

Official Controls delivery on Animal Welfare

1 Purpose of the paper

- 1.1 This paper is for information and decision following the Board's request for a paper on animal welfare in light of the performance reports that have been provided.
- 1.2 Verification of Food Business Operator (FBO) Animal Welfare (AW) controls is one of the key elements in the delivery of Official Controls (OC) in approved slaughterhouses. This paper is intended to update the Board on developments in OC delivery on AW and provides details on future improvement plans.
- 1.3 The Board is asked to:
 - **Note** progress to further develop AW OC delivery in Scotland
 - **Note** the proposals, recommendations and implementation plan for animal welfare including unannounced inspections in slaughterhouses.
 - **Agree** that the executive should develop a methodology for the regular publication of animal welfare data

2 Strategic Aims

- 2.1 This work supports FSS Strategic Outcome 5 - FSS is a trusted organisation and Outcome 6 – FSS is efficient and effective.

3 Background

- 3.1 Under EU and Domestic regulations, responsibility for animal welfare and food safety in slaughterhouses rests with FBOs who must meet legislative requirements in terms of slaughterhouse design, layout, equipment and operation. Their slaughterers must be competent, appropriately trained and be licensed to handle and slaughter all species presented to them. Responsible FBOs and their representative organisations have made it clear that welfare incidents are unacceptable and should be effectively addressed as they damage the reputation of the industry as a whole.
- 3.2 Scottish Government (SG) has policy responsibility for animal welfare, including those relating to businesses regulated by FSS. Our responsibilities to SG are covered by a Service Level Agreement but we work very closely with SG in supporting policy development.
- 3.3 The role of FSS in slaughterhouses is to maintain an effective system of controls that allows us to verify compliance and to take proportionate enforcement action where there is non-compliance with the law. Official Veterinarians (OVs) and Meat Hygiene Inspectors (MHIs) make regular checks throughout periods of operation to ensure that welfare of animals is being appropriately safeguarded.

4. Application of Animal Welfare Policy

- 4.1 FSS has a zero tolerance stance to animal welfare being compromised which translates into staff taking prompt and proportionate enforcement action when incidents of animal welfare legislation are identified in slaughterhouses.
- 4.2 Animal welfare incidents are not uniform and there can be a range of non-compliance. When AW incidents do occur, FSS takes a proportionate approach to enforcement. We apply the enforcement hierarchy by taking informal enforcement action where incidents are minor and where we believe that this will be effective in avoiding future non-compliance. Examples of minor non-compliance may include where the standard operating procedures do not reflect reality but amendments have no impact on welfare or where legislative requirements were not strictly adhered to but there was no impact on animal welfare.
- 4.3 We take formal action, such as serving notices, or referring for investigation with a view to reporting to the Procurator Fiscal (PF) in cases where non-compliance falls into the more severe categories which may have caused pain or suffering or where informal enforcement has not resulted in subsequent compliance by the FBO. We also take into account the overall approach of the FBO and their promptness to address the incident.
- 4.4 Notwithstanding the vigilance we apply in this area, it remains the case that covert footage recorded and released in the media, multiple FOI requests for animal welfare data, and the latest consultations on installing compulsory CCTV systems in slaughterhouses continues to keep animal welfare safeguards and controls across UK in the spotlight.
- 4.5 FSS continues to be proactive to “Deter, Prevent, Detect and Enforce” animal welfare incidents. Pro-active, reactive and comprehensive systems of control are required to achieve this in addition to close working with Scottish Government (SG), Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA), Local Authorities (LAs) and Food Standards Agency (FSA) to ensure a consistent and efficient approach in delivering assurance on AW monitoring and actions across the UK. FSS also provides technical support and advice to Operational and Policy colleagues as well as industry and other stakeholders.
- 4.6 Since April 2015, an FSS Veterinary Manager (VM) has been designated animal welfare portfolio lead to ensure increased focus on animal welfare through operational policy development and implementation of control measures as described in Annex A. Engagement with stakeholders has increased through the Scottish Livestock Welfare Group as outlined in paragraphs 4.8 and 4.9 and the wider meat industry as described in 4.7. The Board also receive a quarterly update on AW performance.
- 4.7 FSS continues to work with Industry through various channels from local operational levels to strategic policy level. In addition to plant level activity FSS engages with Industry on strategic AW matters through the Scottish Meat Industry Forum (SMIF). The industry is supportive of the FSS approach and equally committed to reducing the number of welfare incidents.

- 4.8 FSS recently established a cross-Government Scottish Livestock Welfare Group (SLWG) which is a forum for regulators involved in AW enforcement and policy. Membership includes FSS, SG, APHA, and LAs. Additionally, members in attendance by invitation are: Scottish Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA), Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) and FSS Delivery Contractor (Hallmark Veterinary & Compliance Services). Industry representatives, including Scottish Association of Meat Wholesalers (SAMW), Market/Auctioneer and haulier/transport representatives are to be invited to attend annually to consider overall AW incident performance and to contribute to campaign development.
- 4.9 SLWG convenes quarterly and has been set up to:
- Review welfare data and intelligence recorded by FSS veterinary and inspection personnel working in approved slaughterhouses and by other SLWG members.
 - Identify areas of poor performance with respect to animal welfare and agree national priorities to address these.
 - Assess welfare data and intelligence collected throughout Scotland with a view to identifying repeat offenders and agreeing enforcement strategies/priorities to address this.
 - Ensure a coordinated approach is taken where required across all regulators with regard to identified welfare incidents.
 - Review impact of current welfare policy and to identify areas for improvement.
 - Encourage joint working and intelligence sharing between government/regulators, industry and other stakeholders.
- 4.10 It is important to recognise that the majority of AW incidents do not happen in the slaughterhouse but that is the point in the process where issues are identified. FSS is the competent authority for incidents that are attributable to slaughterhouse conditions or processes and will directly progress investigations and take action as appropriate. For AW incidents that are attributable to welfare on farm, FSS will report these directly to APHA for investigation and action. For transport-related incidents, FSS will refer these to LAs. SLWG now provides the forum whereby incident referrals between regulators can be jointly assessed to ensure effective handover and incident closure. Through this group and also through local meetings, FSS continues to actively engage with Other Government Departments (OGDs) including LAs and APHA to improve our communication and collaboration to ensure animal welfare is protected throughout the farm, transport and slaughter chain.
- 4.11 When AW incidents occur they are initially assessed by FSS OVs and ranked by severity using a scoring system. The scores used are: 1 – Welfare compliant; 2 – Isolated Low Risk Situation unlikely to compromise animal

welfare; 3 – Potential risks to animal welfare with no evidence of pain and suffering; 4 – Imminent Risk to animal welfare and evidence of pain and suffering. All AW incidents are being recorded in our welfare database. As welfare incidents in FSS approved premises are lower than incidents related to farm or transport, we continue to emphasise the importance of accurate reporting of welfare incidents with other regulators and the ability to share intelligence and discuss case work with other regulators at SLWG.

Training and Assurance of FBO Staff Capability

- 4.12 The Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (WATOK) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 came into force in Scotland in January 2013, and requires all animal handlers and slaughterers to operate under a Certificate of Competence (CoC). Since Vesting Day, we have suspended or revoked the CoC held by 21 staff employed by FBOs, following detection of welfare incidents.
- 4.13 The WATOK regulations require the CoC to be granted only on the basis of a Qualification Certificate, received through an approved training and assessment centre. In Scotland, FSS is the only training and assessment centre approved to deliver the Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (WATOK) qualification. We are approved by both Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and Food and Drink Qualifications Ltd. (FDQ) and have recently been audited by both organisations with satisfactory outcomes.
- 4.14 Through the FSS Assessment Centre, arrangements have been put in place to deliver assessments of slaughterhouse staff throughout Scotland supported by 25 OV's who are also working as trained assessors. In 2015, FSS took on the responsibility for the administration of CoCs in Scotland from FSA and have processed in excess of 500 applications to date. FSS are also working closely with APHA and representatives from Scottish knackeries, to facilitate training and assessment sessions for their staff and farmers carrying out on-farm slaughter of poultry.

5 Further Developments

- 5.1 FSS currently operate an Unannounced Inspections (UAI) programme focussed on hygiene compliance that is delivered in all establishments with no permanent veterinary presence (Cutting Plants and Game Handling Establishments). UAIs are conducted by highly skilled and trained MHIs and OV's and have been effective in detecting non-compliances that were not found during announced audits or inspections. The time spent by FSS staff in relation to UAIs is chargeable to FBOs.
- 5.2 FSS will extend the scope of the UAI system by the end of 2017 to include assessment of FBO animal welfare controls to provide further assurance that any animal welfare non-compliances are efficiently detected and dealt with in the appropriate manner. UAIs will provide additional assurance that controls are implemented consistently across all abattoirs in Scotland. The UAIs will focus on plants that have been identified as having an increased risk of welfare incidents. UAIs will also verify the performance of FSS staff and

contractors. The process will ensure that there is a systematic review of in-plant welfare practices and procedures to verify the quality and effectiveness of controls. These animal welfare assurance inspections will be performed by an Authorised Officer (AO) trained to conduct UAIs. The implementation of AW UAIs will be evaluated after one year of delivery.

- 5.3 The successful introduction of the UAI system is predicated on training the current cohort of UAI MHIs. A highly focused animal welfare training pack was developed by Bristol University School of Veterinary Sciences and is being delivered to Industry bodies across UK as the Animal Welfare Officer (AWO) course. This course covers the legal requirements and also best practices identified throughout the UK. Training of our MHIs has been based on the delivery of the AWO course for achieving a uniform standard of knowledge that meet both legislative and industry standards. 16 MHIs have recently completed the course.
- 5.4 In order to prioritise our interventions, all slaughterhouses are currently having their AW controls assessed through an AW control rating questionnaire. The outcomes will inform the prioritisation of UAIs.
- 5.5 FSS are currently working to improve our management reporting systems by upgrading our welfare database. This will provide an improved platform for reporting issues that do not constitute a breach of the legislation, but will collect information and statistics on events that might indicate potential incidents. We will also improve our systems to record and report feedback received from OGDs on welfare incidents reported to them. This will strengthen our working relationships with OGDs and highlight areas for improvement that are not within our control.
- 5.6 Under the [Government's Programme for Scotland 2017-18](#), SG announced their intention to consult on the introduction of compulsory video recording of slaughter at abattoirs in Scotland to aid enforcement of welfare requirements by abattoir management and FSS. More than 95% of throughput in Scotland is covered by CCTV. In 2016 575,958 (98.65%) cattle, 355,829 (97.44%) pigs, 1,579,331 (98.31%) sheep and 44,605,198 (99.78%) poultry were covered by CCTV. FSS supports any initiatives that help to continue to reduce the possibility of AW incidents. FSS has recently agreed a protocol with Industry to monitor CCTV footage in premises where this is already installed. This demonstrates the positive co-operation between industry and FSS in ensuring the highest standards of AW. Further training will be delivered to OVs before this is implemented. FSS is supportive of mandatory CCTV and for the coverage to extend to all areas of live animal handling. FSS further supports Scottish Government position that CCTV in itself does not prevent welfare failures or secure welfare compliance and we will continue to monitor animal welfare at time of slaughter through the presence of veterinary and inspection staff in all approved slaughterhouses.
- 5.7 AW ranks highly in terms of consumer interest and we have responded to 8 FOI requests since Vesting Day. As an organisation that strives to be open and transparent, and given the level of interest in this issue, we propose to review current data collection and to develop a methodology to routinely

publish animal welfare incident information. We will ensure the data is set in context with narrative to aid interpretation. For example the first FOI covered 706 incidents involving a throughput of approximately 900,000 cattle, 2,390,000 sheep, 580,000 pigs and 81,400,000 poultry.

6 Identification of risks and issues

- 6.1 Animal welfare will continue to attract consumer and media attention and the ad hoc response to FOIs can mean that data is presented selectively and risks presenting a misleading picture. More informed release of data at regular intervals will help to reduce this risk.
- 6.2 FBOs are mainly supportive of our approach to the management of welfare issues and have independently reported to FSS incidents found through their own monitoring. Some of these have resulted in the revocation of CoCs. It is important FSS and industry maintain this mutually beneficial relationship whilst recognising the sensitivity of the release of data which may be linked to specific FBOs..

7 European Union considerations

- 7.1 As animal welfare will continue to be an important element in any future trade following BREXIT, we will ensure Scotland continues to have one of the highest standards in animal welfare.

8 Conclusion/Recommendations

- 8.1 Delivering efficient and robust OC on AW in approved premises in Scotland is an important part of FSS responsibility and we continue to develop and refine our systems.
- 8.2 The next stages of delivering the AW implementation plan will include rating the effectiveness of FBO controls; delivering AW UAs and AW themed audits by the end of 2017.
- 8.3 The Board is asked to:
- **Note** the progress being made in Scotland since 2015 in detecting, reporting and monitoring animal welfare incidents.
 - **Note** the progress made in FSS to improve the collaboration with Industry and OGD with the purpose of securing animal welfare and take more robust and consistent actions where incidents are detected.
 - **Agree** that the executive should develop a methodology for the regular publication of animal welfare data

Laurentiu Patea

E-mail: Laurentiu.patea@fss.scot

Tel: 07866796835

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ANNEX A

Current arrangements for AW

- 1 The verification of FBO AW controls is conducted by FSS teams in slaughterhouses. AW checks include all areas where live animals are being handled and slaughtered and also checks on the FBO Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). Detection of any incidents or matters for improvement will result in appropriate action being taken and all enforcement actions will be reflected in the FSS audit of FBOs. Reality checks on these controls are being carried out by our Service Delivery Partner (SDP) management and by FSS Veterinary Managers (VMs) during the regular plant visits.
- 2 The FSS response to the reporting of any serious incidents in animal welfare standards in slaughterhouses is driven by a set of clear protocols and procedures. All welfare incidents, where there is non-compliance with legislation, must be recorded on the welfare database and any incidents involving animal pain and suffering will be followed up with at least a written advice. The most serious welfare incidents are submitted for formal investigation and coordinated through the Scottish Food Crime and Incidents Unit (SFCIU). Up to August 2017, 7 cases related to AW incidents in Scottish slaughterhouses were referred for investigation and one has been referred to the Procurator Fiscal. We mobilise investigators to investigate potential incidents including reviewing the business approval to operate and reviewing the suspension/revocation of CoCs for individual slaughterhouse staff.
- 3 The Operational Management Team (OMT) have a robust system in place for the review of all score 31 and score 42 incidents and VMs verify as far as is reasonably practicable that appropriate enforcement action is taken. Data on all such incidents is published internally each month. The Board also received their first report on animal welfare in October 2016; welcomed the analysis presented and encouraged officials to continue to develop the reporting formats.
- 4 Other improvements introduced recently to strengthen the verification of compliance include:
 - 4.1 Setting minimum targets for the number of animal welfare checks to be undertaken and established to include a minimum number of animals and targets for checking by FSS staff. Checks will be increased where adverse findings occur.

¹ Score 3 = Welfare practices were observed as failing to comply with the requirements of legislation, but there was no evidence of animals suffering any avoidable pain, distress or suffering during their killing and related operations. Welfare of animals during transportation was suspected to be compromised.

² Score 4 = Welfare practices were observed as failing to comply with requirements of legislation, 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.

- 4.2 Introducing new animal welfare verification forms for use in-plant to achieve a robust audit trail of verification activity and clear evidence of the checks taking place.
- 4.3 Plant-specific animal welfare protocols have been established and all FSS team members are required to sign the protocol declaring that they are aware of the animal welfare verification requirements. The protocols were implemented in plants from September 2016.
- 4.4 New posters were created in August 2016 reflecting the new instructions to assist inspection teams in recognising effective signs of stunning and promote our animal welfare verification activity.
- 4.5 Species specific posters (from European Food Standards Agency toolboxes) with indicators for assessing consciousness were also introduced in August 2016 and delivered to FSS teams in all red and white meat slaughterhouses. FSS management carry out checks during routine plant visits to ensure that these posters are displayed appropriately.
- 4.6 A verification exercise was carried out in November 2016 to ensure the implementation of the above measures. FSS Operations Management Team (OMT) received assurance that all measures were successfully implemented across Scotland.
- 4.7 Revised guidance was issued in December 2016 for OV's and MH's on the recording of multiple shots in cattle.
- 5 All abattoir welfare incident scores 3 and 4 are investigated by SDP Area Veterinary Managers (AVM) in the first instance to ensure the appropriate enforcement action was taken. This is reviewed by VMs and OMT.
- 6 A specific learning package in AW legislative requirements was developed for FSS frontline staff (OV's and MH's) and completed by all employed and contracted staff during early 2017.
- 7 FSS issued the following number of new CoCs, including on-farm and knackeries:

Year	Number of new CoCs
2015	119
2016	314
2017	105