasons
- **Withdrawal periods have been observed.** That there are no known veterinary medicine residues in the meat
- **The animal's health status.** That the animal to be slaughtered has not been exposed to any disease, condition or residue (chemical / veterinary medicine, etc) that could affect the animal's health and also the safety of the end product

Additional information will be required on the FCI declaration for those animals showing signs of disease or conditions that may affect the safety of meat derived from them. This information is also contained within the model document.

Format of food chain information

There is no set format for how FCI declarations are to be received. Some slaughterhouses may have their own forms, or you may use the model documents linked to below. It is suggested that you contact your slaughterhouse operator prior to taking any animals to slaughter, so you can establish which FCI format to use.

The following are FCI model documents, based upon those produced by the Food Standards Agency and Food Standards Scotland:

- Poultry
- Cattle and calves
- Sheep and goats
- Horses
- Pigs
- Farmed game

Sheep and goat movement document

In the case of sheep and goats, the FCI declaration and additional information has been incorporated into the movement document issued by the Scottish Government. Use of the form is one means of providing FCI for sheep and goats, but other methods may be used that best suit the slaughterhouse operator's needs.

Pig movement document

In the case of pigs, you can opt to declare additional information relating to FCI by incorporating it into the movement document produced by ScotEID. Use of this form is one means of providing FCI for pigs, but other methods may be used that best suit the slaughterhouse operator's needs.

When do I need to submit the food chain information?

FCI declarations can accompany your animals to slaughter. They may also be submitted to the slaughterhouse 24 hours in advance. This may be helpful for the slaughterhouse in identifying anything contained within the FCI declaration that may affect the normal operation of the business.

The FCI must be made available to the Official Veterinarian (OV) by the food business operator without delay, and the OV must be made aware of anything that gives rise to health concerns. Slaughter of the animals or dressing of the meat may not take place until it has been permitted by the OV.

If animals arrive at the slaughterhouse without an FCI declaration, the OV must be notified. The OV will decide whether slaughter may or may not take place without an FCI declaration. Carcases of animals slaughtered without an FCI declaration will not be approved for human consumption until the FCI declaration is received.

Animals sent to slaughter from markets

If you buy animals at market for onward consignment to a slaughterhouse, FCI declarations must be obtained from all previous keepers to ensure the conditions on the FCI declaration form submitted to the slaughterhouse operator can be met.

These declarations should have been collected by the market and may be stated on its paperwork. If in doubt, then please check with the market.

Similarly, if you send animals to a market, and it is likely that they will go for slaughter, you must supply an FCI declaration.

Horse passports

Horse passports must also be provided and checked by the slaughterhouse operator before slaughter to ensure the animal is intended for slaughter for human consumption. If acceptable, the passport must also be given to the OV to check. See 'Horse passports' for more information.

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: June 2026

Key legislation

- Assimilated Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 *laying down hygiene requirements for the production of food of animal origin*
- Food Hygiene (Scotland) Regulations 2006
- Sheep and Goats (Records, Identification and Movement) (Scotland) Order 2009
- Pigs (Records, Identification and Movement) (Scotland) Order 2011

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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