Labelling of beef

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This guidance is for England & Wales

The Compulsory Beef Labelling Scheme is a European Union (EU) system requiring specific information to be provided to consumers. This traceability information gives the origin of the beef or veal.

Certain prescribed information is compulsory for beef and veal at all stages in the supply chain, from slaughter to final retail. Additional voluntary information may be applied to these products as long as it complies with food labelling legislation.

These provisions do not apply to cooked beef or cooked veal products.

This information must be provided in writing. For prepacked meat it must be either affixed to the meat or the packaging; for non-prepacked meat, it must be in writing visible to the ultimate consumer at the point of sale.

'Prepacked' means food that is completely or partially enclosed in packaging, cannot be removed without changing the packaging in some way, and was packed on a premises other than the one it is being sold from.

Compulsory information
Fresh, chilled & frozen beef & veal

Information that must be provided on all beef and veal products, whether fresh, chilled or frozen. Please note that 'Member State' means Member State of the EU:

- a reference number or code identifying the specific animal or group of animals from which the beef was derived
- the name of the Member State or non-EU country in which the animal or group of animals were born**
- the name(s) of all Member States or non-EU countries in which the animal or group of animals were raised**
- 'Slaughtered in: [name of Member State or non-EU country]'***
- approval number of the slaughterhouse*
- 'Cutting / cut in: [name of Member State or non-EU country]'***
- approval number(s) of the cutting plant(s)*

Those points marked with * above are not required for retail sale to the public of loose (non-prepacked) beef or veal products.

Where animals have been born, raised and slaughtered in the same Member State or non-EU country then those points marked with ** above can be replaced by 'Origin: [name of Member State]' or 'Origin: [name of non-EU country]'.

Where compulsory information is not available for meat imported from a non-EU country, the labelling must show at least the words 'Origin: non-EU and slaughtered in [name of non-EU country]'. You should also show a traceable reference number or code if the meat is cut or repackaged after import.

For more information see what you must put on the labels on the GOV.UK website.

Prepacked cut beef & veal

Prepacked cut beef and veal can be sold with meat from a maximum of three slaughterhouses or cutting plants in the same package. The labelling on these packages must show:

- slaughterhouse approval number and country of slaughter for each of the relevant Member States or non-EU countries of origin. Shown as: ‘Animals in the group slaughtered in [name of Member State or non-EU country of slaughter]’
- country of cutting and cutting plant approval number for each appropriate Member State or non-EU country of cutting. Shown as: ‘Cutting of meat in batch in [name of Member State or non-EU country of cutting]’

Non-prepacked cut beef & veal

For non-prepacked beef and veal, the requirements are the same regarding mixing batches from a maximum of three slaughterhouses or cutting plants. The information that must be provided to the final consumer is country of birth, rearing, slaughter and cutting. This information should be provided in such a way that consumers can clearly see what information relates to what meat without confusion. Meat from different countries must be clearly separated in the display.

Operators must keep a daily, dated record of licence numbers of the slaughterhouses and cutting plants relating to the meat for sale. This must be shown to consumers on request.
Minced beef

Minced beef must be labelled with the following:

- traceability reference number or code
- Member State or non-EU country of slaughter
- Member State or non-EU country of mincing / preparation
- country of origin (from birth to slaughter) if different to country of mincing

You may also include any of the compulsory information for fresh beef and veal products listed earlier in this guidance.

Minced beef from two or more countries of origin cannot be mixed by cutting plants. Minced beef can be mixed with offal from the same country; it must then be marked with all compulsory information.

'Offal' means fresh meat other than that of the carcase, including viscera (organs of the thoracic, abdominal and pelvic cavities, as well as the windpipe and gullet) and blood.

Minced meat should not contain more than 25% fat.

If you describe your product as 'lean' it should not contain more than 7% fat. There is no fat limit set for 'extra lean' mince but if you describe your product as such it should contain considerably less than 7% fat.

Where a meat is named (for example, minced beef) then no other meats can be present.

No additives can be used in minced meat.

If you wish to use any of the descriptions in the table below, you should comply with the stated limits on fat and collagen (note that the reference to collagen in the table means 'connective tissue').

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of minced meat</th>
<th>Fat content: less than or equal to ...</th>
<th>Collagen / meat protein ratio: less than or equal to ...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lean minced meat</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minced pure beef</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minced meat containing pigmeat</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minced meat of other species</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If your product does not meet these limits you can still use the description but you must state ‘For the UK market only’.

When selling prepacked minced meat using any of the above descriptions you must state on the label how much fat and collagen (connective tissue) is present using the following wording:

- 'Percentage of fat content under X%'
- 'Collagen / meat protein ratio under X%'
You do not need to declare the amounts of fat and collagen (connective tissue) if the product is sold loose or if you use a description other than those above - for example, beef mince - but you will still need to comply with the compositional requirements.

**Trimmings**

Trimmings must be labelled with the following:

- country of slaughter
- country or production
- countries of birth and rearing

If all the above are the same country then the labelling may read ‘Country of origin: [name of country] (where birth, rearing and slaughter took place)’.

**EU protected food names**

Products with ‘protected designation of origin’ or ‘protected geographical indication’ must show all compulsory information listed at the start of this guide. More information on protected food names is available on the GOV.UK website.

**Beef & veal from animals under 12 months old**

These animals must be categorised at slaughter with reference ‘V’ for animals under eight months old, and ‘Z’ for animals between eight and 12 months old. They must be marketed according to their designated names in the EU. In the UK, animals with a “V” code under eight months old are required to be described as veal. Animals with a ‘Z’ code aged between eight and 12 months must be described as beef. These requirements also apply to offal.

Meat and offal from animals under 12 months old must be labelled accordingly (‘Age on slaughter: up to 8 months’ or ‘Age on slaughter: 8-12 months’) at each stage of production or sale, but this can be abbreviated to ‘V’ or ‘Z’ until retail to the final consumer.

Offal must also be described appropriately - for example, ‘calves’ liver’ may only be used to describe liver from animals under eight months old. Offal from different aged animals may be mixed, but must be labelled with the appropriate information for both sources. Beef or veal meat from ‘V’ and ‘Z’ coded animals may not be mixed.

The meat should be labelled with the appropriate description for the Member State in which it is to be sold; it is therefore possible to have two or more labels with appropriate descriptions.

**Specified risk material (SRM)**

SRM is the parts of an animal that represent the highest risk of carrying disease.

The sale of SRM and the sale of any food containing SRM for human consumption is banned, as is the use of SRM and the sale of SRM for use in the preparation of food for human consumption.
For cattle, SRM varies according to whether it originated in the UK and its age, but generally includes the skull (including brain and eyes), tonsils, spinal cord, thymus, spleen and intestines.

Further information

Full detailed guidance on the Compulsory Beef Labelling Scheme is available on the GOV.UK website.

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

Beef and Veal Labelling Regulations 2010
Beef and Veal Labelling (Wales) Regulations 2011
EU Regulation (EU) 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers
Food Information Regulations 2014
Food Information (Wales) Regulations 2014
Products Containing Meat etc (England) Regulations 2014
Products Containing Meat etc (Wales) Regulations 2014

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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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