



Welfare standards for

sheep

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Certification Mark

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It is the intention of Freedom Food Ltd to establish sister, franchise organisations in other countries working to these welfare standards and therefore, in time, establish a common and consistent message for consumers around the world.

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Introduction

The *RSPCA Welfare standards for sheep* have been developed to provide the only RSPCA-approved scheme for the rearing, handling, transport and slaughter of sheep. They take account of legislation, government welfare codes, scientific research, veterinary advice, recommendations of the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) and the practical experience of the farming industry.

The standards are based upon the 'Five Freedoms' as defined by FAWC; hence the name 'Freedom Food'.

Although these 'freedoms' define ideal states, they provide a comprehensive framework for the assessment of animal welfare on farm, in transit and at the place of slaughter, as well as representing an important element of farm assurance requirements.

- **Freedom from hunger and thirst**
by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
- **Freedom from discomfort**
by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
- **Freedom from pain, injury or disease**
by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
- **Freedom to express normal behaviour**
by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
- **Freedom from fear and distress**
by ensuring conditions and care which avoid mental suffering.

These freedoms will be better provided for if those who have care of livestock practise:

- **caring and responsible planning and management**
- **skilled, knowledgeable and conscientious stockmanship**
- **appropriate environmental design**
- **considerate handling and transport**
- **humane slaughter.**

Freedom Food Ltd

Freedom Food is a wholly owned subsidiary of the RSPCA formed to implement these standards. Upon satisfactory inspection farmers, hauliers, slaughterers and retailers may subscribe to the scheme and use the Freedom Food trademark. All participants are regularly assessed by Freedom Food Ltd. A charge is levied to cover inspection, administration and marketing costs. Participants are also randomly monitored by members of the farm animals department of the RSPCA, free of charge.

Freedom Food Ltd is non-profit making. Any surplus income will be used to fund research into farm animal welfare.


Guide to the use of the welfare standards

- (i) At the head of each section the broad objectives of the standards are described.
- (ii) The numbered requirements are the standards, all of which must be complied with.
- (iii) Boxed sections (indicated by ⓘ) give additional advice or may highlight areas where the standards will be reviewed in the future.
- (iv) **Farmers are required by law to have a thorough knowledge of the Defra Codes of Recommendations for the Welfare of Livestock: Sheep.**

Food and water

Livestock must have freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and promote a positive state of well-being. Feed and water must be distributed in such a way that livestock can eat and drink without undue competition.

Food

- FW 1.1** Sheep must be fed a wholesome diet which is appropriate to their species and which is fed to them in sufficient quantity to maintain them in good health and to satisfy their nutritional needs.
- FW 1.2** Sheep must have access to food each day, except when required by the attending veterinary surgeon.
- FW 1.3** Producers must have a written record of the constituents of compound feeds and feed supplements, and make it available to the Freedom Food assessor and RSPCA farm livestock officer.
- FW 1.4** No feedstuffs containing mammalian derived protein are permitted, with the exception of milk and milk products.
- FW 1.5** Sheep must be fed so that their body condition is likely to sustain full health and normal reproductive capacity over their maximum foreseeable life span.
- FW 1.6** Body condition change in sheep must be carefully planned and maintained according to the stage of production cycle.
-  **As a general rule, no animal should, at any time, have a body condition score less than 2. (See MAFF booklet *Condition Scoring in Sheep* – PB 1875, 1994).**
- FW 1.7** Efforts must be made to avoid sudden changes in the type and quantity of food.
- FW 1.8** For store lambs and mature sheep, systems involving the use of high intakes of cereal-based diets require an appropriate introductory feeding period, during which sufficient roughage or a suitable high fibre concentrate must also be fed. In the case of the latter, high levels of concentrates must be split into more than one meal per day.
- FW 1.9** In such systems, mineral mixtures must be specifically designed, and appropriate to the animal to avoid causing problems (e.g. urinary problems in male animals).
- FW 1.10** Sheep must be provided with adequate suitable fibre to allow them to ruminate.
- FW 1.11** During the grass growing season, climatic conditions allowing, all sheep must derive the bulk of their nutrient requirements from grazing at pasture, except in the case of dairy ewes which, in addition to grazing, will require supplementary concentrates (see also info box prior to FW(D) 1.1 in Supplementary standards for dairy sheep, p29).
- FW 1.12** All sheep must be able to eat supplementary concentrates at the same time when being fed at troughs, and there must be sufficient trough space for forages to ensure that, within 24 hours, all sheep have sufficient access to meet their requirements.

Food and water

FW 1.13 When calculating required trough space, account must be taken of the size and number of animals and presence or absence of horns and, when sheep are fed in groups, there must be sufficient trough space or feeding points to minimise aggression due to competition for food.



As a guide:

For concentrate feeding, approximately 45cm trough space should be provided. For hay and silage feeding *ad libitum*, approximately 12-15cm trough space per ewe should be provided, depending on access and other relevant factors, e.g. whether ewes are horned.



Floor feeding is permitted, providing bedding is kept clean and dry.

FW 1.14 Sheep must not be kept for longer than 24 hours in an environment which is known to offer nutrient deficiency on a long term basis, e.g. holding pens, stubble or exhausted root crops.

FW 1.15 Sheep which have difficulty in eating due to having damaged, missing or loose teeth must be supplied with food which they are able to eat, e.g. sufficiently long grass or concentrates.

FW 1.16 Troughs must be kept clean and any stale food removed. Automatic feeding equipment must be cleaned at least once a week.

FW 1.17 Equipment and utensils used for liquid feeding must be thoroughly cleansed daily and must be effectively sterilised.

FW 1.18 Stored foods, such as hay and silage, must be protected from cats, rodents and other pests, be of good quality and in a palatable condition.

FW 1.19 To prevent the introduction and potential spread of disease, procedures must be in place to prevent the contamination of all stored animal feeds.

FW 1.20 Control practices must be in place to minimise access to poisonous plants and unsuitable feedstuffs.

FW 1.21 Sheep fed on root crops must be given particular care and attention with regard to dentition, ground condition, provision of shelter and a dry lying area.

FW 1.22 Lambs must not be weaned before five weeks of age, with the exception of lambs from dairy sheep flocks (see standard FW(D) 1.1 in Supplementary standards for dairy sheep, p29).

Water

FW 2.1 Sheep must be provided with continuous access to an adequate supply of clean, fresh drinking water each day.

FW 2.2 For sheep fed on a high dry matter diet (e.g. concentrates, hay), at least one drinking space per 20 animals must be provided.

Food and water

FW 2.3 * For all sheep on other diets, constant and unlimited access to drinking water must be provided so as to ensure that animals can fully satisfy their requirements at all times.



A drinking space is defined as space required by a single sheep whilst drinking, or as an individual bowl.

Sheep will require different volumes of water, depending on diet, age and stage of production, and it is important to provide for these needs. For example, a ewe in early lactation may drink 10 litres a day.

FW 2.4 When sheep are kept extensively, water troughs must be provided unless natural water sources are sufficient to ensure adequate daily access.

FW 2.5 Provision must be made to ensure an emergency supply of suitable drinking water in case normal supplies fail, for instance due to freezing, drought, etc.

FW 2.6 Water bowls and troughs must be kept thoroughly clean and managed in a way which ensures that they are capable of dispensing sufficient clean water at all times.

FW 2.7 Bowls/troughs must be sited to avoid lambs drowning.

Environment

The environment in which livestock are kept must take into account their welfare needs and be designed to protect them from physical and thermal discomfort, fear and distress, and allow them to perform their natural behaviour.

- E 1.1** Where novel management systems, designs or layout of facilities not covered in the RSPCA welfare standards are being employed or considered, these must be referred to, and discussed with, the RSPCA farm animals department before they can be considered for certification.

Buildings

- E 2.1** For all accommodation the key points relating to welfare must be recorded on the farm site plan and, if practical, be displayed at or near to the entrance to each building and be amended accordingly.
- E 2.2** These records must include:
- a) total floor area
 - b) building volume available to sheep
 - c) number of sheep in relation to age, weight, feeding and drinking, and bedding space.
- E 2.3** The interior of any building, including the floor and all internal surfaces/fittings to which livestock have access, must be designed, constructed, maintained and regularly inspected to ensure that there are no sharp edges or protrusions likely to cause injury or distress to the animal.
- E 2.4** Adequate and safe holding and handling facilities must be provided (whether indoors or outdoors).
- E 2.5** In both indoor and outdoor systems, there must be no recurrent injuries on the sheep attributable to physical features of their environment.



Injury is defined as damage severe enough for the formation of granular scar tissue and to an extent significantly greater than would be caused by accidental bumps and scratches.

- E 2.6** Except when preservatives with an insecticidal role are used, sheep must not come into contact with toxic fumes or surfaces from paints, wood preservatives or disinfectants.
- E 2.7** All electrical installations at mains voltage must be inaccessible to sheep, well insulated, safeguarded from rodents, properly earthed and regularly tested.
- E 2.8** Internal surfaces of housing and pens must be made of materials which can be readily cleansed and disinfected or be easily replaced when necessary.

Thermal environment and ventilation

- E 3.1** The thermal environment must not be so hot or so cold as to significantly affect production or cause distress.
- E 3.2** Effective ventilation of buildings to avoid high humidity, condensation and draughts is essential as sheep are particularly susceptible to respiratory diseases.
-  **Properly designed ventilation will permit the free circulation of air above sheep height and avoid draughts at sheep level.**
- E 3.3** Provision must be made to ensure that, when sheep are housed, aerial contaminants do not reach a level at which they are noticeably unpleasant to a human observer (as specified by COSHH).
- E 3.4** Inhalable dust must not exceed 10mg/m³ (averages over any eight hour period).
- E 3.5** Ammonia must not exceed 25ppm (averages over any eight hour period).
- E 3.6** When it can be foreseen that the temperature will fall below the lower critical temperature, supplementary heating must be made available immediately for very young animals.
- E 3.7** Where lambs are being reared at pasture (either with the ewe or artificially) they must all have shelter and shade, either natural or artificial.
- E 3.8** For winter conditions, additional shelter must be provided for those stock which are not considered able to cope comfortably.
- E 3.9** For summer conditions, provisions must be made to protect sheep from heat stress.
- E 3.10** Sheep must not be shorn during winter unless they are housed and measures must be taken to ensure that they are protected from extremes of temperature.
- E 3.11** Every adult sheep of wool breeds must have its fleece removed at least once every year.
- E 3.12** In winter, the ewes must not be turned out within two months of shearing, and even after this time, if necessary, the ewes must be kept indoors until the climatic conditions are suitable and adequate shelter must be accessible to all sheep.

 **Even when housed, environment is particularly important after shearing to ensure that draughts and cold stress are avoided.**

- E 3.13** If an effective natural windbreak is not available, other methods of shelter such as straw bales must be provided which will give sufficient protection to all sheep.

Lying area/floors

- E 4.1 *** Sheep and lambs kept indoors must be kept on, or have access at all times to a lying area (see E 5.3), bedded to a sufficient extent to avoid discomfort, and either sloped or otherwise constructed to provide drainage, or bedded to a sufficient extent to provide a dry lying area.

Environment

- E 4.2** The lying area must be of sufficient size to accommodate all sheep together lying in normal resting posture (see E 5.3).
- E 4.3** When sheep are kept outdoors there must be an area which is grassed or straw covered to which they have ready access, and which is of sufficient size for all sheep to lie down there, so as to limit the build-up of mud or dung on the fleece.


Space allowances

- E 5.1** Sheep must always be provided with a total floor space not less than 1.5 times the lying area.
- E 5.2** Pen shape and space allowance must be such that there is sufficient freedom of movement to permit exercise; space allowances and group size must be determined according to the age, size and class of stock.
- E 5.3** The minimum bedded total floor space allowances are:

Type and weight (kg)	Straw bedded (m ²)
Ewes	
45-60	1.1-1.2
60-90	1.2-1.4
Lambing pens	1.5
Ewes with lambs up to two weeks	
45-60	1.3-1.7
60-90	1.4-1.8
Ewes with lambs up to six weeks	
45-60	1.8-2.0
60-90	2.0-2.2
Creep area	
Two weeks	0.15
Four weeks	0.40
Hoggets	
20-30	0.7
30-40	0.8
40-50	1.0
Rams	1.5-2.0

*  In the case of dairy ewes, these space allowances may need to be increased – see Space allowance section in Supplementary standards for dairy sheep.

Environment

- E 5.4 *** Sheep must not be closely confined except in the following circumstances, and even then only for the shortest period of time necessary:
- for the duration of any examination, routine test, blood sampling or treatment/operation carried out for veterinary purposes
 - while they are being fed on any particular occasion
 - for the purpose of marking, washing or weighing, vaccination or dipping
 - whilst in fostering pens (see also E 5.4.1 – E 5.4.5)
 - while accommodation is being cleaned
 - while they are awaiting loading for transportation.
- E 5.4.1 *** Practices and procedures for fostering lambs must be planned prior to the start of lambing, and details must be outlined in the Veterinary Health Plan.
- E 5.4.2 *** Close restraint of ewes in fostering pens must only be carried out under exceptional circumstances, when other methods of achieving fostering have proved to be unsuccessful, or are unlikely to result in success due to the specific situation.
- E 5.4.3 *** If fostering pens are used:
- ewes must only be restrained in the pen for a maximum of 48 hours
 - frequent checks (several times in any 24 hour period) of the ewes and lambs must be made during the period of confinement.
- E 5.4.4 *** If fostering pens are used, records must be kept of:
- the reasons for using fostering pens rather than other fostering methods
 - the number of ewes and lambs placed in fostering pens
 - the frequency and number of checks made on the animals
 - the duration of the confinement in each case
 - the outcome in terms of the success – or otherwise – of the fostering
- *  **Restraint of ewes in fostering pens restricts normal behaviour and movement and hence raises a number of welfare issues. Evidence suggests that on many units, this method may also be less successful than others. It is, therefore, strongly preferable for the overall welfare of ewe and lamb to apply alternative methods when trying to achieve successful fostering, such as ‘rubbing on’ of the ewe’s birth fluids onto the lamb to be fostered. The RSPCA is currently investigating the issue of fostering methods, with consideration being given to introducing a requirement in the future that only alternative methods to closely-confining fostering pens are used. (Further information on fostering methods and artificial rearing can be found in The Moredun Foundation News Sheet: ‘Effective Fostering and Artificial Rearing of Lambs’ (Feb 2004) (News Sheet Vol 4, No.2), Moredun Research Institute, Pentlands Science Park, Penicuik, Midlothian. EH26 0PZ).**
- E 5.4.5 *** Regardless of the practice/procedure used, if fostering has not been successfully achieved within 48 hours of applying the method, alternatives, such as well managed artificial rearing (see also H 2.9 and H 2.10), must be applied.
- E 5.5** When rams are newly introduced to each other, they must be put in an area small enough to prevent head-to-head combat, but only for a period of time necessary to allow familiarisation and reduction of aggression to occur.

Lighting

- E 6.1** Where sheep are housed, adequate lighting, whether fixed or portable, must be available to enable them to be thoroughly inspected at any time.
- E 6.2** Housed sheep must have access for the normal period of daylight hours to an area designed to be lit to a level of 100 lux at sheep eye level (50 lux is bright enough to allow a person of normal eyesight to read standard newsprint without difficulty).

Environmental hazards

- E 7.1** Young lambs must be protected as far as possible from hazards, in particular from open drains and from predators, using humane methods only.
- E 7.2** To minimise the risk of sheep being trapped in snow or unable to gain shelter, great care must be taken in siting shelters, shelter belts and fences.
- E 7.3** As far as is practicable, sheep must be prevented from gathering in places where they may be buried by snow and must be shepherded into safer areas whenever heavy snowfalls are forecast.
- E 7.4** Sheep must be removed from areas liable to flooding.

Fencing

- E 8.1** All fencing must be adequately inspected and maintained.
- E 8.2** Electric fences must be designed, installed, used and maintained so that contact with them does not cause more than momentary discomfort to the sheep.
- E 8.3** Electric mesh fencing must not be used for horned sheep.
- E 8.4** Where any type of mesh fencing is used, particularly for horned sheep, it must be inspected frequently.
- E 8.5** Where any type of mesh fencing is used around lambing fields, it must be inspected at least twice a day.

Management


A high degree of caring and responsible management and stockmanship is vital to ensure good animal welfare. Managers and stock-keepers must be thoroughly trained, skilled and competent in animal husbandry and welfare, and have a good working knowledge of their system and the livestock under their care.

Managers

- M 1.1** Personnel with responsibility for the management of approved establishments must be named and recorded.
- M 1.2 *** Managers must ensure that all stock-keepers:
- have a copy of the current version of the RSPCA Welfare standards for sheep
 - are familiar with its content
 - understand and apply its content.
- M 1.3** Managers must:
- develop and implement a suitable training programme for stock-keepers with regular updates and opportunities for continuing professional development and keep records of such training
 - have access to, and make available to all stock-keepers, a copy of the MAFF booklet, *Emergencies on Livestock Farms* (PB 1147, 1992) and be familiar with its contents
 - ensure that the *Veterinary health plan* (see H 1.1) is implemented and regularly updated, and that the required data (including records of dipping) is recorded appropriately
 - maintain and make available to the Freedom Food assessor and RSPCA farm livestock officer, records of production data and use of medication – these records must include documentation on all incoming and outgoing stock on the farm as well as types and quantities of medicines used
 - develop and implement a transport plan to Freedom Food-approved abattoirs which includes a method of identification of animals (see M 4.1) and minimises waiting time for the sheep.
- M 1.4 *** Managers must develop and implement plans and precautions to cope with emergencies such as fire, flood or interruption of supplies, and provide an emergency action board sited in a prominent position, which must include:
- the procedures to be followed by those discovering such an emergency
 - the location of water sources for use by the fire brigade
 - a map grid reference and post code for the location of the unit.
- M 1.5** Intravaginal insemination must only be performed by a veterinary surgeon, or a skilled and trained person under the direction of a veterinary surgeon.
- M 1.6** Transcervical and/or intrauterine (laparoscopic) artificial insemination must not be carried out.
- M 1.7** Extensive management systems must make best use of local knowledge, traditions and practices to ensure the highest possible welfare standards.
- M 1.8** Should an emergency require the removal of livestock to unregistered premises, the Freedom Food scheme manager and RSPCA farm animals department must be informed at the earliest convenience.

Management

- M 1.9 *** When developing and implementing farm pest and predator control plans, physical exclusion methods, and the removal of elements in the vicinity of livestock that might encourage the presence of pests and predators (see information box below), must be included.

- *  **Methods of physical exclusion and discouragement of pests and predators include:**
- **Construction/maintenance of fencing appropriate for excluding the pests/predators in question**
 - **Removal of shelter/cover (e.g. weeds) in the area surrounding livestock buildings**
 - **Removal/protection of obvious food sources**
 - **Maintenance/proofing of buildings against pests and predators**

Stock-keepers

- M 2.1** Stock-keepers must understand the times and circumstances in which sheep are prone to welfare problems on their own unit and must be able to demonstrate their competence in recognising and dealing with these problems.
- M 2.2** Stock-keepers caring for breeding flocks must be aware of the welfare implications during lambing, injection, oral dosing, tail docking and castration.
- M 2.3** Stock-keepers with responsibility for care of lambs must know when to give colostrum and how to avoid the problems of mismothering.
- M 2.4** Prior to being given responsibility for the welfare of livestock, stock-keepers must:
- a) be properly trained
 - b) be able to recognise signs of normal behaviour, abnormal behaviour and fear
 - c) be able to recognise signs of common diseases and understand their prevention and control, and know when to seek veterinary help
 - d) have a knowledge of body condition scoring
 - e) understand the functional anatomy of the normal foot, its care and treatment
 - f) when necessary, have a knowledge of lambing and the care of the newborn lamb.
- M 2.5** Stock-keepers must:
- a) be able to demonstrate competence in handling animals in a positive and compassionate manner
 - b) be able to demonstrate their proficiency in any procedures they might carry out which have the potential to cause suffering, e.g. injections, castration.

Handling

- M 3.1** All producers must have suitable facilities for routine handling and management of the flock.
- M 3.2** Handling systems must be designed, constructed and maintained so as to minimise the stress and likelihood of injury suffered by the sheep during handling.
- M 3.3** Handling systems must be appropriate for the number of sheep kept, and the nature of the procedures carried out.

Management

- M 3.4** Sheep must be handled quietly and firmly at all times, with care to avoid unnecessary pain or distress.
- M 3.5 *** Sheep must not be caught by the fleece alone, nor lifted or dragged by the fleece, limbs, ears or tail, nor roughly handled by the horns.

*  **Horns, particularly of young sheep, can be damaged or broken if sheep are roughly handled by them.**

- M 3.5.1 *** Sheep must be handled or restrained by means of a hand or an arm under the neck (holding – but not pulling – the neck wool if necessary) with the other arm placed on or around the rear.

M 3.6 Electric goads must not be used.

M 3.7 Sticks must not be used for hitting sheep.

 **Sticks or other benign handling aids may be used as extensions of the arms.**

M 3.8 Heavily pregnant ewes must only be handled when absolutely necessary.

M 3.9 Heavily pregnant ewes must be handled with care to avoid distress and injury which may result in premature lambing.

M 3.10 When shearing, care must be taken not to nick or cut the skin; particular care must be taken not to cut the teats of young female sheep and not to injure the penis/sheath and/or scrotum of ram lambs.

M 3.11 If, when shearing, a wound occurs, effective treatment must be given immediately by a veterinary surgeon when necessary.


M 3.12 Shearers must disinfect their shearing equipment between flocks to minimise the risk of spreading diseases such as caseous lymphadenitis and sheep scab.

Identification

M 4.1 * Sheep must be marked for identification purposes in accordance with current legislation.

M 4.1.1 * If electronic boluses are used for identification purposes:

- a) a written procedure must be in place on the farm outlining the precise protocol followed, and the measures taken to minimise the risk to welfare
- b) insertion of boluses must only be carried out by those who have received specific training, and are competent, in the procedure
- c) an inspection protocol must be in place, and implemented, to ensure that all sheep receiving boluses are more closely monitored for a period of at least two weeks following insertion.

*  **Those involved in piloting various initiatives that include the need to use electronic identification (EID) boluses (e.g. the National Scrapie Plan) have developed protocols for administering the boluses to sheep, aimed at ensuring 'best practice'. An example of this is the written procedure developed by ADAS for administering an EID bolus during a pilot study in sheep. Further information can be obtained by contacting ADAS Redesdale.**

Management

- M 4.2 *** All identification procedures must only be undertaken by trained, competent personnel using appropriate, well-maintained equipment, and in a way that minimises the risk to welfare both during and after the procedure.

Equipment


- M 5.1** When equipment is installed which affects animal welfare, stock-keepers must be able to:
- demonstrate an ability to operate equipment
 - demonstrate the ability to carry out routine maintenance
 - recognise common signs of malfunction
 - demonstrate knowledge of action to be carried out in event of a failure.
- M 5.2** All automatic equipment must be thoroughly inspected by a stock-keeper or other competent person, not less than twice daily to check that there is no defect in it.
- M 5.3** Where a defect is found in the automatic equipment:
- the defect must be rectified immediately, or
 - if this is impracticable, such measures must immediately be taken (and must be maintained until the defect is rectified) as are required to safeguard the sheep from suffering unnecessary pain or distress as a result of the defect.
- M 5.4** Where the automatic equipment includes a ventilation system, the system must contain:
- an alarm which will give adequate warning of the failure of that system to function properly (and will operate even if the principal electricity supply to it has failed)
 - additional equipment or means of ventilation (whether automatic or not) which, in the event of such a failure of the ventilation system, will provide adequate ventilation so as to prevent the livestock from suffering unnecessary distress as a result of the failure.
- M 5.5** Devices such as harnesses must:
- be made of suitable material
 - be properly fitted and adjusted to avoid causing injury or discomfort
 - be closely checked at least once a day.

Inspection

- M 6.1** When sheep are housed, stock-keepers must inspect their livestock and the equipment upon which such stock depend at least twice daily.
- M 6.2** Following inspections, stock-keepers must:
- record observations
 - record action taken.
- M 6.3** On extensive farms, shepherds must inspect the flock as frequently as is necessary, particularly:
- in summer, at the time of fly strike danger
 - in winter, under adverse weather conditions
 - when sheep have access to potentially hazardous environment, e.g. where they may become trapped, entangled, etc.

Management

- M 6.4 *** Any welfare problems seen during an inspection by the shepherd/producer must be dealt with appropriately and without delay.

*  **Welfare problems of sufficient severity, that they should have been noticed on previous inspections and dealt with, shall be taken by the Freedom Food assessor or RSPCA farm livestock officer as evidence of negligence of duties by the stock-keeper.**

Waste management

- M 7.1** Animal waste and effluents must be stored and disposed of in such a way as to minimise the risk of spread of disease to other animals or humans and in a manner that avoids polluting the environment.
- M 7.2** Muckheaps in fields must be fenced off to prevent direct access by grazing livestock.

Sheep dogs

- M 8.1** Sheep dogs must be properly trained.
- M 8.2** All dogs must be under control at all times.
- M 8.3** Farmers/shepherds must ensure that the dogs are well cared for with suitable housing, feeding and proper attention to their health and welfare needs.
- M 8.4** All dogs must be treated regularly to eliminate endoparasites.

Sourcing of livestock

- M 9.1** All sheep presented for slaughter must have spent their entire lives on Freedom Food farms, except in the circumstances set out in T 1.3

 **Animals can still be transferred between farms, as long as all premises are Freedom Food accredited. If finishers have problems in sourcing Freedom Food stock, please contact the Freedom Food office where information on Freedom Food accredited sheep breeders is held.**

Livestock must be protected from pain, injury and disease. The environment in which livestock are housed must be conducive to good health. All producers must develop a health plan in consultation with their veterinary surgeon.

- H 1.1** All sheep units must have a written Veterinary Health Plan (VHP) drawn up and regularly updated by the producer in conjunction with the attending veterinary surgeon.
- H 1.2** Sheep producers must arrange for at least one veterinary visit per year for finishing units and two per year for breeding units.
- H 1.3** Records must be kept in association with the VHP, and must be available for examination by the Freedom Food assessor and RSPCA farm livestock officer.

*



The Veterinary Health Plan (VHP) forms a vitally important part of the RSPCA welfare standards with regard to maintaining health and welfare of livestock on farm.

In liaison with the Sheep Veterinary Society, the RSPCA has developed guidance notes for producers and veterinary surgeons as to how the VHP should be formulated to ensure high standards of health are maintained. These guidance notes are available to Freedom Food producers and their veterinary surgeons from the RSPCA farm animals department.

Should you or your veterinary surgeon require assistance with the formulation of your VHP, please refer to these guidance notes or talk to an RSPCA farm livestock officer.

- H 1.4** All sudden deaths, disease outbreaks and sheep humanely killed as unfit, must:
- be recorded
 - be reported to the veterinary surgeon
 - be investigated appropriately
 - have the outcome and action recorded.
- H 1.5** Flock performance data must be continuously monitored for signs of disease or production disorders.
- H 1.6** If any flock performance parameters fall below the tolerance limits identified in the VHP (e.g. parasite infestations):
- the veterinary surgeon must be informed
 - the VHP must be revised to try to remedy the problem.
- H 1.7** Any injured, ailing or distressed sheep must:
- be segregated
 - be treated without delay
 - and, if necessary, veterinary advice must be sought when needed (see H 3.1).
- If necessary, such animals must be humanely killed.
- H 1.8** Hospital pens must be constructed to facilitate effective cleaning of surfaces, and the possible removal of a carcass from the pen.

Health

- H 1.9** Hospital pens must be emptied between occupancies, cleaned according to the cleaning plan, and waste disposed of separately without risk of infection to other stock.
- H 1.10** Replacement animals brought in from other sources must be quarantined and/or appropriately treated, e.g. for ecto/endoparasite control, in accordance with the VHP, before integration.
- H 1.11** It is essential that all practical measures be taken to prevent or control external and internal parasitic infestations.
- H 1.12** Where infestations such as fly strike or sheep scab mite are likely to occur, sheep must be given routine treatment such as regular dipping or other effective methods.
- H 1.13** When dipping is carried out, operators must know how to minimise stress to the sheep and to safeguard human health and safety.
- H 1.14** Measures for prevention and treatment of parasitic infestations must be detailed in the farm's VHP.



For more guidance on best practice in dipping and other parasite controls, refer to the relevant information booklets produced by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and ATB Landbase.

- H 1.15** Close attention must be given to the condition of the feet, which must be regularly inspected for signs of abnormal wear, excessive growth or infection.
- H 1.16 *** Preventative measures must include careful foot paring when necessary, and the regular use of a footbath, which must be a non-irritant solution. Details on use of footbaths to ensure effectiveness, appropriate concentrations of solutions used etc. must be set out in the farm Veterinary Health Plan.
- H 1.17 *** Stock-keepers must have access to a copy of the DEFRA booklet, '*Lameness in Sheep*' (PB1149, 2003), be familiar with its content and implement its recommendations.



It is recommended that producers obtain, watch and where appropriate, apply the advice contained within the RSPCA-commissioned information video: '*Stamping out lameness – a practical guide for sheep owners*', which contains information and advice on identifying, controlling and treating all the common causes of lameness in sheep. Copies can be obtained from the RSPCA Farm Animals Department.

- H 1.18 *** Prior to housing, sheep must:
- be in a dry condition
 - be foot bathed (preferably in zinc sulphate solution)
 - be checked for lameness.
- H 1.19 *** Any lame animals detected must be inspected and treated without delay as appropriate, and affected animals isolated where infectious causes are suspected.
- H 1.20** When conventional methods prove ineffective in control of foot rot, consideration must be given to immunisation of the flock against the infection.




Freedom Food assessors and RSPCA farm livestock officers will consider the existence within the flock of unrecognised, untreated chronic foot lameness as an indicator of poor welfare standards within that flock.

Health

- H 1.21** All personnel involved in the administration of animal medicines must be competent to do so.
- H 1.22** Written procedures must be in place, and must be followed at all times, for the safe disposal of pharmaceutical waste, needles and other sharps.
- H 1.23** These procedures must be in strict accordance with the relevant waste disposal regulations.

 For example, sharps may be disposed of in a separate 'sharps' disposal box, which may then be taken to a local veterinary surgery for disposal.

- H 1.24** Medicines must be clearly labelled and stored in accordance with the label instructions.
- H 1.25** Medicines must be kept in a secure, lockable store which is safe from animals, children and birds.
- H 1.26** The medicine store must be separate from food producing areas.
- H 1.27** A nominated person must:
- be responsible for the management of the medicine store
 - keep appropriate records for stock control purposes.
- H 1.28** Any medicines used must be authorised for use in the UK, and applied in accordance with UK and EU legislation.

*  It is recommended that producers obtain, read and where appropriate, apply the advice contained within the latest version of the 'Guidelines on Responsible Use of Antimicrobials in Sheep Production', issued by the Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture (RUMA) alliance (RUMA, Acorn House, 25 Mardley Hill, Welwyn, Hertfordshire, AL6 0TT; www.ruma.org.uk).

Pregnancy/lambs

- H 2.1** Stock-keepers must have access to a copy of the MAFF booklet, *Improving Lamb Survival* (PB 2072, 1995), be familiar with its content, and adopt its recommendations.
- H 2.2** During pregnancy, the use of scanning techniques to determine foetal numbers must be considered.
- H 2.3** Body condition must be monitored throughout pregnancy and diet adjusted accordingly.
- H 2.4** Every effort must be made to maintain body condition scores in accordance with MAFF/defra recommendations (in MAFF booklet 'Condition Scoring in Sheep' (PB 1875, 1994)).
- H 2.5** When a stock-keeper experiences difficulty in delivering a live lamb, skilled assistance must be sought immediately.
- H 2.6** Embryotomy must be carried out on dead lambs only, and only by a veterinary surgeon.
- H 2.7** Stock-keepers must be trained in the use of stomach tubes for feeding lambs and must have knowledge of all other recovery techniques in the event of lamb hypothermia.

Health

H 2.8 All lambs must receive a sufficient amount of colostrum in the first 24 hours after birth.



Lambs should receive colostrum as soon after birth as possible, ideally within two to three hours. The antibodies in colostrum can only be absorbed from the gut into the bloodstream of the lamb for 12 to 15 hours after birth, so it is vital they receive sufficient quantities by this time.

As a guide, lambs should receive around 150-250mls of colostrum per feed, in proportion to size/weight, and 4-5 feeds in the first 24 hours. This should be increased by 20-30 per cent if outdoors, particularly in cold, wet, windy conditions. If the lamb's mother has inadequate colostrum, alternatives can be used such as colostrum from another ewe or cow's colostrum. Refer to the MAFF booklet 'Improving Lamb Survival' for details (See H 2.1).

H 2.9 Orphan lambs must be fed a suitable milk substitute at least four times daily in the first week, and at least three times daily in weeks two to four, so ensuring that they remain in good condition without dehydration.

H 2.10 Where automatic feeding equipment is provided, lambs must be trained in its use to ensure an adequate intake of food.

H 2.11 From the end of the second week of life, lambs must also have access to palatable and nutritious solid food (which may be grass) and fresh clean water.

H 2.12 Close attention to detail and high standards of supervision and stockmanship must be applied when artificial rearing is practised.

H 2.13 For at least the first three weeks of life, housed lambs must be kept in groups small enough to facilitate inspection and limit the spread of disease. This is particularly important for twin and triplet lambs.

H 2.14 Potentially injurious husbandry procedures must not be carried out, with the exception of the following (except those done for therapeutic reasons by a veterinary surgeon).

a) **Castration**

Castration must not be carried out if the predicted slaughter age of ram lambs is below that of their sexual maturity or if management practice allows flock segregation.

When necessary, castration may be performed by a trained, competent person using a rubber ring between 24 hours and seven days of age only.

In the event of the failure of unintentional omission of the rubber ring technique, the use of an approved bloodless castrator shall be allowable from one day to eight weeks of age by a trained, competent person.

b) **Tail docking**

Tail docking must only be carried out when there is an unavoidable and high risk of greater suffering due to fly strike, and close supervision of the flock is not possible.

When necessary, tail docking may be performed by a trained, competent person using a rubber ring, between 24 hours and seven days of age only.

From one day to eight weeks, tail docking by thermocautery may be used under veterinary advice.

It must be ensured that sufficient tail is retained to cover the vulva in the female and the anus in the male sheep.

Both castration and tail docking must only be carried out by a suitably trained person and must be done only in ways which minimise suffering.

H 2.15 There must be no cosmetic surgery carried out on sheep for show purposes which causes pain to the animal.

Casualty animals

- H 3.1** Each farm must have provisions for humane slaughter without delay of casualty sheep, either by on-farm methods carried out by a named, trained, competent member of staff, or a licensed slaughterman; or a veterinary surgeon must be called to carry out the procedure.
- H 3.2** If there is any doubt as to how to proceed, the veterinary surgeon must be called at an early stage to advise whether treatment is possible or whether humane slaughter is required to prevent suffering.
- H 3.3** If an animal is in severe pain that is uncontrollable, then the animal must be promptly humanely slaughtered.



It is not illegal to slaughter an animal to prevent further severe suffering if a method of humane slaughter is available on the premises and there is somebody competent to undertake the procedure. However, for non-emergency casualty slaughter, a slaughterman's licence is required if a captive bolt pistol is used.

- H 3.4** Managers and stock-keepers must have access to a copy of the Sheep Veterinary Society booklet '*The Casualty Sheep*' (1994) and be familiar with its contents.
- H 3.5 *** All carcasses must be disposed of according to current legislation.
- H 3.6 *** A record must be kept of how and where all carcasses are disposed of.
- H 3.7** On-farm disposal must be in line with the relevant MAFF/defra code of good agricultural practice (air, water, soil).
- H 3.8** Carcass disposal in muckheaps is not permitted.

Transport

Animal transport systems must be designed and managed to ensure livestock are not caused unnecessary distress or discomfort. The transport and handling of livestock must be kept to an absolute minimum. Personnel involved in transport must be thoroughly trained and competent to carry out the tasks required of them.

Livestock markets

- T 1.1** Sheep presented for sale at a livestock market will automatically lose their Freedom Food status.
- T 1.2 *** All sheep presented for slaughter must have spent their entire lives on Freedom Food farms, except in the circumstances set out in T 1.3.
- T 1.3 *** In the case of new members of the Freedom Food scheme only:
- All stock on the farm at the time of accreditation must subsequently have a dwell period of at least 90 days on Freedom Food farms from the date of accreditation before qualifying as Freedom Food animals for the purposes of labelling after slaughter.
 - If the animals are moved prior to the 90 days, they can still retain their Freedom Food status if they are moved to other Freedom Food accredited farms using Freedom Food accredited transport (including the producer's own transport), and the total dwell time on accredited farms totals 90 days before slaughter.
 - From the accreditation date onwards, any store animals brought onto the farm and intended for the food chain under the Freedom Food label must be sourced from a Freedom Food accredited farm.
 - Animals that have not completed the 90 day dwell time on Freedom Food farms may be registered on the store stock register as 'Freedom Food' provided that:
 - it is stated that they still have dwell days to serve on Freedom Food farms prior to slaughter, and
 - the number of dwell days remaining is stated.




Animals can still be transferred between farms, as long as all premises are Freedom Food accredited. If finishers have problems in sourcing Freedom Food stock, please contact the Freedom Food office where information on Freedom Food accredited sheep breeders is held.

Casualty animals

- T 2.1** A sick or injured animal may only be transported if it is being taken for veterinary treatment or it is being taken to the nearest available place for humane slaughter, and then only if the said animal is suitable for loading, travelling and unloading. This standard must be read in conjunction with the MAFF booklet *Guidance on the Transport of Casualty Farm Animals* (PB 1381, 1998).

Training

T 3.1 Personnel in charge of sheep transporters must have completed an approved training course, preferably validated, and be able to demonstrate competence in handling sheep when loading, unloading and whilst in transit.

*  **Drivers need to be aware of the effect of their driving style on the welfare of livestock on-board vehicles. In particular, they should make every effort to corner smoothly and pull away/stop as gently as possible.**

T 3.1.1 * Managers of livestock hauliers must utilise the Humane Slaughter Association's training video '*The Road Ahead – livestock welfare in transit*' as part of their staff training programme.

T 3.2 Animal handlers must be trained to:

- a) understand the likely stress factors sheep may be subject to
- b) appreciate how sheep react towards other sheep
- c) appreciate how sheep react towards humans
- d) appreciate how sheep react towards strange noises, sights, sounds and smells.

T 3.3 Sheep have the following behaviour characteristics which must be taken into account when being moved:

- a) they have a wide field of vision and can see moving objects even at a long distance, so wherever possible their far vision should be restricted
- b) they have acute hearing so must not be subjected to loud noise
- c) they are gregarious animals and should not be left in isolation while in transit.

Handling/loading/unloading

 **Sticks and flags may be used as benign handling aids, i.e. as extensions of the arms. Well trained dogs may also be used.**

T 4.1 Sticks must not be used for hitting sheep.

T 4.2 Electric goads must not be used.

T 4.3 All handling systems must be designed and operated so as not to impede movement of the sheep and to reduce the incidence of noise.

T 4.4 Sheep must not be driven unless the exit or the way forward is clear.

T 4.5 Loading facilities must provide a ramp of no more than a 20 per cent incline.

T 4.6 Both loading ramps and tail boards must be fitted with a means of preventing animals from falling off or slipping.

T 4.7 All tailboards must be fitted with appropriately designed and spaced foot battens.

Transport

T 4.8 If a loading ramp is to be modified or newly installed, a reverse ramp must be provided.



When a 'reverse ramp' is installed, it is the vehicle that negotiates the incline until the tailgate is level with the ground and animals walk straight into or out of the vehicle on the level.

Purpose built loading bays should be designed such that the vehicle is level during loading.

T 4.9 Races and gates must be designed and operated so as not to impede the movement of sheep.

T 4.10 Gates and catches must be baffled to reduce the noise when they shut.

Transport

T 5.1 The timing of transport for any purpose must be planned between haulier and producer, and slaughterhouse if applicable, to minimise travelling and waiting time for the sheep.

T 5.2 * All hauliers must have a written *Standard Operating and Emergency Procedure* to implement during transportation. The content of this must be made available to the Freedom Food assessor (see Appendix 2).

T 5.3 Sheep must be unloaded immediately at the slaughterhouse.

T 5.4 Sheep must be transported in their on-farm social groups (established at least one week prior to transport) and must not be mixed at the abattoir.

T 5.5 Sheep must not be transported for more than eight hours from the first sheep loaded to the last sheep unloaded.

T 5.6 Sheep must have access to water up to the point of transport and have access to food up to four hours before loading onto the lorry.

T 5.7 The floors of all vehicles must be covered with sufficient bedding in order to provide comfort and reduce the likelihood of injury.

T 5.8 All deaths and serious or widespread injuries must be recorded and reported to:

- a) the driver
- b) the haulier
- c) the slaughterhouse manager
- d) the farm manager

before the next consignment from the same source is collected.

T 5.9 An on-farm record must be maintained of all such incidents during transit.

T 5.10 All incidents must be investigated and the results of the investigation recorded.

T 5.11 Where causes have been identified, prompt action must be taken to prevent further deaths and suffering occurring.

T 5.12 Any transit mortality must be the subject of a veterinary investigation and reported to the Freedom Food assessor and RSPCA farm livestock officer.

T 5.13 All transporters must have a 'livestock capacity document' on board at all times.

 **This will give data on the size of the transporter and the calculated carrying capacity for different livestock species under different climatic conditions.**

T 5.14 Sheep must be penned within the lorry in groups of similar age and size.

T 5.15 The following groups must not be mixed:

- a) unfamiliar rams over six months of age
- b) unfamiliar weaned lambs under three months of age
- c) polled and horned sheep.

T 5.16 Sheep must be slaughtered as close as possible to their place of production.

Transport space allowances

T 6.1 On journeys longer than three hours, sheep must have enough space in which to lie down.

 **Research suggests that sheep weighing 30-40kg require a space allowance of at least 0.27-0.3m² per sheep in order to lie down in transit. Correspondingly, greater space will be required by heavier sheep.**

T 6.2 The following minimum space allowances must always be provided during transport:

	Weight (kg)	Area/animal (m²)
Shorn	< 55	0.2-0.3
	> 55	> 0.3
Unshorn	< 55	0.3-0.4
	> 55	> 0.4
Pregnant ewes	< 55	0.4-0.5
	> 55	> 0.5

Slaughter

All slaughter/killing systems must be designed and managed to ensure livestock are not caused unnecessary distress or discomfort. The pre-slaughter handling of livestock must be kept to an absolute minimum. Personnel involved in the slaughter must be thoroughly trained and competent to carry out the tasks required of them.

Management and training

- S 1.1** Managers must develop and implement an animal welfare policy, which must include written procedures with regard to maintaining animal welfare in the abattoir, including the responsibilities and duties of staff and emergency procedures.
- S 1.2** The animal welfare policy must be regularly reviewed and updated.
- S 1.3** Managers must appoint at least one trained Animal Welfare Officer (AWO), who is responsible for the implementation of the animal welfare policy.
- S 1.3.1 *** From 1st January 2007, all AWOs must have attended the Bristol University Animal Welfare Officer training programme, or other recognised, named, validated course on animal welfare at abattoirs. Until that time, it is strongly recommended that AWOs attend a recognised validated training course.
- S 1.4** Managers, in conjunction with the AWO, must develop and implement a training programme for all staff handling and slaughtering animals, ensuring that staff are properly trained to carry out their duties and are competent to perform them.
-  **Where possible this training should be validated.**
- S 1.5 *** The Humane Slaughter Association (HSA) has developed a training programme (*'Humane Slaughter – Taking Responsibility'*) for use in abattoirs, and a set of *'Best Practice Guidelines for the welfare of Sheep and Goats in Abattoirs'* (HSA 2004). Managers must obtain copies of these and utilise them as part of the staff training programme.
- S 1.6** An AWO must:
- a) be present on the site at all times whilst slaughter is being carried out
 - b) make frequent and thorough checks throughout the day to ensure that animals are being effectively stunned and are insensible throughout the slaughter operation.
- S 1.7** Where it is found that animals are not being effectively stunned, the slaughter line must be stopped and immediate remedial action taken.
- S 1.8** The managers, AWOs and all slaughter staff must have access to a copy of the current MAFF/defra codes of practice relating to slaughter, and be familiar with their content.
- S 1.9 *** The AWO must ensure that animal welfare during the slaughter process is not compromised by operator fatigue.
- S 1.10 *** In order to reduce the likelihood of operator fatigue, managers must ensure that rotation of staff is practised as necessary, and recorded, as a Standard Operating Procedure.

Casualty animals

- S 2.1 *** Sheep who are not able to walk must be killed without delay, except in exceptional circumstances where a delay can be justified (see information box below), to ensure avoidance of suffering, and without moving them i.e. the animals must be killed on the lorry, in the lairage pen, or wherever they are situated, using emergency slaughter equipment and procedures.

*  **Delay in killing a sheep unable to walk can only be justified in exceptional circumstances i.e. when the welfare of other sheep would otherwise be adversely affected.**

- S 2.1.1 *** In order to reduce delay in killing a sheep that is unable to walk, appropriate, well-maintained slaughter/killing equipment must be easily accessible for use in such emergencies.
- S 2.2** Killing methods for disease control are outlined in S 6.1 or, alternatively, an injection of an overdose of a drug with anaesthetic properties which causes immediate loss of consciousness and then death, may be administered by a veterinary surgeon.
- S 2.3** All staff must have access to a copy of the MAFF booklet *Guidance on the Transport of Casualty Farm Animals* (PB 1381, 1998), be familiar with its contents and implement its recommendations.

Lairage

- S 3.1** Sheep must be provided with an adequate quantity of appropriate food on arrival at the lairage, and twice daily thereafter, unless they are to be slaughtered within 12 hours.
- S 3.2** Slaughterhouse managers must ensure that the premises are constructed and maintained so as to prevent any injury being caused to animals confined there.
- S 3.3 *** The slaughterhouse must provide a lairage facility which:
- is constructed so as to provide shelter from direct sunlight and adverse weather conditions
 - provides animals with a dry lying area (see S 3.4 below)
 - is of adequate size and construction for the number of animals confined there (see S 3.4 below)
 - provides adequate and draught-free ventilation
 - is thermally comfortable for the sheep (i.e. the sheep are neither overheated nor chilled)
 - is properly lit to permit animals to be inspected
 - has drainage facilities for faeces and urine
 - is able to be thoroughly cleaned between batches of animals
 - has isolation pens in which sick or injured animals can be isolated and, if necessary, humanely slaughtered, these pens being located close to the unloading area and within easy access of the stunning area
 - provides easy access to adequate water, which must be available at all times, and to food, if necessary (see S 3.1 above).

Slaughter


S 3.4 Staff in charge of a lairage must ensure that animals confined in a lairage overnight have the following space allowances:

Type and weight (kg)	Straw bedded (m ²)
Ewes	
45-60	1.1-1.2
60-90	1.2-1.4
Hoggets	
20-30	0.7
30-40	0.8
40-50	1.0
Rams	1.5-2.0

When animals are confined in lairage for shorter periods, at least two thirds of the above space (i.e. the lying area – see E 5.1) must be provided.

S 3.5 Sheep which, because of their sex, age or origin are likely to be aggressive, must be separated from each other at lairage.

S 3.6 Sheep in lairage pens must not be exposed to bright artificial light or direct sunlight except during antemortem inspection, which must be carried out in a minimum of 220 lux illumination.

*  **A number of abattoirs have installed Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) monitors within the pre-slaughter handling and slaughter areas. This can be a very effective way of enabling those responsible for animal welfare within the abattoir to monitor whether welfare standards are being maintained at each stage – pre-slaughter, and during both stunning and sticking. The installation of CCTV systems is, therefore, very strongly recommended by the RSPCA.**

S 3.7 Milk lambs must be slaughtered within two hours of arrival at the abattoir.

Pre-slaughter handling

S 4.1 Sheep must be handled calmly and quietly, with care to avoid unnecessary excitement or distress.

S 4.2 Race design and construction must encourage sheep to move forward, with:

- as few right-angled bends as possible
- no projections and obstructions in the races and passageways
- appropriate lighting.

S 4.3 Races must have an exit gate immediately prior to the stunning area which allows sheep to be taken back to the lairage.

S 4.4 * Electric goads must not be used under any circumstances.

S 4.5 Flooring must be non-slip in races and passageways.

S 4.6 Sheep must not be driven unless the way forward is clear, and there is adequate space available for them to move into.

Slaughter

- S 4.7** Work routines for stunning and slaughter must be arranged to ensure that all sheep are slaughtered within 18 hours of their last feed.

Slaughter equipment

- S 5.1** The equipment used for the stunning and killing of animals, including the stunning pen and/or restraint devices, must be designed, manufactured and maintained to ensure rapid and effective stunning or killing.
- S 5.2** All slaughter equipment must be thoroughly and appropriately cleaned after use.
- S 5.3** Slaughter equipment must be checked at least once daily by an AWO to ensure it is in working order and in a good state of repair.
- S 5.4** A record of the check on slaughter equipment must be made.
- S 5.5** Reserve equipment for the stunning and killing of animals must be kept at the place of slaughter for use in an emergency.
- S 5.6** Reserve equipment must be checked at least once weekly by an AWO to ensure it is in working order and a good state of repair.
- S 5.7** A record must be made of the check on reserve equipment.

Slaughter/killing methods

- S 6.1 *** Sheep must only be slaughtered/killed using one of the following methods:
- head-to-back electrical stun/kill
 - free bullet,
- or
- captive bolt stunning
 - head only electrical stunning
- which renders sheep instantaneously insensible and insensitive to pain, followed by bleeding.

*



Signs of an effective stun/kill:

a) head-to-back electrical stun/kill

- animal becomes rigid with slight tremors
- body gradually relaxes

b) free bullet

- animal collapses immediately
- no rhythmic breathing
- no corneal reflex
- twitching and convulsions may start shortly afterwards


For signs of an effective stun using captive bolt or head only electrical stunning, see information box below Standard S 7.1.

Slaughter

- S 6.1.1 *** Deviation from the signs outlined in a) or b) in the information box above may be an indication that the killing procedure has been ineffective, and immediate action must be taken to ensure the animals are swiftly killed.
- S 6.2 *** In the case of electrical stun/kill, it must be ensured that electrical stunning equipment is delivering the appropriate current. This must be checked at the start of the killing process for each batch of animals using a tester which can simulate the resistance offered by the sheep and can check the current and amperage output at the tongs. The outcome of each check must be recorded, and the records made available to the Freedom Food Assessor and Farm Livestock Officer.
- S 6.3 *** When using a 50 Hertz a.c supply, the current level must not be less than 1.0 amps, or 0.6 amps in the case of lambs. In order to achieve this, an output voltage of at least 200V must be delivered for at least three seconds.

Stunning

- S 7.1** Sheep must be stunned prior to slaughter by means of a stunning system which renders them instantaneously unconscious and insensitive to pain and maintains that state until the point of death.


- *  **a) Signs of effective captive bolt stunning (one phase):**
- animal collapses
 - no rhythmic breathing
 - fixed, fully dilated pupils
 - no corneal reflex (i.e. no blink reaction when the surface of the eyeball is lightly touched)
 - relaxed jaw
 - tongue hanging out
- b) Signs of effective head-only electrical stunning:**
- i) Tonic phase**
- animal collapses and becomes rigid
 - no rhythmic breathing
 - head is raised
 - forelegs extended and hind legs flexed into the body
- ii) Clonic phase**
- gradual relaxation of muscles
 - paddling or involuntary kicking (can be severe)
 - downward movement of eyeballs
 - urination and/or defecation

Deviation from the signs outlined in a) or b) above may be an indication that the stun has been ineffective or that animals are beginning to recover from the stun.

- S 7.1.1 *** If there is any indication that a stun has not been completely effective, or that animals are displaying signs of recovery from a stun, re-stunning must take place immediately.
- S 7.2** To ensure that electrical stunning equipment is delivering the appropriate current it must be checked using a tester which can simulate the resistance offered by the sheep and can check the current and amperage output at the tongs.


Slaughter

- S 7.3 *** When using a 50 Hertz a.c supply, the current level must not be less than 1.0 amps, or 0.6 amps in the case of lambs. In order to achieve this, an output voltage of at least 200V must be delivered for at least three seconds.

*  **Current legislation requires that any electrical equipment used for stunning an animal in the slaughterhouse is fitted with a failsafe device that will prevent it from delivering current below that which it has been set to deliver, in order to ensure an effective stun. However, to date, it has not proved possible to develop an effective device of this kind. At present, therefore, the difficulty of achieving full compliance with this legislative requirement is appreciated.**

- S 7.4 *** Sheep must only be stunned when they can be stuck immediately afterwards with a stun-to-stick interval of no more than 15 seconds.

- S 7.5** Techniques which lower the resistance of the sheep to electrical current must be used.

 **Resistance to current flow may vary, depending on the condition of the electrodes, the site of contact with the sheep's head, and how tightly the electrodes are pressed onto the head. The efficiency of current flow can be improved by regular decarbonising and cleaning of electrodes (when dry) with a wire brush.**

- S 7.6 *** The effectiveness of stunning, in terms of ensuring immediate unconsciousness in all animals which remains until death, must be monitored at the start of slaughter and at least every two hours after that, and the outcome recorded. At least 10 animals must be checked on each occasion.


- S 7.6.1 *** The records of checks on the effectiveness of stunning must include the name of the person undertaking the checks, the number of sheep checked each time, the date and time of the checks, the number of non-compliant sheep, and the action taken to correct ineffective stunning.

Sticking

- S 8.1** After incision of the blood vessels, there must be no further dressing procedure on the animal for at least 20 seconds and, in any case, until all brain-stem reflexes have ceased.

- S 8.2 *** Sheep must be stuck using a sharp knife which is a minimum of five inches (12cm) long.

- S 8.3 *** Blood loss from the sheep must be rapid, profuse and sufficient to ensure that the animal is dead.

*  **Two methods can ensure achievement of S 8.3 – a chest stick (i.e. thoracic bleeding method) which is the best method, or a throat cut.**

- S 8.3.1 *** Both carotid arteries and jugular veins (in the case of a throat cut), or the major blood vessels near the heart from which they arise (in the case of a chest stick), must always be completely severed during sticking.

- S 8.4** Where one person is responsible for the stunning, shackling, hoisting and bleeding of sheep, they must complete all these operations on each individual sheep in turn.

- S 8.5 *** No dressing procedures must be undertaken until at least 20 seconds after bleeding has commenced.

SUPPLEMENTARY STANDARDS FOR DAIRY SHEEP


The following standards for the care of dairy sheep are additional requirements to the *RSPCA Welfare standards for sheep*, which must be read in conjunction with this document.

Food and water (dairy sheep)

Food


 It is recognised that dairy sheep during lactation will not be able to attain sufficient nutrients and energy from grazing at pasture alone, and will require supplementary concentrates as well.

FW(D) 1.1 Dairy lambs must not be weaned before they are capable of consuming sufficient quantities of solid feed to fulfil their nutritional requirements.

 As a guide, dairy lambs should not be less than three to four weeks of age at weaning, unless in individual cases, health and welfare considerations dictate otherwise.

Water

FW(D) 2.1 Drinking facilities must be sufficient, and appropriately positioned (e.g. away from the entrance/exit to the dairy), to ensure that all sheep waiting in the collecting yards, both prior to and following milking, have ready access to sufficient quantities of clean, fresh water.

 It is particularly important that lactating dairy ewes are provided with sufficient quantities of water. It is recognised that there will be variation in the numbers of animals waiting at any one time and in the waiting period on different farms. It is necessary, therefore, to take account of these criteria when calculating the provision of water facilities needed to satisfy the standard. (See also the Water section in the *RSPCA Welfare standards for sheep*, p2).

Environment (dairy sheep)

Milking parlour

- E(D) 1.1** The highest standards of hygiene must be practised in the parlour to reduce the risk of infection.
- E(D) 1.2** Udder, teats and flanks must be clean, dry and free from sores on entry to the parlour.
- E(D) 1.3** Udders must be appropriately cleansed prior to milking.
- E(D) 1.4** Parlour staff must have clean hands when handling teats; consideration must be given to the use of rubber gloves.
- E(D) 1.5 *** Statutory requirements (e.g. relating to examination of milk) under current Dairy Products (Hygiene) Regulations must be adhered to.
- E(D) 1.6** All cases of mastitis must be treated promptly, and underlying predisposing factors corrected.
- E(D) 1.7** Any sheep with mastitis or other udder diseases must be marked and milked last, and the milk discarded. Alternatively, they must be milked with a separate cluster and bucket.
- E(D) 1.8** Sheep with chronic mastitis must be identified and humanely slaughtered.
- E(D) 1.9 *** Clinical cases of mastitis and mastitis tube usage must be monitored and recorded.
- E(D) 1.10** Milking machinery must be properly maintained.
- E(D) 1.11** All teats must be dipped in an approved teat disinfectant; consideration must be given to the use of an emollient when teats are dry, chapped or cracked.
- E(D) 1.12** Measures must be in place to minimize the risk/ incidence of mastitis in dry sheep.
- E(D) 1.13** Milking machine testing must be carried out and recorded at least once every six months.
- E(D) 1.14** Proper application, function and maintenance of the milking machinery must be ensured, by practising the following:
- avoid under and over milking
 - select appropriate teat cup liners
 - check teat cup liners daily and replace damaged/rough teat liners
 - exchange liners according to manufacturer's recommendations
 - ensure correct pulsation rate and a correct release/squeeze ratio
 - the vacuum regulation must be functioning correctly and preventing vacuum fluctuation.
- E(D) 1.15** The waiting/standing time for sheep prior to and after milking must be minimised.



As a guide, waiting should be limited to around two hours.

Dairy

E(D) 2.1 * The highest standards of hygiene must be practised in the dairy, and producers must adhere to the appropriate Food Hygiene Regulation(s).

Thermal environment and ventilation


E(D) 3.1 Dairy sheep at pasture must have access to shade and shelter, either natural or artificial at all times, in order to protect them from adverse weather conditions.

Space allowances



When housed, additional space may be required by dairy ewes when lactating, particularly in the case of higher yielding breeds with larger udders. As a guide, for such animals, the space allowances in E 5.3 of the *RSPCA Welfare standards for sheep* should be increased by around 20 per cent.

Health (dairy sheep)

 There are indications that some breeds of dairy sheep may be particularly susceptible to lameness problems such as foot rot. It is, therefore, most important that effective methods of lameness prevention/control are in place, and form part of the veterinary health plan, and that levels of lameness are regularly monitored and reviewed.

Surplus lambs

- H(D) 1.1** * When it is intended to euthanase lambs that are not required for rearing, and for which no suitable alternative market is available, producers must:
- a) contact the RSPCA Farm Animals Department in order to discuss and agree on an acceptable method to be used for the purposes of euthanasia, which will then be confirmed in writing by the RSPCA
 - b) ensure that the agreed procedure is only undertaken by a veterinary surgeon or other trained, named, competent personnel using appropriate, well-maintained equipment.

Appendix 1

Flock biosecurity

All approved units must have a written plan describing precautions to limit the introduction of and/or spread of disease onto and within the unit. (This could be considered as part of the health plan). A Flock health plan is important from financial, welfare and food safety perspectives.

The written policy must include procedures for cleaning and disinfection of buildings and equipment, specifying the approved dilutions at which chemicals are to be used.

All such chemicals must be on the approved MAFF/defra list for the Purposes of the Diseases of Animals (Approved Disinfectants) Order 1978. Exceptions are acceptable only under veterinary direction.

The written policy must include procedures for pest control.

Units must have written waste management procedures (manure, slurry, all farm waste and general rubbish). Waste materials of any nature must not be a risk to animal health or compromise the control of pests.

Domestic animals must not have access to the unit, other than farm dogs and cats, which must be in a clean, healthy condition and regularly wormed (recorded in medicine book).

Domestic pets, birds, and pests must not have access to carcasses.

Feed stores, offices, toilets, etc., must be maintained in a clean, hygienic condition.

Transport – standard operating and emergency procedure

Items to be included

1. RSPCA/Freedom Food standards relating to transport of sheep.
2. Procedure for loading/unloading of sheep delivery vehicles.
3. Procedure for delivery of sheep to customer sites.
4. Daily journey sheet.
5. Sheep delivery report.
6. List of good hygiene measures, including procedure for cleaning of lorries prior to collection of sheep.
7. Total quality management leaflet – if appropriate.
8. Operating procedures for roadside checks.
9. Accident procedure.
10. Out of hours telephone numbers and 'emergency procedure'.
11. Mobile phones or other communication equipment (and procedures for use).
12. Fire extinguishers.
13. Tyres – punctures – codes of practice.
14. Freight Transport Association – *The Driver's Handbook* (1996) including Tachograph Regulations.
15. Certificate of motor insurance.
16. Guidelines on correct environmental conditions during the journey, depending on length of journey and ambient temperature.
17. MAFF booklet: *Sheep Identification, Records and Movement – a guide to the legal requirements* (PB 2495, 1997).
18. MAFF booklet: *Heat Stress in sheep – solving the problem* (PB 2111, 1995).

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RSPCA, Wilberforce Way, Southwater, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 9RS
Tel: 0870 010 1181 www.rspca.org.uk

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