

Annex – Request and response

1a.

I would like to receive, or be able to view one, a full list of all licensed slaughterhouses within the UK, by the UK I mean England, Scotland, Wales & Northern Island?

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 the UK. These meat establishments are operating under Regulation (EC) No 852/2004, Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 and Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 and are either conditionally approved or approved.

The FSA publishes details of these approved establishments and they can be found on the FSA website at the following web link:

www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/sectorrules/meatplantsprems/meatpremlicence

1b.

If this is not available from the FSA, from whom may I request the above?

Please see the response in Question 1a.

1c.

What procedures if any are there in place to make regular visits, announced or unannounced, to the individual premises to check that all legislation, procedures and requirements are being followed, and how rigorously do you enforce the legislation, procedures and requirements?

Official veterinarians, and meat hygiene inspectors working under the supervision of official veterinarians, are present during processing of animals presented for slaughter. They carry out a range of duties, including ante and post-mortem checks (on live animals and carcasses and offal) and checks on the health and welfare of animals presented for slaughter. These official control duties ensure that food business 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.

Animal welfare and health checks are carried out on live animals by official veterinarians on animals presented for slaughter. Meat hygiene inspectors carry out checks on carcasses and offal (post-mortem inspection) and apply a health mark to meat that is fit for human consumption and may be allowed to enter the food chain.

In addition to routine official controls carried out on a day to day basis by official veterinarians and inspectors, the FSA has a dedicated team of trained and skilled veterinary auditors who carry out compliance audits on a scheduled (announced) basis. These audits assess compliance with legal requirements and ensure adequate business operator standards in relation to public health, animal health and welfare.

On the basis of levels of compliance, businesses are assessed through the audit as being good, generally satisfactory, improvement necessary or urgent improvement necessary. Businesses will be audited once every two, three, twelve or eighteen months – with twelve months being the ceiling level for cutting plants (where the FSA does not have routine attendance) and compliant businesses audited less frequently.

Unannounced inspections take place in between scheduled audits, and follow-up visits where enforcement action or monitoring is considered necessary.

1d.

What procedures do you have in place for penalising any slaughterhouse that is found to be in breach of any legislation, procedures and requirements and how rigorously do you apply any such penalties?

The business operator is responsible for the safe production of meat and the welfare of animals at his or her premises. The FSA has responsibility for the enforcement of legislation in Great Britain relating to public health, animal welfare at slaughter and animal health controls in approved establishments under veterinary supervision.

FSA officers are authorised to enforce public health, hygiene, animal welfare and animal by-products legislation in approved establishments. Enforcement action will be initiated when the business operator's food safety management systems and standard operating procedures are failing to protect public health, animal health or animal welfare and will typically follow a hierarchy of enforcement. There are various sanctions that authorised officers (typically official veterinarians, but, in certain situations trained inspectors) can use to deal with contravention of the legislation. The choice of tool depends on the alleged offence, the severity of non-compliance, the history involved and the willingness of the business operator to comply with the legal requirements.

The aim of enforcement action is to secure compliance through co-operation, advice and persuasion. As part of the enforcement hierarchy, when an authorised officer identifies a non-compliance, they would typically first provide verbal advice, and where this is ignored, the officer would escalate the issue in various ways depending on the nature of the non-compliance, the legislation and powers available. These may include:

- written warnings
- the service of statutory notices
- detention, formal seizure of what are considered non-conforming foodstuffs
- declaring meat unfit for human consumption, requiring the disposal of unfit food as an animal by-product and in certain cases applying to the courts to have food condemned as unfit.

Continued failure to comply with the legal requirements may result in formal investigations with a view to prosecuting the operator in the Courts, or the suspension / withdrawal of the establishment's approval which will prevent them from operating.

Authorised officers will take immediate formal enforcement action where business operators do not adequately control risks to public health, animal health, or animal welfare.

2a.

I would like to receive, or be able to view one, a full list of all religiously exempt slaughterhouses within the UK, by the UK I mean England, Scotland, Wales & Northern Island?

By religiously exempt, I mean that they have applied for and been granted exemption from the normal rules, regulations etc, as the meat they are producing is for religious products such as kosher and Halal.

The FSA gives slaughterhouses approval to operate. There is no separate approval for religious slaughter except for religious slaughter of cattle. Every slaughterhouse has the capability to carry out religious slaughter intended for religious communities, once approved by the FSA under European legislation.

There are national rules that set down requirements for religious slaughter. If a business wishes to slaughter adult bovines in accordance with religious rites, a bovine restraining pen has to additionally be approved before slaughter can take place. See answer to Question 1 a) for details approved establishments.

2b.

If this is not available from the FSA, from whom may I request the above?

Please see the response to Question 2a.

2c.

What procedures if any are there in place to make regular visits, announced or unannounced, to the individual premises to check that all legislation, procedures and requirements are being followed, and how rigorously do you enforce the legislation, procedures and requirements?

By this I mean, if a premises has applied for exemption for production of Halal, for example, how rigorously do you enforce the requirements for Halal Slaughter as set out in the Koran?

As detailed previously, official veterinarians and inspectors are present during processing of animals presented for slaughter. In addition to this routine presence, the FSA has a dedicated team of trained and skilled veterinary auditors who carry out compliance audits on a scheduled (announced) basis. In between audits, there will be follow up visits to make sure non-compliances have been closed off.

Enforcement action will be taken where there is evidence of non-compliances, with this varying from informal to formal enforcement, depending on the nature and severity of the non-compliance.

Halal slaughter must be performed by a Muslim who holds a licence to slaughter animals by the Muslim method for the food of Muslims. There are a number of Halal accreditation bodies all setting specific standards. The accreditation bodies will verify compliance with these standards.

Separately, the FSA's role focuses on ensuring businesses are complying with specific requirements in animal welfare legislation.

2d.

What procedures do you have in place for penalising any slaughterhouse that is found to be in breach of any legislation, procedures and requirements as discussed in section 2c. and how rigorously do you apply any such penalties?

What I am trying to establish is that if a Slaughterhouse claims to be undertaking Halal slaughter then they should do so properly.

The animals should not see each other getting slaughtered, they should be slaughtered only by a Muslim, and the prayer of dedication must be SPOKEN at the time of death (not a pre-recorded tape version) by a Muslim.

What is there in place to stop slaughterhouses overriding animal welfare simply to cash in on the so called Muslim £1b trade in Halal meat?

There are a number of Halal accreditation bodies all setting specific standards for Halal slaughter. The accreditation bodies will verify compliance with these standards.

The FSA's role is to make sure that all slaughterhouses, including those that carry out religious slaughter, comply with specific legal requirements and ensure that animals are spared any avoidable suffering, distress or pain during the slaughter process. Enforcement action will be carried out where there is evidence that this is not the case.

3a.

It is my understanding that individual slaughter men, that is an employee of a slaughterhouse, who is going to carry out slaughter must be trained to a certain level and have the appropriate documentation to prove it whether.

Can you confirm or deny this?

3b.

who is responsible for providing this training and how is it delivered, regulated and enforced?

3c.

What exact qualifications does this training provide?

a basic knowledge perhaps?

a full license or accreditation?

3c.

Does a person who is going to carry out religious slaughter have to undergo the same training and become, for want of a better phrase, accredited or licensed?

Details about training and registration of business operator staff involved in the handling or slaughter and killing of animals may be found in the Manual for Official Controls, Chapter 2.3, Section 5. This is available on the FSA website at:

<http://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/MOC%20Manual%20Chapter%202.3-%20Animal%20Welfare.pdf>

If a slaughterer is wishing to slaughter by the Halal method then the official veterinarian would have to record on the assessment that they were competent to slaughter in this method and this would be recorded on the issued license. Schedule 12 of Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) (WASK) requires that only a slaughterman licensed under Schedule 1 of WASK for religious slaughter can undertake non-stun slaughter. Schedule 12 is also mentioned on individual licences.

4a.

If such licensing or accreditation of religiously exempt slaughter men, or anyone who is going to slaughter an animal using religious practices (Halal or Kosher for example) does exist, please provide full information as follows but not limited to:

4b.

I would like to receive, or be able to view one, a full list of all religiously exempt Slaughter men or employees of slaughterhouses within the UK, by the UK I mean England, Scotland, Wales & Northern Island?

By religiously exempt, I mean that they have applied for and been granted exemption from the normal rules, regulations etc, as the meat they are producing is for religious products such as kosher and Halal.

The FSA does not hold information in relation to the number of slaughterers employed or actively working. Slaughterers are employed by the individual business operators and not the FSA.

4c.

If this is not available from the FSA, from whom may I request the above?

As above slaughterers are employed by the individual business operators.

4d.

What procedures if any are there in place when making visits (or otherwise), announced or unannounced, to the slaughter premises to check that the religiously exempt person performing the slaughter is actually fully licensed or accredited?

How often and who would check that all legislation, procedures and requirements are being followed by the person performing the slaughter, and how rigorously do you enforce the legislation, procedures and requirements?

By this I mean, if a PERSON has applied for exemption from the normal animal welfare rules so that he or her may perform religious slaughter, for example, how rigorously do you enforce the requirements for Halal Slaughter as set out in the Koran?

4e.

What procedures do you have in place for penalising any such licensed or accredited person that is found to be in breach of any legislation, procedures and requirements as discussed in section 4d. and how rigorously do you apply any such penalties?

What I am trying to establish is that if a Slaughter person claims to be undertaking Halal slaughter then they should do so properly.

The animals should not see each other getting slaughtered, they should be slaughtered only by a Muslim, and the prayer of dedication must be SPOKEN at the time of death (not a pre-recorded tape version) by a Muslim.

As detailed previously, the FSA's role is to make sure that all slaughterhouses, including those that carry out religious slaughter, comply with specific legal requirements in animal welfare legislation and ensure that animals are spared any avoidable suffering, distress or pain during the slaughter process. Enforcement action will be carried out where there is evidence that this is not the case.

Official veterinarians will carry out appropriate checks that requirements of animal welfare legislation are being met as part of their routine official control duties.

Veterinary auditors will also confirm this separately as part of FSA compliance audits.

There are a number of Halal accreditation bodies all setting specific standards. The accreditation bodies will verify compliance with these standards.

5a.

What procedures are there in place to prevent a company from simply applying for exemption on the grounds of religious slaughter and then they just employ a non-Muslim to carry out the slaughter?

As detailed previously, every slaughterhouse has the capability to carry out religious slaughter without stunning, intended for the religious community, once approved by the FSA under European legislation. Slaughterers though must hold specific licences to carry out non-stun slaughter.

6a.

Do slaughterhouses who are exempt on religious grounds as set out in this request, have to declare whether they are using the stunned or no stun method of killing?

No, slaughterhouses do not have to declare whether they are using stun or non-stun methods of slaughter.

6b.

If yes, is this a legal requirement and in line with my previous questions, such as who enforces it, how is it enforced and so on?

Not applicable.

6c.

If yes, I would like to receive, or be able to view a list of those who claim to stun and those who claim they do not?

Not applicable.

7a.

Do you as an agency recognise as an official approved body or organisation who's advice or opinions, written - spoken or published, hold any gravitas, sway or authority, or are you aware of, any of the following:

Halal Food Authority - <http://halalfoodauthority.com/> Halal ANSA (Association of Non Stun Abattoirs) - <http://www.ansauk.co.uk/>

7b.

Are you aware of any other Pro Halal or religious Slaughter organisation who does hold any of the any gravitas from whom you as an agency may seek advice from and presumably consider or act on said advice?

The Secretary of State for Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in England, the Scottish Ministers, and the Welsh Ministers are the competent authorities for implementing domestic and European animal health and animal welfare legislation. The FSA does not hold responsibility for recognising such organisations.