

Food Standards Agency: Information released under the Freedom of Information Act

Date released: 6 October 2017

Request

In relation to page 4 of your recently published poultry welfare data project focussed on haulage welfare issues- see <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/fsa170905c.pdf> I request the following information under FOI please

1, The number of transport/haulage poultry welfare non-compliances* recorded using the new Chronos reporting system for each month since the system came on-stream until the present date, to include a total number of non-compliances

****To include birds trapped between crate and module, overstocking, dead on arrival, other non compliances***

2, If possible, this information broken down by haulier company, using an anonymised system / code (not identifying the company)

Response

I have attached to this response the requested data in Annex B. The data has been taken from the Food Standard's Agency (FSA) animal welfare database covering the period 01 March 2017 to 31 July 2017.

The FSA is responsible for the delivery of official controls in approved meat establishments (slaughterhouses, cutting plants and game handling establishments) subject to veterinary control within England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This work is carried out for the FSA by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in Northern Ireland through a Service Level Agreement.

The FSA monitors and enforces welfare compliance in approved slaughterhouses on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in England and Wales through a Service Level Agreement. The FSA has a zero tolerance approach to animal welfare breaches and all staff are instructed to take prompt and proportionate enforcement action where breaches are identified. This means that we apply the enforcement hierarchy in a way that allows us to take informal enforcement action where breaches are minor and where we believe that this will be effective in avoiding future non-compliance, and take formal action, such as serving of notices in cases where non-compliance falls into the most severe categories which may have caused pain or suffering or where informal enforcement has not resulted in subsequent compliance by the business operator.

FSA official veterinarians and meat hygiene inspectors, either employed by the FSA, or supplied through an approved contractor, are typically present during processing of animals. They carry out a range of duties, including ante-mortem and post-mortem checks (checks on live animals and carcasses and offal) which include checks on the

health and welfare of animals presented for slaughter. These official control duties ensure that food businesses operators have produced meat in accordance with regulatory requirements, with a health mark applied to show that meat is safe to enter the food chain.

A number of reported animal welfare non-compliances relate to the suitability of transport facilities and condition of the animals upon arrival at an abattoir from a farm. These are separate to any issues occurring at the abattoir, but are detected by FSA officials on the animals' arrival. The findings are referred to Local Authorities / Trading Standards Officers in the case of welfare in transport issues, and the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) where the issue originated on farm. Local Authority / Trading Standards Officers have enforcement responsibility for transport, with APHA enforcing welfare issues on farm.

At the FSA Open Board meetings on 21 September 2016 and 20 September 2017 the FSA approach to animal welfare was discussed and you may find the following links useful for more information.

<https://www.food.gov.uk/about-us/our-board/meetings/2016/010116/board-meeting-agenda-21-september-2016>

<https://www.food.gov.uk/about-us/our-board/meetings/2017/010117/board-meeting-agenda-20-september-2017>

During those meetings the animal welfare assurance programme was explained and is based on the principles of “Deter, Prevent, Detect, Enforce” in line with good practice in wider law enforcement. This Welfare Assurance Programme, sponsored in partnership with Defra, clearly sets out the FSA ambition and approach enabling tracking of FSA and industry performance.

Delivery of this programme of activities can be summarised under four key themes:

- a) Strengthening verification of compliance
- b) Clarifying accountability and improving collaboration
- c) Improving education and instruction
- d) Better analysis and reporting

The FSA animal welfare database provides information on non-compliances in relation to animal welfare legislation. The FSA currently uses a system of exception reporting. The categories and definitions of non-compliances are:

- Score 2 – “Minor” non-compliances which pose a low risk of compromising animal welfare or an isolated low risk situation that poses no immediate risk to the welfare of animals.
- Score 3 - ‘Major’ non-compliances which are likely to compromise animal welfare but there is no immediate risk to the animal - although the non-compliances may lead to a situation that poses a risk to animals.

- Score 4 - 'Critical' non-compliances are considered to pose a serious and imminent risk to animal welfare or are ones where avoidable pain distress or suffering has been caused.

The data provided shows the number of 'Critical', "Major" and "Minor" non-compliances recorded.

As requested, we have anonymised the data via deterministic modification assigning a code to each haulier, including where no haulier details were recorded on the system.