Humane disposal of infant calves

This guidance is for Scotland

When dispatching on-farm, infant calves must be killed humanely and without avoidable excitement, 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 but 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 carcases must be disposed of in accordance with the Regulations.

Can I kill the calves myself?

The Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations 1995, the Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (Scotland) Regulations 2012 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 calves, you must restrain them. The Regulations also make it an offence to cause or permit any avoidable excitement, pain or suffering to any animal during the killing process.

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

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

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 Food Standards Scotland website.

It is an offence under the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) 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 firearm certificate or shotgun certificate. 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.

Captive bolt equipment is no longer subject to the firearm legislation.

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.

Detailed information relating to the practical considerations of captive bolt stunning, 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
  - note: calves must be double-tagged and have a passport in accordance with the Cattle Identification (Scotland) Regulations 2007
- free collection service. A number of calf dealers are operating a free collection service (no cash paid for calf)
  - note: calves must be ear-tagged and have a passport in accordance with the Cattle Identification (Scotland) Regulations 2007
- hunt kennels. Will shoot on-farm (a nominal charge may be incurred)
  - note: removal to a hunt kennel alive, for slaughter, will require calves to be ear-tagged and have a cattle passport

**Identification & record keeping**

The keeper must also 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 Scottish Ministers (in practice, 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.

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 carcases

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

- these Regulations require any person who has in their possession, or under their control, any animal by-products, including the carcases of fallen farm animals (includes stillborn) and beef bones 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 'Disposal of animal by-products'.

Penalties

There are a number of offences for failing to comply with the requirements of the legislation detailed above. The penalties that may be imposed vary, with the maximum being a fine and two years' imprisonment.

Further information

For guidance on the correct use and maintenance of firearms and captive-bolt equipment contact the Humane Slaughter Association on 01582 831919.

Codes of recommendation on animal welfare and further information on the slaughter of animals can be found on the Scottish government website.

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

For more information please see 'Disposal of animal by-products'.

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Key legislation

Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations 1995
Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006
Cattle Identification (Scotland) 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
Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (Scotland) Regulations 2010
Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (Scotland) Regulations 2012
Animal By-Products (Enforcement) (Scotland) Regulations 2013

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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 UK legislation can be found on each link’s 'More Resources' tab; amendments to EU legislation are usually incorporated into the text.

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