Home slaughter for private consumption

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This guidance is for England

The term 'home slaughter' has a specific definition. If you are planning on slaughtering your own livestock on-farm, there are welfare implications if you do not have the necessary skills, equipment and competency to do so.

On-farm slaughter of any livestock is an extremely difficult option to achieve legally in terms of food hygiene and transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (such as BSE) controls, and in terms of application of humane methods of restraint, stunning and slaughter. You need to ensure that you dispose of the carcase and any animal waste in accordance with the Regulations.

Definition of home slaughter

Home slaughter means the slaughter of a livestock animal by the animal's owner, on their property, for their own personal consumption or that of members of their immediate family living there.

Is this different to private slaughter in an approved slaughterhouse?

Yes. This is when the owner of the animal sends it to an approved slaughterhouse to be slaughtered and the carcase is returned to the owner.
Slaughter outside a licensed slaughterhouse

EU Regulation (EC) 853/2004 laying down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin states that in most cases meat for human consumption must be from animals slaughtered in an approved slaughterhouse (an approved slaughterhouse could include a licensed mobile slaughterhouse but not an itinerant slaughterman). A full list of meat establishments that are approved to slaughter livestock and/or cut meat can be found on the Food Standards Agency (FSA) website; contact details for those wanting further information about approved meat establishments across the UK are also available by following this link.

At present it is the FSA's policy that you are not able to use an itinerant slaughterman to kill animals at your farm. It would also be unlawful to have the animal slaughtered anywhere else away from your property other than in an approved slaughterhouse.

Under EU Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 it is an offence to sell, or to supply to another person, meat that has not been slaughtered and health-marked in a licensed abattoir. It is for this reason that meat that has been slaughtered on-farm can only be consumed by the owner and their immediate family.

Can I slaughter the animals myself?

You may only do this if you have the necessary skills and training to ensure that you slaughter the animals humanely. Also you need to have the necessary equipment and be sure that you can use it competently.

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

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. Unless you are using a firearm to kill pigs, sheep, goats, deer or cattle, you must restrain them. The Regulations also make it an offence to cause or permit any avoidable excitement, pain or suffering to any animal or bird during the slaughter or killing process.

Under these Regulations, religious slaughter is only permitted in approved slaughterhouses, as all on-farm kills must be stunned before bleeding.

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

Do I need a slaughter licence?

A slaughter licence is not needed when slaughtering your own animal for your own consumption or consumption by your immediate family who live with you. However, certain operations both in slaughterhouses and when carried out on farms for the purpose of killing animals require a certificate of competence (CoC).

Further information on when a CoC is required and how to obtain one can be found on GOV.UK website.

Disposal of the carcase & waste material

Animal by-products must be disposed of in accordance with the Animal By-Products (Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2013. This is all slaughter waste not destined for human consumption or classed as specified risk material (SRM), including the horns, hides, hooves and blood.
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 (Animal by-products Regulation). In general, the higher the risk category the fewer are the options for use.

The owner must stain, store, dispose of, etc the SRM in accordance with the Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (England) Regulations 2018. Definitions of SRM will depend on the age of the animal being slaughtered.

The spinal column must not be split. It must be removed whole and disposed of as SRM.

**Specific information for cattle & sheep**

See 'Home slaughter of cattle' and 'Home slaughter of sheep'.

**Further information**

Further guidance on home slaughter can be found on the Food Standards Agency website. The Food Standards Agency is currently considering a policy revisal to include the option for home slaughter and dressing to be carried out by a licensed slaughterman. The final policy decision may affect some of the advice included in this guide.

**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 & penalties'.

**Key legislation**

Food Safety Act 1990  
EU Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 laying down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin  
Animal Welfare Act 2006  
EU Regulation (EC) No 1069/2009 laying down health rules as regards animal by-products and derived products not intended for human consumption (Animal by-products Regulation)  
EU Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing  
Animal By-Products (Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2013  
Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013  
Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015  
Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (England) Regulations 2018

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