

Alexandra Heal

Our Reference: FOI 2262

By email: [ahalfreelance@gmail.com](mailto:ahalfreelance@gmail.com)

Date: 25 September 2018

Dear Ms Heal

## **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST**

Further to your request for information which was received by us on 31 July, I am now in a position to respond.

I am handling your request under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act).

The information that you have requested is provided for in Annex A of this letter.

Please note that some of the information related to your request is being withheld from disclosure under Section 43 (2) of the Act.

Further details about our use of these exemption have been provided in Annex B to this letter.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me on the details provided in the footer of this letter. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are not satisfied with the way the Food Standards Agency (FSA) has handled your request for information, you should write within two calendar months of the date of this letter to the FOI Complaints and Transparency team, and ask for an internal review. They will arrange for the Complaints Coordinator to conduct the review. Their address is Food Standards Agency,

Floors 6 and 7 Clive House, 70 Petty France, Westminster, London SW1H 9EX (email: [FCT@food.gov.uk](mailto:FCT@food.gov.uk)).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the FSA. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF or through the website at: [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Dick', written in a cursive style.

**Matthew Dick**  
**Official Controls Lead**  
**Operations Assurance**

## **Annex A – Request/Response**

### **Request**

Under the FOI Act I would please like to know, for the last three years for which you have data and broken down annually:

- 1) The number of audits or unannounced inspections at meat processing plants and meat cold storage facilities that resulted in a finding of one or more 'major' food safety or hygiene non-compliance.

And for each of the above audits/inspections:

- 2) The company/processor being audited/inspected.
- 3) How many 'major' non-compliances were found.
- 4) What aspect of production each 'major' non-compliance related to (e.g. maintaining legal temperature controls, minimising or preventing cross-contamination etc).
- 5) How many follow up pre-announced audits/inspections there were and any outcome(s).
- 6) How many unannounced audits/inspections there were and any outcome(s).

### **Response**

In response to Q1-4, please see Annex C-E csv spreadsheets as listed below documenting the full audits of Food Business Operators (FBOs) by calendar year. The data covers 3 full years, January 2015 – December 2017, this includes the period of 1 January – 31 March 2015, where the FSA conducted audits and inspections at approved meat sites in Scotland prior the creation of Food Standards Scotland. Annex C-E provide details of audit outcomes, numbers of major non-compliance, and details of the food safety and hygiene categories infringed. Granular details regarding partial audits and unannounced inspections is being withheld under Section 43(2) of the Act. As noted, further details about our use of this exemption is provided at Annex B.

The requested totals are summarised in Tables 1.0 – 1.2 below. A total of all full audits conducted per year has also been included in Table 1.0 to give a more complete picture of all audit activity. This includes those audits where no major non-compliances were detected, and therefore a 'good' outcome.

Please note that a single instance of non-compliance can be recorded in multiple categories. For example, an instance of unhygienic equipment could

result in a non-compliance related to good hygiene practices. Additionally, the same instance could also be recorded as a non-compliance related to the Food Safety Systems intended to prevent equipment becoming unhygienic. Therefore, the single non-compliance would be recorded in these multiple categories. The totals included in tables 1.0 and 1.1 are based on counting single non-compliances (e.g. the total of Column F ‘Major’ in Annex E), and not the separate areas infringed that contributed towards that major non-compliance being recorded.

An audit with one major non-compliance will result in a ‘Generally Satisfactory’ outcome. The audit frequency associated for this outcome is annual. Whilst a major non-compliance remains open, the establishment is subject to quarterly partial audits and further unannounced inspections.

In England, NI and Wales, at the end of March 2018 97% of slaughterhouses (with or without co-located cutting plants) and 97% of standalone cutting plants were at least generally satisfactory in terms of compliance.

An overview of what aspects of production contributed towards each major non-compliance for an establishment can be observed in Annex C-E by tracking across the spreadsheet for each FBO. Definitions of HACCP Principles (1-7) are included in Annex F.

After an extensive public consultation, the FSA introduced “Extended Audit Frequencies” for the most compliant plants from January 2017. This reduced the cost burden on industry for those better performing premises without compromising consumer safety. This allows us to focus our resources and public money on the most non-compliant FBOs, and accounts for the reduction in audits from 2016 to 2017.

The FSA does not generally inspect stand-alone Cold Stores, this function is undertaken by Local Authorities.

#### **Annex C-F (csv spreadsheets):**

Annex C - Full Audit 2015 (with one or more ‘major’ non-compliances)

Annex D - Full Audit 2016 (with one or more ‘major’ non-compliances)

Annex E - Full Audit 2017 (with one or more ‘major’ non-compliances)

Annex F (word doc) – Definitions of HACCP Principles (1-7)

**Table 1.0 – Full Audits with one or more ‘major’ non-compliances**

	2017	2016	2015*
Total number of full audits conducted (all outcomes)	792	1052	1075
Total number of full audits with one or more ‘major’ non-compliances	525	525	558
Number of Major Non-compliances	1049	1003	1099

\* Figures include approved sites in Scotland 1 January – 31 March prior the creation of Food Standards Scotland.

**Table 1.1 – Number of follow ups on pre-announced audits (Partial audits)**

	2017	2016	2015*
Total number of follow up audits (partial audits)	597	551	646
Number of Major Non-compliances	510	397	440

\* Figures include approved sites in Scotland 1 January – 31 March prior the creation of Food Standards Scotland.

**Table 1.2 - Unannounced Inspections**

	2017	2016	2015*
Total number of Unannounced inspections	963	990	679

\* Figures include approved sites in Scotland 1 January – 31 March prior the creation of Food Standards Scotland.

### **Supporting information and outcomes**

The FSA monitors FBO compliance with the regulations in stand-alone Cutting Plants, where daily Official Veterinarian (OV) presence is not required via a programme of Official Controls comprising both Audits (full and partial) and Unannounced Inspections (UAI). The frequency at which audits take place is risk based, and therefore determined by the levels of compliance. In slaughterhouses, FSA monitoring of FBO compliance is carried out by the local FSA team, who are in attendance at all times during processing.

To conduct a scheduled FBO audit (full and partial), the Veterinary Auditor (VA) will contact the FBO to arrange a mutually convenient time at which to conduct the site visit. The purpose of those visits is to review the processes undertaken at the plant and verify the compliance with hygiene and other relevant regulations governing the business to ensure only safe food is placed on the market. At the conclusion of the audit visit the Veterinary Auditor provides feedback to the FBO on the findings and provisional audit outcome. Following the visit, a written report is prepared which is provided to the FBO. Audits are either **Full audits**, where all aspects of the business are audited, or **Partial audits**, which focus on non-compliances found at previous audits.

Scheduled Audits are complemented by a regime of Unannounced Inspections. Unannounced Inspections are designed to help the FSA form a view of sustained compliance by the FBO. We do not publish information on unannounced inspections or partial audits as they are often targeted based on

previous issues found and do not therefore provide a complete or comprehensive assessment of a food business.

FSA enforcement action is risk based and proportionate, and in order to ensure this, enforcement activity is planned to follow a hierarchy of enforcement, aimed at working with FBOs to achieve compliance with the Regulations.

Ultimately, where an FBO fails to put in place the necessary measures leading to significant public health, animal health and welfare improvement, FSA officials may recommend that their approval status is reviewed. This could lead to their approval being withdrawn or suspended.

Further guidance on how the FSA audits meat premises can be found [here](#). For specific information on intervention action taken in relation to non-compliances; a detailed breakdown of the process the FSA follows can be found [here](#). The 'outcome' for each audit in Annex C-K can be cross referenced with this document to gain an overview of enforcement measures taken.