



Slaughter of Animals for Private Domestic Consumption

Background

This note is intended to provide general guidance on the slaughter of farm animals for private domestic consumption, i.e. the slaughter of an animal by an individual to feed his/her own family. It is not intended to deal with slaughter for sale or supply, even on a limited basis.

Domestic slaughter presents increased food safety risks. In addition, rules in relation to animal welfare, disposal of animal by-products, sampling for BSE and notification of the relevant Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine database must also be followed.

As an alternative, individuals should seriously consider bringing their animals to an approved slaughterhouse, where this work can be done for them by skilled, experienced operatives. In all approved slaughterhouses, checks are carried out by veterinary public health professionals. These checks address food safety, animal health and welfare, animal by-product, TSE and food chain information considerations (a list of local authority approved small slaughterhouses is available on the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) website http://www.fsai.ie/uploadedFiles/Food_Business/LA_approved_premises.pdf)

Food Safety

The European Union has developed a comprehensive package of legislation which seeks to deliver a high level of health protection for consumers of food in the Union – commonly known as the Hygiene Package (Regulation 178/2002; Regulation 853/2004; Regulation 853/2004 and Regulation 854/2004, and other linked legislation and guidance notes). However, this food legislation does not apply to the production of food for private domestic consumption. Accordingly, individuals may slaughter animals and prepare meat from these animals, and consume this meat without needing to comply with food legislation. This is considered to be their personal choice.

The meat may not be supplied/sold to any third party outside the 'private domestic' situation. Any slaughter for this purpose is illegal and is an offence. If the meat is supplied or sold to individuals beyond the private domestic situation then all this activity comes within the scope of EU food legislation.

During the slaughter and dressing process, the carcass can become contaminated with faecal matter, which can include pathogens, such as *E. coli O157* and *Salmonella*, which can cause serious human foodborne illness. Individuals considering slaughtering animals for their private domestic consumption should recognise the considerable challenge involved in producing clean, safe food, and the option of using a qualified butcher for this task should be considered. Pigs and horses should also be tested for the parasite *Trichinella spiralis*, which can cause serious illness in humans.

Prior to slaughtering an animal, it is important to check that the withdrawal period for any medicines that may have been administered, has expired.

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Animal Welfare

There is an obligation on every individual to take all necessary steps to ensure the welfare of an animal in his/her possession or under their care and to ensure that the animal is not caused unnecessary pain, suffering or injury.

EU and national legislation on slaughtering practices aims to minimise the pain and suffering of animals through use of properly approved stunning and killing methods, based on scientific knowledge and practical experience.

EC Council Regulation 1099/2009, (given effect through S.I. No. 292 of 2013) on the protection of animals at the time of killing, came into effect from 1st January, 2013. Article 10 of this Regulation deals with slaughter for domestic consumption and lists the rules which apply to slaughter for private domestic consumption. These include that animals must only be restrained in a humane way and must be stunned before being killed (unless they are being killed in accordance with certain religious rites). The person killing the animal must have “the appropriate level of competence to do so without causing any avoidable pain, distress or suffering”. Failure to comply with these requirements is an offence under Irish law. For practical reasons, it may be simpler to ask a licensed slaughter man to perform this task.

Animal By-products (ABPs)

The parts of the animal which are not intended for human consumption are defined as animal by-products (ABPs). The disposal of ABPs is regulated by EU Regulation 1069/2009 and Commission Regulation (EU) No 142/2011 which lays down detailed requirements regarding ABPs from the point of production to safe disposal or use.

ABPs arising from the slaughter of animals in Ireland are normally disposed of via an approved rendering plant. It may also be possible to dispose of this material via an approved knackery.

Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs)

The TSE Regulations (Regulation (EC) No 999/2001) and national implementing legislation, apply to slaughter for private domestic consumption as well as commercial slaughter.

These Regulations define certain parts of cattle, sheep and goats as Specified Risk Materials (SRM). These parts must be excluded from human consumption and must be disposed of safely in accordance with the Animal By-products legislation.

Parts which are SRM include:

- Bovines
 - Skull (including the brains and eyes) and spinal cord from animals over 12 months
 - Vertebral column from animals over 30 months
 - Tonsils and the intestines from animals of all ages
- Sheep and Goats
 - Skull (including the brains and eyes), the tonsils and spinal cord of animals over 12 months
 - Spleen and ileum of animals of all ages

Your local District Veterinary Office will be able to advise regarding testing requirements for TSEs which may be in force.

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Animal Identification and Recording

- a) Where a bovine animal is slaughtered on-farm for personal private consumption, the death of the animal should be notified to the local District Veterinary Office so it can be recorded onto the Animal Identification and Movement (AIM) system.
- b) In the case of sheep, goats and pigs slaughtered on-farm, the herd register should be updated.

(Note - for further information on this subject contact your local District Veterinary Office of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine)