

Ante-Mortem Inspection

Chapter overview

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Section 1 - Introduction

Section overview

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Purpose The purpose of ante-mortem inspection is:

- To determine whether there is any sign of any condition which might adversely affect human or animal health
- To enable the OV to make the decisions as to whether the animal can be slaughtered for human consumption
- Whether any test should be carried out in relation to TSEs, disease diagnosis or for residues of veterinary medical products
- To determine whether welfare has been compromised.

Particular attention should be given when zoonotic or notifiable diseases are a possible diagnosis.

Legislation

Regulations

Ante-mortem inspection is covered by Regulation (EC) 853/2004 (Food Business Operator (FBO) duties) and Regulation (EC) 854/2004 (VPHU duties).

VPHU role

Inspection tasks

The official veterinarian (OV) must carry out the ante-mortem inspection.

Meat inspectors (MIs) can make an initial check and help with purely practical tasks in relation to ante-mortem inspection and welfare checks.

The MI may conduct the ante-mortem checks at the slaughterhouse when there has been an ante-mortem inspection performed on the holding of provenance by an OV or authorised veterinarian (AV).

The MI must alert the OV to abnormal animals identified pre-slaughter.

Inspection	By
Observing animals at unloading (random)	OV/MI
Initial checks	OV assisted by MI
Ante-mortem inspection	OV assisted by MI
Completion of ante-mortem record	OV/MI
Completion of pen cards	OV/MI
Enforcement	OV

Verification tasks

The OV is required to verify that the slaughterhouse FBO has fulfilled his responsibilities for:

- accepting animals for slaughter
- processing animals in a timely manner
- arrangements for animals not fit for slaughter
- presenting animals for ante mortem.

Verification	By
Procedures for acceptance – checks on identification, movement documents, health certificates, cleanliness, health and welfare	OV
All animals presented to the OV for ante-mortem under suitable conditions	OV
Slaughter without undue delay	OV

Verification of FBO responsibilities

Presentation for ante mortem inspection

Slaughterhouse FBO must follow the instructions of the OV to ensure that ante-mortem inspection of every animal is carried out under suitable conditions.

Regulation: 853/2003 Annex III, Section I, Chapter IV, paragraph 5
853/2003 Annex III, Section II, Chapter IV, paragraph 2.

Lairage period

After arrival at the slaughterhouse there must be no undue delays in slaughter of domestic ungulates, except where a rest period is required for welfare reasons.

Regulation: 853/2003 Annex III, Section I, Chapter IV, paragraph 1

Acceptance procedure guarantees

The FBO must have procedures in place to guarantee that each animal or batch of animals accepted into the slaughterhouse:

- are properly identified
- are accompanied by the relevant information from the holding of provenance (FCI)
- are not from areas under disease control with movement restrictions unless the CA so permits
- are clean
- are healthy, as far as the FBO can judge
- are in a satisfactory state as regards to welfare

If the FBO is aware of any animals that do not comply with any of the above then the OV must be notified.

Movement from slaughterhouse

Animals accepted onto a slaughterhouse premises are as a general expected to be slaughtered there. They can under exceptional circumstances, for example equipment breakdown, be moved to another slaughterhouse.

Animal should be considered to be accepted onto the premises when its movement document shows the slaughterhouse as its destination and it has arrived within the curtilage of that slaughterhouse. This allows for the multi-drop slaughterhouse haulage runs.

Regulation: 854/2004 Annex I, Section II, Chapter III, paragraph 8

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Verification of FBO responsibilities, Continued

Identity

Guidance on assessment of this aspect is covered in:

Reference: Chapter 2.5 Animal identification

MIG, Part Two, Chapter 8. Raw Materials, page 10 - 13

FCI

Guidance on assessment of this aspect is covered in:

Reference: Chapter 2.1 Food chain information

MIG, Part Two, Chapter 8. Raw Materials, page 15 - 20

Health status of holding and of the animals

Animals that are accompanied to slaughter with a valid movement document for the relevant species will have come from a holding without restriction.

The slaughterhouse FBO assessment of animal health is equivalent to that of a stockman and is not expected to be a veterinary assessment. Animals considered suspect are brought to the attention of the OV and isolation facilities used where appropriate.

Reference: MIG, Part Two, Chapter 8. Raw Materials, page 13

Cleanliness of the livestock

The OV must verify that the FBO follows his procedures to ensure that the hide, skin or fleece conditions do not present an unacceptable risk of contamination of the meat

Regulation: 854/2004, Annex I, Section II, Chapter III, 3.

Reference: MIG, Part Two, Chapter 8. Raw Materials, page 14.

Welfare

The OV must verify that where the rules concerning the protection of animal welfare are breached, the FBO immediately takes necessary corrective action and prevents recurrence.

Regulation: 854/2004, Annex I, Section II, Chapter IV, paragraph 3.

Reference: Chapter 2.3 Animal welfare.

MIG, Part Two, Chapter 8. Raw Materials, page 15
[MIG chapter x animal welfare once available]

Guidance for FBO

Guidance for FBO can be found in the MIG

<http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk/foodindustry/meat/draftguidehygiene/meat>

Verification of FBO responsibilities, Continued

Animals accepted at the slaughterhouse

Only live animals are accepted into the slaughterhouse, with the exception of:

- animals that have undergone emergency slaughter outside the slaughterhouse (red meat)
 - delayed eviscerated poultry, geese and ducks raised for the production of “foie gras”
 - animals including farmed game slaughtered at the place of production
 - wild game.
-

Dead on arrival (DOA) and dead in lairage (DIL).

Bovines:

- The FBO reports dead on arrival (DOA) and dead in lairage (DIL) bovines over 24 months of age to Lisburn Proteins on **028 9262 1441**. They will arrange for the body to be collected and tested for TSE.

Goats:

- The FBO must report any DOA or DIL goats which have more than two permanent incisors to the DVO.
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Section 2 - Procedures

Section overview

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Ante-mortem inspection procedures

Considerations

When considering ante mortem inspection requirements thought must be given to:

- the individual slaughterhouse - every slaughterhouse lairage layout is different and
- the species concerned.

The OV must clearly explain the ante-mortem requirements to the FBO including any different conditions for inspecting the different species.

Facilities and equipment requirements

To be able to carry out satisfactory ante-mortem inspections, clinical inspections and detailed examinations, the OV must have available the following facilities and equipment:

- adequate lighting
 - adequate space
 - adequate access
 - adequate facilities for detailed examination (a crush is desirable but not legally required and equivalent means of restraint can be acceptable – the OV should agree suitable facilities and arrangements with the FBO)
 - isolation pen(s) for suspect animals with separate drainage and situated as to avoid contamination of other animals (not needed in all establishments e.g. very small establishments)
 - staffing assistance
 - sufficient time
 - proper equipment e.g. thermometer and stethoscope.
-

Time of ante-mortem inspection

The inspection must take place within 24 hours of arrival at the slaughterhouse and less than 24 hours before slaughter. In some cases, ante-mortem inspection may need to be repeated. The OV may inspect the animal(s) at any other time.

Food chain information

When the FBO passes any required FCI to the OV, the OV should use their professional judgement and take into account the information provided when performing ante-mortem inspection and post-mortem inspection.

Currently FCI is required for poultry and any animal known to be or suspected to be injured or showing signs of abnormality.

Reference: Chapter 2.1 Food Chain Information.

Ante-mortem inspection procedures, Continued

Disease eradication programmes

The OV is to impose the conditions, already determined by the competent authority, for slaughtering animals under schemes for the control of:

- a specific disease, such as brucellosis or tuberculosis
- zoonotic agents such as salmonella,

Conditions imposed will include any specific ante mortem arrangements for these animals The OV must clearly explain any specific ante-mortem requirements to the FBO. Directions for slaughter should be given to the FBO using VPH 08.

Regulation: 854/2004, Annex I, Section II, Chapter III, 7

Observations

The OV must observe each animal (except poultry) moving and at rest.

The inspection must be sufficient to identify animals showing neurological symptoms, respiratory symptoms, alimentary tract abnormalities, change in gait or external abnormalities.

The OV is the judge of when they are satisfied that they have adequately observed the animals.

Initial check

Routine ante-mortem inspection may begin with an initial check done by the MI.

Where a suitably trained MI assists the OV in carrying out the initial check, the OV should subsequently observe all the animals interacting with each other in their pens during ante-mortem inspection

Clinical inspections

In addition to routine ante-mortem inspection, the OV is required to carry out a clinical inspection of all animals which do not appear to be "normal" and those that the FBO or an MI may have put aside.

Clinical inspection does not necessarily require the OV to undertake a clinical examination. The OV is the judge of the appropriate nature and extent of the clinical inspection.

Ante-mortem inspection procedures, Continued

Animals in pain or distress

If an animal is in pain or distress as a result of an accident at the slaughterhouse and the OV is not present, the FBO should slaughter it immediately. Meat from animals that undergo this emergency slaughter may be used for human consumption providing:

- it has received ante mortem inspection by the OV
- it passes post-mortem inspection performed personally by the OV
- no serious lesions other than those due to the reason for slaughter are found

Note: if a bovine over 24 months old, TSE testing will be required.

Regulation: 853/2004 Annex III, Section I, Chapter IV, point 2c.
854/2004 Annex I, Section II, Chapter V, point 1a.

Exception to OV ante-mortem inspection

OVs must carry out ante-mortem inspection at the slaughterhouse except in the following situations regarding pigs and poultry:

- an OV or AV has carried out the inspection at the farm and the FCI has been received by the FBO and given to the VPHU.

Note: Animals that have undergone ante-mortem at the farm by an AV must come with a health certificate.

Reference: Specimen health certificate for live animals in Regulation (EC) 854/2004, Annex I, Section IV, Chapter X, A.

and

- the MI is satisfied that the:
 - FCI does not point to any possible problem for food safety
 - checks indicate the animal's welfare has not been comprised
- the MI has checked the health certificate and found it satisfactory
- the OV must ensure through regularly checks that the MI is carrying out such actions properly.

Note: the MI must have undergone required training in these duties before undertaking this work.

Ante-mortem inspection records

Legislation requires the VPHU to keep records of ante-mortem inspection.

Regulation: 854/2004, Annex I, Section II, Chapter I.

The OV records ante-mortem inspection findings on APHIS for all species supported by APHIS.

For species not yet covered by APHIS

- horses, farmed deer, complete VPH 06
 - poultry record the ante-mortem findings on VPH 07.
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inspection procedures, Continued

When animals can be moved from lairage to slaughter

The OV must be satisfied that an effective positive release system is in operation to ensure that every animal that requires ante-mortem inspection:

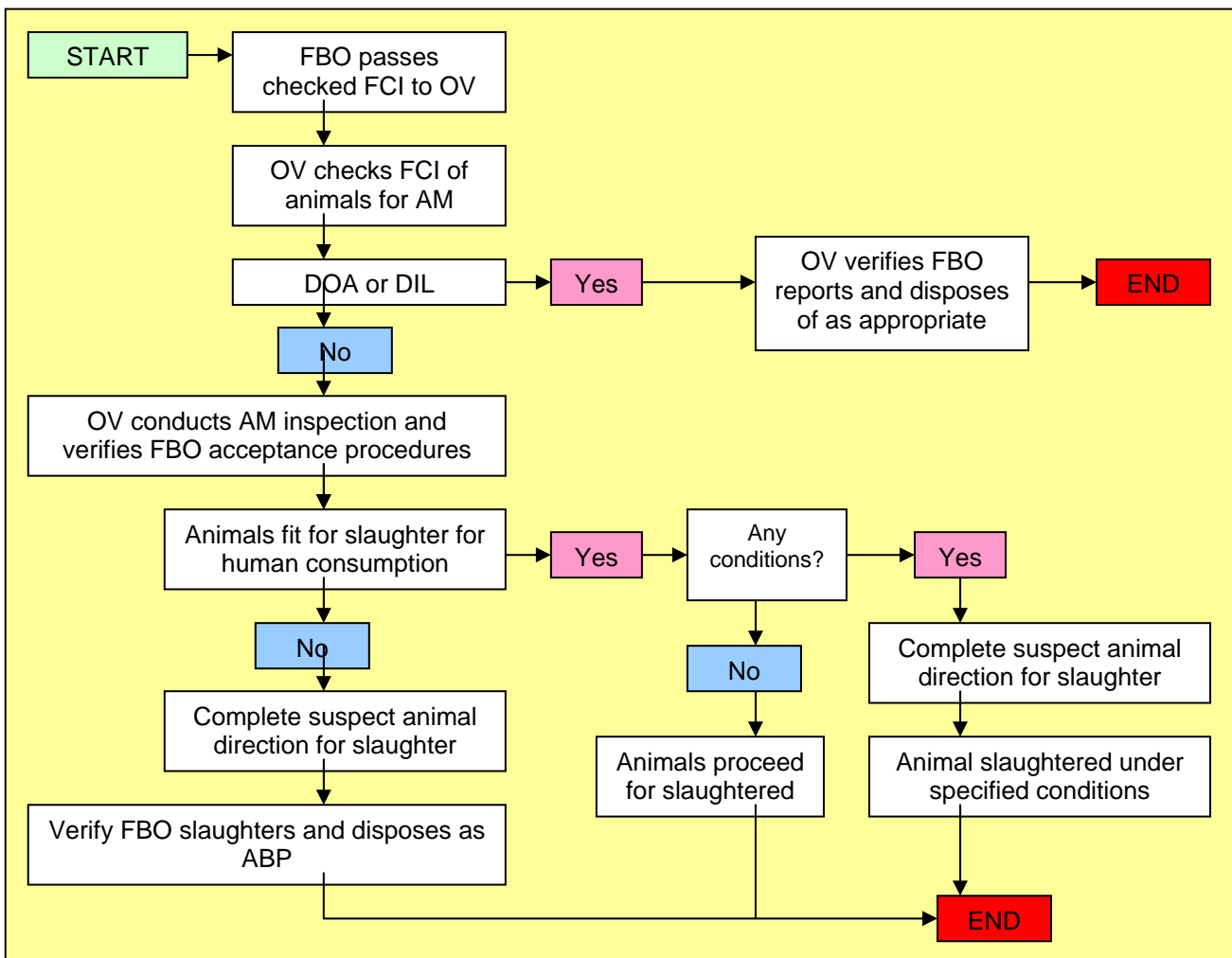
- receives that inspection;
- is only slaughtered for human consumption when ante-mortem inspection has been carried out and has been passed fit for slaughter.

Animals must not be moved from the lairage to be slaughtered for human consumption until:

- ante-mortem inspection has been completed, recorded and signed by the OV
- any conditions for suspect animals have been met.

Ante-mortem inspection summary

The flowchart below summarises the procedure for ante-mortem inspection.



Specific ante-mortem issues for poultry

Ante-mortem at the abattoir following ante mortem at the holding

Where the birds have received ante mortem inspection by an AV on farm, the poultry will arrive accompanied by a health certificate for live animals transported from the holding to the slaughterhouse. Full OV ante-mortem inspection at the slaughterhouse is not required. The inspection at the slaughterhouse can be performed by a suitably trained MI or by the OV. Inspection is to verify:

- animal identification
- animal welfare
- any condition that may adversely affect human or animal health.

Regulation: 854/2004 Annex I, Section IV, Chapter X, A

When the birds are not slaughtered within 3 days of the issue of the health certificate, the following should take place:

- birds that have not left the holding must be re-examined and a new health certificate issued
- birds that arrive at or are en route to the slaughterhouse may be slaughtered for human consumption after they have passed a flock ante-mortem inspection performed by the OV at the slaughterhouse.

Ante-mortem at the abattoir

When ante-mortem inspection is not carried out at the holding, the OV is to carry out a flock ante-mortem inspection at the slaughterhouse where

- the overall health and welfare of each flock must be assessed
- ante-mortem should include listening to the birds and observation of a random sample checking posture, wattle colour and cleanliness, and
- consider the information available from the FCI.

The ante mortem must be recorded on the VPH 07.

As at the farm, ante mortem inspection is on a flock basis. This means that while the first consignment from a house must be seen by the OV, the level of inspection of subsequent loads will be determined by the OV on a risk basis. For example, where FCI and the OV ante mortem of the initial consignment give no cause for concern, not all subsequent loads from that house need to be inspected individually. The OV will decide and advise the FBO of the level of inspection that is necessary depending on the significance of the findings in the FCI and initial inspection. The OV may also decide to increase the level of ante mortem inspection on the basis of post mortem findings.

Continued on next page

Specific ante-mortem issues for poultry, continued

Ante mortem of birds from another member state

Birds imported from other MS for slaughter must receive full ante mortem inspection at the abattoir. A veterinary health certificate for trade purposes will accompany birds from another MS. This certificate is not the health certificate produced in accordance with Regulation 854/2004 for ante mortem at the holding. The decision to opt for ante mortem at the holding is for individual CAs, consequently such an arrangement cannot be imposed in one MS by another MS. The FBO of the holding of provenance must provide FCI to the slaughterhouse FBO in advance of slaughter in addition to the trade certificate.

Poultry showing signs of disease

If the birds show clinical symptoms of a disease, they may not be slaughtered for human consumption. However, killing of these birds on the slaughter line may take place at the end of the normal slaughter process, if precautions are taken to avoid the risk of spreading pathogenic organisms and to clean and disinfect the facilities after killing.

Regulation: 854/2004, Annex 1, Section IV, Chapter V, A, 7.

Poultry slaughtered at the holding

In the case of poultry slaughtered at the farm and sent for delayed evisceration, the ante-mortem inspection will be done at the holding by an OV or an AV.

Uneviscerated carcasses must be accompanied to the slaughterhouse or cutting establishment with a health certificate for poultry intended for the production of foie gras and delayed eviscerated poultry slaughtered at the holding of provenance’.

Regulation: No 854/2004, Annex 1, Section 4, Chapter 5, C.

Health certificate

The post-mortem inspection at the slaughterhouse or cutting establishment must include a check on the certificate accompanying the carcasses.

Uneviscerated poultry requirements

Delayed eviscerated poultry obtained at the farm of production may be kept for up to 15 days at a temperature of not more than 4°C. It must be then eviscerated in a slaughterhouse or in a cutting establishment located in the same member state as the farm of production, and must undergo post-mortem inspection.

Suspect live animals

OV judgement Each OV should make a professional judgement based on the FCI, ante-mortem inspection or any other information available, as to which animal/s should undergo a detailed ante-mortem. Such an examination may include taking of appropriate samples.

Slaughter of suspect animals The detailed ante-mortem examination of suspect animals will allow the OV to make a decision whether the animal is fit for slaughter for human consumption.

The OV must defer the slaughter of animals suspected of having a disease or condition that may adversely affect human or animal health and agree with the FBO an appropriate time for their slaughter. The FBO should hold the animal(s) in isolation pending the OV's final decision. The OV should issue directions for slaughter (VPH 08) where appropriate.

Regulation: 854/2004 Annex I Section II Chapter III, 5.

Examples of suspect animals Examples where the OV might decide a detailed examination is required includes:

- animals with FCI as a result of known or suspect injury or abnormality
 - animals show clinical signs of a disease transmissible to man or animals. Example: animals are found or suspected to have any form of clinical TB.
 - animals show clinical signs of a disease or disorder that may make fresh meat unfit for human consumption
 - animals where residues are suspected, the possibility of treatment to mask illness must be considered
-

Veterinary medicines Animals that **may** contain residues of veterinary medicinal products in excess of the levels allowed or residues of forbidden substances are to be sampled with in accordance with The Animals and Animal Products (Examination for Residues and Maximum Residue Limits) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1998.

Regulation: 854/2004 Annex I Section II Chapter III 6.

Reference: Chapter 5, Residues.

Emergency slaughter on farm

Definition Meat from a red meat animal that has undergone emergency slaughter outside the slaughterhouse may be used for human consumption only if it is from an otherwise healthy animal that has suffered an accident that prevented its transport to the slaughterhouse for welfare reasons.

Reference: See “Guidance for Veterinary Surgeons and Farmers on the Slaughter of Cattle which are Injured or Showing Signs of Abnormalities” booklet produced by the British Cattle Veterinary Association.

OV attendance The OV must be present to carry out the post-mortem inspection of any animal that has undergone emergency slaughter.

Declarations A declaration completed by the primary production FBO and private veterinarian must accompany the slaughtered animal to the slaughterhouse and be examined by the OV.

Regulation: 853/2004, Annex 3, Section 1, Chapter IV, 5 & 6 and Regulation (EC) 854/2004 Annex 1, Section I, Chapter II B, 4.

Reference: MIG, Part Two, Chapter 8. Raw Materials, page 21 and MIG, Part Two, Chapter 8. Raw Materials Annex 1.

<http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk/foodindustry/meat/draftguidehygiene/meat>

Eligibility Please follow the steps in the table below with regards to eligibility:

Step	Action
1	Confirm animal eligible by checking: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• farmer’s declaration• slaughterer’s declaration• veterinarian’s declaration• transport time/chilling requirements complied with• any other eligibility regulations for human consumption, e.g. identification.
2	Consider if any testing is required, e.g. TSE, residues.
3	Post-mortem inspection carried out by OV. <u>Note:</u> The OV can require any additional tests.
4	Square health mark applied.

Section 3 - Record keeping

Section overview

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Purpose

- To record disease conditions for disease surveillance purposes.
 - To indicate to the FBO that the OV has passed or rejected the animal for slaughter for human consumption.
 - To meet statutory obligations to maintain records and supply FBOs, producers, veterinarians and the competent authority with relevant information.
-

Reconciliation

At the end of each day's slaughter, the total number of cattle recorded on the pen-cards as having received ante-mortem inspection must be reconciled with the total on APHIS as slaughtered on the day.

Similarly number of sheep and pigs receiving ante mortem should be reconciled with the number slaughtered that day.

For poultry, the number of new flock ante mortem inspection records should be reconciled against the number of new flocks presented.

Where available VS administrative staff should perform this task.

APHIS

APHIS

APHIS provides the central database for animal and public health information in NI. It facilitates a standard means of recording and provides for the extraction and transmission of relevant information to relevant parties..

Use

AHPIS must be used for the recording of ante mortem inspection findings wherever the system covers the species in question.

The system must be used responsibly having regard to access to the system and data protection issues.

Data must be entered accurately. Where, for reasons of accuracy, it is necessary to alter information entered onto the system records covering the change made and the reasons why it was necessary must be kept.

Alternative arrangements

Where a particular species is not supported by APHIS written records of ante mortem findings, equivalent to those kept on APHIS for other species must be used (VPH 06 & 07).

Information to include

The OV or DARD officer under the direction of the OV must complete details including:

- details of any abnormalities noted and any actions required
Note: APHIS will set a test and allow for the printing of sample labels for any bovine animal 24-30 months old that requires TSE testing. Justification must be given for decision not to sample for TSE testing any bovine animal 24-30 months of age showing abnormalities
 - details of emergency slaughter animals.
Note: Ante-mortem details must be completed to indicate that the animal and the documentation have been checked and found satisfactory.
 - any welfare concerns
 - the arrival of over thirty months of age bovine animals and the requirement to sample all such animals for TSE testing (automatically set on APHIS)
-

Positive release authorisation of slaughter

Purpose

The OV must positively authorise the slaughter of animals once ante mortem inspection has been concluded with a satisfactory outcome.

This can be done by OV signature on a pen card or other permanent record. The OV's signature shows that the animal(s) passed as suitable to be slaughtered for human consumption without additional conditions. The VPH 07 fulfils this function for poultry and the VPH 06 for deer and horses.

Systems

Some systems use a signed pen card or some other signed ante mortem inspection record to act as the means of communication between OV and operator. Other systems involve the use of markers or indicators on the pens or on the animals as the signal to the operator.

The system must be documented in detail. Both the OV and the operator must hold a copy of the document. The procedure must be readily available to relief OVs. The record of where it can be located must be kept in the current VPHU logbook for the establishment.

Retention period

Retain completed pen cards / other signed records for 12 months. They may be used to check that only animals that have undergone ante-mortem inspection are slaughtered.

Use of suspect animal directions for slaughter

Purpose The directions for slaughter (VPH 08) must be used to identify animals considered suspect but which may still be suitable for slaughter. It must be completed by the OV and accompany the animal on transfer to an isolation pen unless an alternative mechanism for transfer of the information is agreed with the FBO.

Multiple suspect animals The directions for slaughter (VPH 08) may be used for groups of animals where the OV considers it appropriate that all animals are treated the same or it is impractical to segregate and use one card for one animal, e.g. for a flock of sheep.

Where to display The directions for slaughter (VPH 08) must be attached to a suitable position on the isolation pen unless an alternative mechanism for transfer of the information is agreed with the FBO. Such arrangements must be clearly documented so that a relief OV can comply with the arrangements. A record of where it can be located must be kept in the current VPHU logbook.

Retention of directions for slaughter The OV must alert the MI(s) to any suspect animal and ensure the post-mortem findings are recorded on APHIS or the written record where APHIS does not cover the species in question.

The directions for slaughter (VPH 08) must be retained for 12 months.

Section 4 - Movements

Section overview

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Movement of live animals from slaughterhouse

OV action Animals that are presented to a slaughterhouse for slaughter must usually be slaughtered there.

Reference: 854/2004 Annex I Section II Chapter III: Decisions Concerning Live Animals, 8.

Animal	Circumstance	Animal can be removed
Cattle, Sheep, Pigs	Exceptional, e.g. equipment breakdown Or Animal ineligible for slaughter in that establishment	1. If the FBO contacts local DVO and requests a movement licence to allow movement to another slaughterhouse and the DVO issues such licence, and 2. If the OV authorises the FBO to remove the animal.
Horse	Exceptional, e.g. equipment breakdown	If the OV authorises the FBO to remove the animal to another slaughterhouse.
Birds	Exceptional, e.g. equipment breakdown	If the OV authorises the FBO to remove the birds to another slaughterhouse.

Note It is for the FBO to ensure that another slaughterhouse is willing and able to accept and process animals which, have not been able to be processed in the establishment to which, they were originally consigned and where they were originally accepted onto the premises.

Field lairages

**Part of
curtilage**

Field lairages within the curtilage of the approved slaughterhouse are part of the slaughterhouse and therefore the responsibility of the FBO.

Animals can therefore move into such a lairage.

The slaughter of the animals must not be unduly delayed.

Regulation: 853/2004, Annex III, Chapter IV.

**Fields out with
the curtilage**

Any field out with the curtilage of the approved slaughterhouse is, in effect, a holding or part of a holding. Moves from the holding of provenance to such a place for sorting prior to slaughter should be covered by the appropriate movement documentation and associated record keeping.

The OV should report any knowledge or suspicion of the use of such a facility to the relevant divisional veterinary office for investigation.
