



New food chain rules to help 'farm to fork' safety

Thursday 31 December 2009

The Food Standards Agency is reminding slaughterhouse operators and livestock keepers that they will soon have to ensure that Food Chain Information (FCI) is provided for all cattle, sheep and goats sent for slaughter. Guidance and model forms are available.

About the new rules

The new requirement under European Union legislation comes into force from 1 January 2010 and will apply to all slaughter animals, whether sent directly to a slaughterhouse or sold through a livestock market.

FCI is information about the health of the animals being sent for slaughter, and other information relevant to the safety of meat derived from them, including medicines the animals have been given. The rules already apply to pigs and calves.

The new rules are an important part of 'farm-to-fork' food safety controls and highlight the food safety responsibilities of livestock keepers in the meat production chain. The information about slaughter animals that is passed from the farm to the slaughterhouse can be used by operators and official veterinarians to make decisions about processing and inspection procedures.

Since this is information that livestock keepers should already have, we believe that this change in the law will not be burdensome. Each slaughterhouse operator will decide how they wish to receive FCI. In the case of sheep in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, some operators may choose to use new movement documents that are being produced by Defra and the Welsh Assembly Government. There will be no changes made to movement documents in Scotland, where industry's preference is to use company declarations.

Once the new rules come into force, meat from cattle, sheep or goats without FCI information cannot be sold for human consumption. Slaughterhouse operators, markets and livestock keepers are therefore being advised to discuss arrangements for exchange of FCI now, in preparation for 1 January.

Guidance and model documents

The minimum information that producers must provide as FCI has been determined following discussions between the Agency and meat and agriculture industry representatives, and the Agency has published guidance on this for livestock producers. Further information, model documents and guidance can be downloaded via the link below.

<http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/guidancenotes/meatregsguid/fciguideance/>