



Assured Meat Processing Standard – Animal Welfare Module (AW)

AW1.0 Animal Welfare Policies		
AW1.0	Standard	Guidance Notes
AW1.1	The Company must have an Animal Welfare Policy which is communicated to all relevant staff.	<i>The Animal Welfare Policy must include the written procedures with regard to maintaining animal welfare including the responsibilities and duties of staff and emergency procedures. This policy must be annually reviewed, updated and conform to current legislation.</i>
AW1.1.1	There must be a designated person on site responsible for animal welfare	<i>Defined role on organisation chart</i>
AW1.1.2	There must be a trained Animal Welfare Officer on duty at all times during operational hours.	<i>The animal welfare officer should have sufficient authority and technical competence to provide relevant guidance to slaughter line personnel. The animal welfare officer must be in possession of a certificate of competence for all the operations taking place in the slaughterhouse for which he or she is responsible.</i>
AW1.1.3	All persons involved with the handling of livestock and birds must be suitably trained, assessed as competent and hold relevant legally authorised approval for handling and slaughter of livestock and birds The site must have access to or hold a copy of current regulations relating to the protection of animals at the time of killing	
AW1.1.4	Ongoing performance of staff must be monitored and training updated or refresher as required	<i>Employee training needs reviewed and where needed additional training provided</i>
AW1.1.5	Animal welfare incidents that occur on site are recorded and reviewed to prevent recurrence	<i>The root cause of each incident must be determined and appropriate corrective action implemented Records must be kept</i>
AW1.1.6	CCTV system where installed is used to review practices and behaviour of staff in relation to animal welfare during internal audits	<i>CCTV footage where installed is kept for a minimum of three months</i>
AW2.0 Design and Facilities		
AW2.1	The lairage must be designed so as not to cause distress or harm to the livestock and birds	<i>The design must encompass walls, flooring and pen construction. Pens, gates and races must be designed, constructed and maintained in such a manner that stress or injury to animals is minimized, and also be secure as to prevent livestock and birds from escaping.</i>



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AW2.1.1	<p>A daily visual check of the facilities used for livestock and birds must be carried out prior to arrival of any livestock and birds and recorded</p> <p>Regular checks must be made of the lairage when livestock and birds and poultry are in situ</p>	<p><i>Visual check of unloading, lairage, pens etc.</i></p> <p><i>Corrective actions must be in place should an issue be identified</i></p>
AW2.1.2	<p>The unloading bays must be designed to facilitate ease of unloading of all species.</p>	<p><i>The angle between the tail ramps and the unloading facilities must be no greater than</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>26° for sheep and cattle</i> • <i>20° for pigs. (Ramp angles must be measured from the floor to the top of the ramp.)</i> <p>• <i>Unloading docks should be provided to facilitate ease of unloading of all livestock and birds.</i></p>
AW2.1.3	<p>Livestock and birds must not be subjected to any avoidable, excessive or sudden noises</p>	<p><i>Lairage areas must quiet and staff movements kept to a minimum</i></p>
AW2.1.4	<p>The lairage must have adequate ventilation, lighting and shelter from adverse conditions.</p> <p>Lairage should have systems in place to ensure that the animals remain comfortable in all weathers.</p>	<p><i>Lairage should be suitably vented to minimize high humidity and the build-up of odours, ammonia and to maintain temperatures</i></p> <p><i>Lairage should have systems to reduce the temperature in hot weather</i></p>
AW2.1.5	<p>The lairage must provide access to clean drinking water for all livestock and birds at all times.</p>	<p><i>Drinkers must be positioned so that all classes of livestock and birds can have access to them and that they are kept clean and operational</i></p>
AW2.1.6	<p>There must be suitable and sufficient bedding available for animals which are lairaged for periods in excess of 6 hours.</p>	<p><i>This standard applies to all livestock and birds arriving at the abattoir before midnight the day prior to the day of kill.</i></p> <p><i>Assured bedding must be used for assured livestock and birds</i></p>
AW2.1.7	<p>There must be suitable and sufficient feed available for animals which are to be lairaged for periods of greater than 12 hours from arrival</p>	<p><i>This standard applies to all livestock and birds arriving at the abattoir before midnight the day prior to the day of kill.</i></p> <p><i>Assured feed must be used for assured livestock and birds and records of purchase kept</i></p>
AW2.1.8	<p>Appropriate penning facilities must be available to isolate animals</p>	<p><i>The company must have signage or other means of indication that the animal within the pen is in isolation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ideally there should also be a dedicated isolation pen available and ready for use at all times and ideally situated close to the unloading bay, easily accessible and identifiable.</i>



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		<i>All animals requiring this facility should be dealt with as a matter of urgency with due care for animal health and welfare.</i>
AW2.1.9	Lairage facilities should undergo a wash/clean down regularly to minimise the contamination of livestock and birds and thoroughly cleansed and disinfected at least weekly.	<i>Facilities for adequate cleaning must be in place Lairage should undergo a daily clean but this may be at a reduced level when animals are present overnight.</i>
AW2.1.10	All maintenance must be carried out with due regard for animal welfare.	<i>Maintenance must not cause distress or harm to livestock and birds.</i>
AW2.1.11	Persons (including farmers) who enter the lairage must cleanse and disinfect their boots on entry and exit, to reduce the risk of spread of disease. The disinfectant provided must be approved by Defra.	
AW2.1.12	Persons working in the lairage must be provided with a complete change of clean clothing and clean footwear if they are required to enter food production areas	
AW3.0	Livestock and Birds Transport and Intake	
AW3.1.1	All livestock and birds being purchased as 'Assured' must be transported to the abattoir on 'Assured' Transport. All markets and collection centres used to purchase/move assured livestock and birds must be assured.	<i>Assured checker systems should be used to verify - for livestock and birds and vehicles the online checkers (RTA, FAWL and QMS), - for livestock and birds the RTA Tracker - In Northern Ireland the APHIS system identifies cattle/ sheep assurance - for cattle residency periods passport dates – for sheep residency periods declarations Cutting plants, catering butchers - to verify suppliers (abattoirs, cutting plants) assurance status, through reviewing their assurance certificate, through contacting RTA/ their certification body. Any claims of origin (e.g. English) or Farm Assurance must be identified, documented, independently audited.</i>
AW3.1.2	All livestock and birds must be accompanied by a Delivery Note, Passport or Animal Movement Licence. All incoming livestock and birds must be identified in line with current legislation	<i>The documents must relate to transport used and farm/market of departure to allow for farm assurance verification and traceability Food Chain Information required: Cattle must have two tags and the tags must correspond with the passport.</i>



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	<p>If claims are made about the production status of livestock and birds (e.g. assured, outdoor bred) delivery documentation must confirm the status.</p> <p>Records of all livestock and birds must be maintained to ensure full traceability in line with current legislation</p>	<p><i>All sheep must be double tagged with a unique ID unless they are under 12 months of age where a flock tag is acceptable.</i></p> <p><i>All pigs must be slap marked.</i></p> <p><i>Checks that Veterinary Medicine Withdrawal periods have been observed.</i></p>
AW3.1.3	<p>Livestock and birds vehicles must be unloaded promptly on arrival.</p>	<p><i>There should be a pre-planned arrival system, and communicated to hauliers to minimise waiting times of livestock and birds on vehicles.</i></p> <p><i>Hauliers should notify site of delays beyond/before the planned arrival time.</i></p>
AW3.1.4	<p>A record of the date and time of livestock and birds arrival and unloading must be kept</p> <p>Systems must be in place to manage delayed off loading</p>	<p><i>Records available</i></p>
AW3.1.5	<p>A system must be in place to check the health and welfare of all incoming livestock and birds</p> <p>Poultry – must be monitored for hockburn incidence, pododermatitis, bruising and DOAs (dead on arrival)</p> <p>Prompt action must be taken in the event of an animal arriving in distress, pain or injury</p>	<p><i>Checks must identify if livestock and birds are showing signs of distress, pain, injury, disease or illness</i></p> <p><i>Relevant staff must understand and be trained in actions to be taken</i></p> <p><i>Records must be kept</i></p>
AW3.1.6	<p>Livestock and birds that require emergency killing must be dealt with immediately according to the sites procedure and avoiding unnecessary stress to other animals</p>	<p><i>Equipment for emergency slaughter must be easily accessible</i></p>
AW3.1.7	<p>There must be procedures in place to report welfare-related issues</p>	<p><i>Serious concerns over the animals, vehicle or haulier should be reported directly to the Scheme owners.</i></p>



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AW3.1.8	<p>There must be procedures in place to report welfare issues back to the haulier and or farmer.</p> <p>Welfare incident trends must be identified and any corrective action taken and recorded</p>	<p><i>Records must be available showing date, supplier details and issues</i></p>
AW3.1.9	<p>The site must have a system to manage animal escape during offloading and penning.</p>	
AW4.0	Vehicle Washout	
AW4.1.1	<p>Vehicles that unload livestock and birds must be cleaned and disinfected on site or there must be a system to ensure it is undertaken off site by the vehicle owner</p> <p>Crates used for poultry transport must be washed immediately</p>	<p><i>Facilities must be provided for the washing of vehicles and suitable waste water disposal systems in place</i></p> <p><i>Or the farmer/haulier must complete a declaration confirming they will clean and disinfect elsewhere. Records must be kept</i></p>
AW4.1.2	<p>Suitable disinfectants must be provided</p>	<p><i>Disinfectants used must be relevant to the species, disease risk and movement licence requirements and used in accordance with the manufacturer instructions</i></p> <p><i>MSDS information must be kept</i></p>
AW5.0	Lairage Operations	
AW5.1.1	<p>The site must have a Clean Livestock and birds Policy setting out the standards which livestock and birds acceptable for slaughter must meet.</p>	<p><i>The site must have a policy and staff are able to identify clean/ dirty animals according to that policy.</i></p>
AW5.1.2	<p>All livestock and birds must be penned in clean, dry pens</p> <p>Livestock and birds must not be penned with stock of different species, or with stock from a different holding/market.</p>	<p><i>Males and females and horned and non-horned animals, must also be kept separate unless they have been reared together.</i></p>
AW5.1.3	<p>Systems must be in place to ensure livestock and birds are penned at appropriate stocking densities to ensure animals are not overcrowded</p>	<p><i>There is sufficient space in pens to allow livestock and birds to lie down and turn around without difficulty</i></p> <p><i>Pen stock charts should be available</i></p>



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		<i>Pigs are penned at a density of no greater than 235kg/m²</i>
AW5.1.4	<p>Livestock and birds must be handled in a quiet manner without frightening or excitement</p> <p>Handling aids must be suitable for the species handled</p>	<p><i>Livestock and birds must be handled appropriate to their species behaviour</i></p> <p><i>Acceptable handling aids:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Paddles</i> • <i>Boards</i> • <i>Mechanized gates</i> • <i>Blunt wooden sticks to guide only</i> <p><i>Electric goads may only be used as a last resort by trained persons and used in accordance with legislation, site procedures and records of goad usage maintained</i></p>
AW5.1.5	<p>Casualty animals must be accompanied by the appropriate documentation.</p> <p>Casualty animals must be treated as a priority</p>	<p><i>Casualty animals must be transported in accordance with Welfare regulations relevant to the location of the operation.</i></p> <p><i>Procedures must be in place to allow the slaughter of a casualty animal in situ either on the vehicle or in the pen if necessary.</i></p>
AW5.1.6	All staff involved in the lairage operations must hold appropriate legal approvals for the operation they are involved in	
AW6.0	Stunning and Killing	
AW6.1.1	All staff involved with the slaughter or killing of livestock and birds must hold appropriate legal approvals and trained in the method used.	<i>Staff must be able to recognise signs of an effective/ineffective stun/kill. This also applies to emergency slaughter procedures</i>
AW6.1.2	<p>All livestock and birds must be stunned prior to killing.</p> <p>Practices must be in accordance with current legislation, best practice guidelines and site operating procedures</p> <p>Stunning equipment must be maintained to ensure consistent, effective stunning.</p>	<p><i>It is recommended that the Humane Slaughter Association (HSA) Best Practice Guidelines for the Welfare of Cattle / Sheep / Pigs in Abattoirs be followed.</i></p> <p><i>Procedures must outline the legal requirements for different species and slaughter equipment</i></p> <p><i>Electrical stunning must incorporate a device to indicate the length of application and the voltage and current</i></p> <p><i>Gas stunning equipment used for pigs must have an alert system to inform the operator in event of gas concentration and equipment failure</i></p>



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		<p><i>Approved methods for birds are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Stunning bath</i> • <i>Dry stunner</i> • <i>Hand-operated stunner</i> • <i>Controlled atmosphere stunning</i> <p><i>Appropriate to the size of bird, adequately calibrated, maintained and supervised during its operation</i></p>
AW6.1.3	Equipment used to restrain, stun and kill must be maintained in good repair and effective working order	<i>Equipment replaced as necessary and manufacturer's instructions are accessible and followed</i>
AW6.1.4	<p>Shackling must be carried out by staff who are both competent and trained.</p> <p>Birds must be hung onto the shackle line by both legs</p> <p>Birds must be stunned within 2 minutes of shackling</p>	<i>Shackling area to have installed subdued or blue lighting.</i>
AW6.1.5	Appropriate measures must be taken to prevent wing flapping and head raising before stun, e.g. the use of a breast bar.	
AW6.1.6	Appropriate measures must be taken to match the line speed to staff ability to hang birds on line without causing unnecessary distress to the birds.	
AW6.1.7	Care must be taken to ensure birds cannot escape from the holding/hanging area or fall from the shackle line.	<i>Any escaped birds should be recaptured immediately and taken to the hanging on area or, if injured, immediately humanely destroyed.</i>
AW6.1.8	A permitted, back-up method of stunning must be available at the stun and must be ready for immediate use.	
AW6.1.9	Stun to stick times for livestock and birds must be within the time limits set out in the HSA Guidelines	<p><i>Stun to stick times for sheep and pigs must not exceed 15 second.</i></p> <p><i>Stun to stick times for cattle must not exceed 60 seconds for penetrative captive bolt stunning,</i></p>



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	Review of stun and stick times should be included within internal audits	<p><i>Stun to stick times for calves 30 seconds for non-penetrative captive bolt stunning and 10 seconds for electrical head only stun.</i></p> <p><i>Stun to stick time for pigs 15 seconds for captive bolt and head only electrical stun and 75 seconds for gas stun.</i></p> <p><i>Birds - no more than 15 seconds must elapse between stunning and neck cutting.</i></p>
AW6.1.10	<p>Livestock and birds must be left to bleed and no further dressing procedures (including scalding) undertaken until it has been verified that the animal has no signs of life</p> <p>There must be complete effective severance of carotid arteries and jugular veins in both sides of the neck through the use of a ventral cut.</p> <p>Chickens must not be immersed in a scalding tank or plucked until at least 90 seconds have elapsed since the major blood vessels in their necks have been severed.</p>	<p><i>Not less than the minimum times specified below.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cattle 30 seconds</i> • <i>Sheep 20 seconds</i> • <i>Pigs 20 seconds (CO₂ Gas 75 seconds)</i>
AW6.1.11	Plans must be in place and implemented as necessary for handling livestock and birds in the event of a slaughter line breakdown	<p><i>Plan must cover actions for dealing with livestock and birds in stunning pens and livestock and birds in transit</i></p> <p><i>Poultry - if the slaughter line is stopped, birds between the point of shackling and the killer must be removed and placed in crates, any birds which have already been stunned must be humanely killed.</i></p> <p><i>The length of time birds remain on the shackle line must comply with legislative requirements. (Note not greater than 1 minute from hanging to slaughter)</i></p>
AW7.0	Slaughter Hygiene and Processing	
AW7.1	Systems must be in place to ensure no cross contamination between species on the slaughter line in multi specie abattoirs. Slaughter of different species must be separated by time or space (e.g. separate lines).	



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AW7.1.2	Two knife system must be used and carcasses must be dressed in accordance with agreed dressing specifications Knives must be sterilized in between use	
AW7.1.3	Carcasses must be clearly identified in a way that allows them to be traced throughout the site and back to source. The site identification mark/ approval number must be applied to the carcase as early as practicably possible, but at least prior to its dispatch, to ensure it is traceable back to the site.	<i>Carcasses must be marked/ labelled with a slaughter number/ batch number/ slap mark and kill date that links the carcase to records that allows the carcase/ a batch of carcasses to be traced back to source. The slaughter number must be unique to the day's production per species</i>
AW7.1.4	The head, viscera and pluck must correlate with the relevant carcass on the slaughter line to aid inspection	<i>The body parts must correlate with the carcase they originate from or be traceable</i>
AW8.0	Internal Auditing	
AW8.1.1	Regular internal auditing must be undertaken to establish whether all welfare procedures from unloading through to bleeding are effective and working	<i>Records of internal audit and any subsequent corrective action verified</i> <i>Internal audits shall include:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Stun to stick times/stick to dress timings</i> • <i>Slaughter processes</i> • <i>CCTV footage</i> • <i>Use of goads</i> • <i>Animal welfare incidents</i> • <i>Out of hours arrival</i> • <i>Supplier monitoring for DOA</i> • <i>Fabrication of lairage</i> • <i>GMP</i> • <i>Staff behaviour</i>
AW.9	Livestock Collection by abattoir own-transport (note: delivery of livestock to abattoirs by farmers' own transport is covered by their farm assurance certification).	



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AW9.1	Welfare during transport rules require all journeys to be logged (date, time, duration etc). For journeys up to eight hours involving any species of animal, you must have an Animal Transport Certificate or similar document.	<p><i>If you're transporting animals for less than 65 kilometres (about 40 miles), it is not necessary for vehicles to be authorised or for drivers/handlers to hold certificates of competence. However, an ATC is required and drivers and handlers must have had demonstrable relevant training.</i></p> <p><i>If transport of livestock is further than 65 kilometres where total journey times are less than eight hours, the following must be held:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a valid transporter authorisation for short journeys • valid certificates of competence for drivers and handlers <p><i>Journey time is defined as when the first animal is loaded on to the vehicle and the last animal is off-loaded at the final destination as a single journey, not including a return journey if refused entry at the abattoir.</i></p>
AW9.2	For journeys greater than 65km the livestock haulier must hold transporter authorisation	<i>Type 1 authorisation is required for journeys of greater than 65km and less than 8 hours.</i>
AW9.3	Certificates of competence for drivers and attendants of journeys over 65km	<i>Journey is defined as the total distance from loading the first animal to off-loading at final destination. The certificate of competence must be carried by the transporter on all journeys.</i>
AW9.4	<p>The vehicle and loading and unloading facilities are designed, constructed and maintained to avoid injury and suffering. The vehicle must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have no damage or protrusions that could injure livestock • Must protect animals from inclement weather • Ensure adequate ventilation • Prevent animals from escaping • Provide access and sufficient lighting to be able to inspect animals • Provide flooring that is anti-slip and minimises leakage of urine and faeces • Facilitate cleaning and disinfection • Have partitions and decks which shall be strong enough to withstand the weight of animals. 	<p><i>Vehicles must comply with current regulations relating to the welfare of animals during transport.</i></p> <p><i>Loading/unloading ramp angles must not exceed:</i></p> <p><i>Adult cattle and sheep – 26-34 °</i></p> <p><i>Pigs and calves - 20 °</i></p> <p><i>Bedding should be provided for calves less than 6 months, lambs less than 20kg and all pigs.</i></p> <p><i>Records of vehicle and load compartment inspections must be kept.</i></p>
AW9.5	All livestock that are transported must be fit for travel.	<i>Fitness for travel excludes the following conditions</i>



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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>very young animals, eg calves less than ten days old, pigs less than three weeks and lambs less than one week</i> • <i>new-born mammals where the navel hasn't completely healed</i> • <i>heavily pregnant females - where more than 90 per cent of the expected gestation period has passed</i> • <i>females who have given birth during the previous seven days</i> <p><i>sick or injured animals where moving them would cause additional suffering, unless instructed by a vet</i></p>
AW9.6	Livestock must be handled appropriately to their species and handling must not cause pain, distress or injury.	<p><i>Handlers must not strike, kick or apply pressure to sensitive parts of the animal</i></p> <p><i>Handlers must not lift or drag livestock by their ears, horns, fleece, tail or legs</i></p>
AW9.7	Livestock must be appropriately segregated by species, social group, sex or whether horned/un-horned	
AW9.8	There must be documented instructions for drivers, attendants and key handling staff on how to manage incidents and emergency situations. This must include a list of emergency contacts (including out of hours contacts) which should be available to the driver and attendant.	<p><i>Incidents and emergencies may include (not exhaustive)</i></p> <p><i>Vehicle accident</i></p> <p><i>Vehicle breakdown</i></p> <p><i>Vehicle fire</i></p> <p><i>Action by activists</i></p> <p><i>Extremes of weather (heat/cold/snow)</i></p> <p><i>Emergency contacts should include:</i></p> <p><i>Contact details of livestock owner</i></p> <p><i>Vehicle owner/operator</i></p> <p><i>Veterinary surgeon</i></p> <p><i>Vehicle recovery/mechanic</i></p>