

Meat traceability, drug residues and withdrawal periods

Livestock keepers have a responsibility to prevent or minimise any risk of hazards in food causing illness to consumers.

Livestock keepers can prevent or minimise any risk of hazards in food by:

- Ensuring animals are identified in compliance with regulations.
- Recording illness and veterinary treatments.
- Avoiding the build-up of harmful bacteria in the farm environment.
- Managing animal feeding prior to slaughter.
- Using appropriate bedding to transport animals on to slaughter
- Not stressing animals during transport.
- Ensuring hides/fleeces are not contaminated with faeces (visible cleanliness score).

Further information on some of these points is available below.

Ensuring animals are identified in compliance with the regulations.

In the case of meat there has to be a system of traceability so any incidents can be traced back to the producer responsible. The livestock keepers' responsibility for meat traceability includes the:

- Requirements for animal identification information (e.g. ear tags).
- Supply of food chain information.

If the animal is booked in for slaughter, identified according to the regulations, clean and healthy and accompanied by FCI then it will be accepted by the lairage operator at the slaughterhouse. Once accepted the responsibility for traceability passes to the slaughterhouse food business operator (FBO) which is A D Cox Ltd. The FBO has to correlate animal identification with its carcasses and offal, producer declarations and identification marks on products.

Food Chain Information (FCI) certificates

All animals must be accompanied with a 'Food Chain Information' (FCI) certificate, the declaration of which MUST be signed by the producer, keeper or consignor. This includes a declaring that all medicine withdrawal periods required for animal products to enter the human food chain have been observed.

All animals which are individually identified, known as 'fully identified', must be accompanied with individual FCI certificates. Batches of animals presented for slaughter with 'slaughter tags' or 'slaughter tattoos', may be accompanied with FCI which includes a declaration for all animals within the batch.

The European Community regulation 853/2004 laying down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin states that: *'slaughterhouse operators must not accept animals onto the ... premises unless they have requested and been provided with relevant food chain information contained in the records kept at the holding of provenance'*.

853/2004 goes on to say that: *'In the event of failure to comply with any of the requirements listed under point 2, the food business operator must notify the Official Veterinarian (OV) and take appropriate measures.'*

This means that if an animal arrives at the slaughterhouse without FCI it will not be accepted for slaughter.

FCI will be retained by the FBO for a period related to the shelf life of the meat or meat products, in case of queries.

FCI Declaration

Producers, keepers or consignors must complete their name and contact details and identification of individual animals or batches.

The FCI certificate for the Guernsey Slaughterhouse requires compliance with four statements before an individual animal or batch of animals will be accepted for slaughter. It is the producer, keeper or consignor that will have to make the declaration.

The four statements are:

1. Animals on the holding are not under movement restrictions for other animal disease or public health reasons.
2. Withdrawal periods have been observed for all veterinary medicines and other treatments administered to the animals while on this holding and previous holdings.
3. To the best of my knowledge the animals are not showing signs of any disease or condition that may affect the safety of meat derived from them.
4. No analysis of samples taken from animals on the holding or other samples has shown that the animals in this consignment may have been exposed to any disease or condition that may affect the safety of meat or to substances likely to result in residues in meat.

If the animals are non-compliant with any of the four statements the signatory must not submit the animals for slaughter.

The FCI declaration form can be downloaded by following this [link](#).

Recording illness and veterinary treatments - withdrawal periods

The use of veterinary medicines on livestock is controlled under European Union (EU) law. This includes:

- the initial authorisation of a veterinary medicine
- whether it can be used on livestock
- how long after a treatment an animal may be used for human consumption

The 'withdrawal period' is time after a treatment with a Veterinary Medicinal Product (VMP) that an animal can be used for human consumption.

The legislation aims to protect consumers by stopping unacceptable levels or concentrations of residues from VMP's getting into the food chain. Samples of meat from the Guernsey

Slaughterhouse will be randomly taken and monitored for drug residues as part of the UK's surveillance.

If you have any doubts about making affirmative declarations to any of the four points then you should ask the veterinary surgeon whose care your animals are under. If you have obtained VMP's for your livestock from a pharmacist or 'suitably qualified person' (SQP) and have a query about 'withdrawal' periods then you should contact them for assistance.

In general terms VMP's used to treat animals in Guernsey must have marketing authorisation for use in the United Kingdom (UK) (The Medicines (Human and Veterinary) (Bailiwick of Guernsey) Law, 2008). These are VMP's whose active ingredients have been evaluated for residue safety and withdrawal periods. Guernsey regulations also allow your vet to give other products under a 'prescribing cascade'. This is allowed when no medicines are available for an illness and the animal's suffering must be prevented.

The cascade has three levels:

Level 1 - use of a UK-authorized veterinary medicine indicated for the same species but for another condition or indicated for use in another species.

Level 2 - use of a UK-authorized human medicine or veterinary medicine authorised in the EU but not the UK. This requires a Special Import Certificate.

Level 3 - specially prepared medicine made by a veterinary surgeon, pharmacist or suitably authorised manufacturer.

If a VMP is used outside its authorised uses under the cascade, a vet must specify an appropriate withdrawal period. The statutory withdrawal period for VMPs must not be less than:

- seven days for milk
- **28 days** for meat, fat and offal

Livestock keepers presenting animals for slaughter before a withdrawal period has been observed may be guilty of an offence.

Managing animal feeding prior to slaughter

Reducing faecal output and ensuring faeces is firm helps avoid contamination of the environment and the hide/fleece.

To avoid diarrhoea in animals, alterations in feed must be made gradually.

Grass, silage, vegetables and cereal feeds tend to result in soft faeces and quantities must be gradually reduced prior to slaughter. Hay and straw feeds tend to result in firm faeces and quantities must be increased gradually prior to slaughter.

Cattle, sheep and goats, young-stock and adults, have established a rumen (the large first chamber of the stomach of cattle, sheep and goats) so are able to manage without food for reasonable periods. Therefore they should be starved for 24 to 36 hours immediately before slaughter.

For lambs, kids and calves less than 12 weeks of age, without a well-developed rumen, and all pigs it is only necessary to withdraw feed for approximately 24 hours immediately prior to slaughter.

Feed withdrawal 24 to 36 hours prior to slaughter reduces:

- gut fill at slaughter and reduce the risk of gut rupture during disembowelling
- the quantity of faecal material carried in case of gut rupture
- the amount of faeces on the carcass

If a carcass is contaminated with faeces or gut contents during dressing and/or evisceration, depending upon the extent, the carcass may be fully or partly condemned or may have to be trimmed. Carcass contamination is unacceptable - the required hygiene standards will be met and if necessary meat will be lost.

Using appropriate bedding to transport animals on to slaughter

Livestock keepers and transporters should not use saw dust or wood chip to provide grip or bedding for animals prior to slaughter. It tends to collect in the hide/fleece and can contaminate the carcass which will result in meat loss. Livestock keepers are advised to use only sufficient clean bedding to provide sufficient grip on the floor during travel and sufficient bedding to soak up urine or clump around faeces. After unloading livestock keepers, hauliers or carters must remove all bedding from their vehicles, wash the vehicle and then disinfect it at the slaughterhouse. Tyres, wheels and wheel arches must also be cleaned and disinfected before departure. Failure to clean and disinfect vehicles may result in future consignments not being accepted at the slaughterhouse.