

FOOD CHAIN INFORMATION FOR CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS

Background

Legislation¹ comes into force on 1 January 2010 requiring slaughterhouse operators to *'request, receive, check and act upon'* food chain information (FCI) for all cattle, sheep and goats sent for slaughter for human consumption.

This requirement forms part of the whole chain, farm-to-fork approach to food safety introduced by the Hygiene Regulations from the beginning of 2006. FCI has been progressively implemented for the food animal species – poultry 2006, pigs 2008, calves and horses 2009, cattle, sheep and goats 2010.

FCI contributes to slaughterhouse operators' HACCP-based food safety management systems by providing information about animals procured for slaughter. Many FBOs will already require much of this information from their livestock suppliers as part of their commercial relations with them, and may have little more to do to comply.

FCI is used by MHS to aid decisions about meat and may be used to determine inspection procedures for animals and groups of animals.

Contents of Food Chain Information

FSA is required to inform food business operators (meat abattoirs and processors) of the 'minimum elements' of FCI which must be provided, and has consulted with a range of stakeholders to determine these minimum elements, which are included in form of model documents at Annexes A & B to this document. The minimum elements have been developed with the aim of ensuring that FCI is restricted to information that can be used directly by the operator or MHS staff at the slaughterhouse.

The minimum elements should be taken as a minimum requirement for the information slaughterhouse operators must receive - ultimately it is for operators to request the information they require from suppliers for their own food safety management purposes.

¹ Regulation (EC) No. 853/2004 laying down specific rules for food of animal origin

Additional information will be required for animals when there is relevant information to report. This information is contained in a model document enclosed at Annex C.

Format of food chain information

Legislation does not stipulate how slaughterhouse operators should receive FCI. Operators should select a format that best suits their business. Examples include; the enclosed model documents may be used or customised for their own use by slaughterhouse operators; the minimum elements may be incorporated into companies' own documentation (e.g. supplier declarations or passport envelopes); electronic information exchange methods.

In the case of sheep and goats, provision is being made in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, for FCI declarations and additional information to be merged on the movement document. For example, the AML 1 form that Defra and Welsh Assembly Government produce. Use of the new AML1 forms is one method to obtain FCI for sheep and goats, but other methods may be used that best suit slaughterhouse operators' business needs.

It is the responsibility of slaughterhouse operators to inform their suppliers about the exact FCI they require and of the form in which they wish to receive it.

Time of receipt of FCI

FCI may be provided before the animals arrive or may accompany them to the slaughterhouse. Ideally FCI should be received before animals arrive at the slaughterhouse, but in many cases this will be impractical, particularly for cattle and sheep procured through livestock markets. In the case of any information that may disrupt the normal operation of the slaughterhouse, suppliers must be advised to provide FCI in good time before the animals arrive.

If animals arrive at the slaughterhouse without FCI, the operator must immediately notify the OV. Slaughter may not take place until the OV permits. The carcasses of animals slaughtered without FCI will not be approved for human consumption until the FCI for the animals is received. Any animals arriving without FCI will, at least, cause disruption to the

normal operation of the slaughterhouse – it is in operators' interests to ensure that they comply with the FCI requirements from 1 January 2010 and that livestock suppliers are aware that FCI must be provided before animals arrive or must accompany them.

Actions on receipt of FCI

Legislation requires slaughterhouse operators to 'check and act upon' food chain information. Operators should use FCI to inform their HACCP-based food safety management systems and to make decisions about accepting animals and any special processing arrangements e.g. slaughter at the end of a run, additional dressing requirements, reduced line speed.

Once the operator has accepted the animals for slaughter he/she must make the FCI available to the OV. The OV must be notified of any concerns about the health of animals before ante-mortem inspection.

Further information

This information document and the enclosed model documents (Annexes A, B and C) can be found on the FSA's website at the following link:

<http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/guidancenotes/meatregsguid/fciguideance>