

FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY: INFORMATION RELEASED UNDER THE
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

DATE RELEASED: 30 May 2019

Request

I would like information regarding animal welfare incidents in Welsh slaughterhouses between 5 April 2017 and 21 December 2018:

(1) The total number of animal welfare related incidents recorded for the specified period. And for these to be classified by the total number ranked at level 4 (critical non-compliance), level 3 (serious non-compliance) and for level 2 (minor non-compliance).

(2) For this period, how many 'welfare enforcement notices' were issued, how many incidents were 'referred for investigation', how many had 'written advice' notices issued and how many cases of 'verbal advice' were issued?

(3) How many incidents of 'operative kicked or hit an animal', 'ineffective stunning', 'incompetent slaughterman – stunning and killing', 'failure to sever both carotid arteries' and 'no monitoring of animals to ensure unconscious until death' occurred during the specified period.

Response

The data you have requested is provided in Annex B (Excel Spreadsheet).

Within Annex B (Excel Spreadsheet) the tab titled 'Score' relates to question 1. The tab titled 'Action' relates to question 2. The tab titled 'NC Type' relates to question 3.

When reading the data in the 'Action' tab please also be aware that the actions and non-compliances will not always correspond. For example, a single non-compliance could generate a number of actions such as a referral for investigation and written advice.

When reading the data in the 'Score' tab please take into consideration that animal welfare non-compliances are categorised from 2-4. A full definition of these scores is included in the Manual for Official Controls, chapter 2.3, section 3.4.3, page 26. But in summary they are defined as:

Score	Descriptor	Definition
2	Minor non-compliance	An isolated low risk situation observed with the requirements of legislation but with no immediate risk of injury, avoidable pain distress or suffering. There was a technical infringement that does not impact on the welfare of animals.

3	Serious non-compliance	Welfare practices were observed as failing to comply with the requirements of legislation and there was no potential risk to animals. There were no animals suffering any avoidable pain, distress or
4	Critical non-compliance	Welfare practices were observed as failing to comply with legislative requirements, and there was evidence of animals suffering avoidable pain, distress or suffering during their killing and related operations or a contravention poses a serious and imminent risk to animal welfare. Welfare of animals during transportation was seriously compromised with evidence of animals suffering unnecessary or avoidable pain, distress or suffering. DOA red meat animals will require a 4 score as the cause of death is not determined. These will be referred to the Local Authority.

Background

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is responsible for approval of all slaughterhouses in England and Wales. The FSA's role focuses on ensuring those businesses are compliant with all specific requirements in hygiene and animal welfare legislation.

These requirements are monitored and enforced by Official Veterinarians of the FSA to ensure that animals are spared avoidable suffering, distress or pain during the slaughter process.

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 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 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.