

FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY: INFORMATION RELEASED UNDER THE  
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT  
DATE RELEASED: 05 MARCH 2020

**Request**

You requested the following information:

*I would want to receive information on the trend in animal welfare breaches during slaughter and transport in the United Kingdom between the years 2010 and 2018*

**Response**

The FSA does not record animal welfare data in such a way as to provide a trend in animal welfare breaches during slaughter and transport. Whilst we cannot provide trend analysis, we can provide the data on animal welfare non-compliances between the years you have requested.

A large amount of the data is already published by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and in National Archives and therefore this information is being withheld from disclosure under section 21 of the Act. In accordance with our duty to provide advice and assistance under section 16 of the Act, I have provided links to the relevant data below.

Where information has been requested which is not already published this has been provided in Annex C (April 2010 to March 2014), Annex D (January 2019 to March 2019), and Annex E (Transport/On-Farm April 2017 – March 2019).

Some information has been redacted and withheld under sections 31, 38, and 40 of the Act. The establishment names and addresses have been removed, as have named individuals, and replaced with the relevant exemptions used. Further details about our use of these exemptions has been provided in Annex B.

FSA hold data for England and Wales, and for Scotland up to March 2015. For details of non-compliances in Scotland from April 2015 and all Northern Ireland non-compliances, please contact Food Standards Scotland (FSS) and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) respectively who hold this information. FSS and DAERA can be contacted at the following addresses:

FSS: [openness@fss.scot](mailto:openness@fss.scot)

Daera: [daera.informationmanager@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:daera.informationmanager@daera-ni.gov.uk)

### **Years April 2010 to March 2014**

Can be found an Annex C of this letter (Excel Spreadsheet).

### **Years April 2014 and up to 30 June 2016**

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171207175047/https://www.food.gov.uk/about-us/data-and-policies/foia/foirelease/information-released-under-the-foi-eir-2016/animal-welfare-non-compliances>

Slaughterhouse non-compliances can be obtained by filtering on numerical value in columns F, G, H, I and J.

### **July 2016**

<https://data.food.gov.uk/catalog/datasets/7e7e8ea0-9ba2-4241-8e74-6e16ed677027>

(Scroll to “Animal Welfare law breaches - Annex C – requested 10 February 2019”)

Slaughterhouse non-compliances can be obtained by filtering on column F.

### **Period 1 August 2016 to 1 February 2017**

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20171207180726/https://www.food.gov.uk/about-us/data-and-policies/foia/foirelease/information-released-under-the-freedom-of-information-act-and-environmental-information-regulations-in-2017/animal-welfare-non-compliance-data>

Slaughterhouse non-compliances can be obtained by selecting the Abattoir tab of the spreadsheet.

### **March 2017**

<https://data.food.gov.uk/catalog/datasets/7e7e8ea0-9ba2-4241-8e74-6e16ed677027>

(Scroll to “Animal Welfare law breaches Annex D – requested 10 February”)

Slaughterhouse non-compliances are listed in columns H, I and J.

### **Period April 2017 to Dec 2018**

<https://data.food.gov.uk/catalog/datasets/b9ae2875-3941-47c7-81a6-bb1c503ff063>

(Scroll to “Animal welfare non-compliances – data - requested 10 December 2018”)

This dataset only contains slaughterhouse non-compliances.

### **Period January 2019 to March 2019**

Can be found at Annex D of this letter (Excel Spreadsheet).

### **Period April 2017 to March 2019 – Transport and On-Farm only**

Can be found at Annex E of this letter (Excel Spreadsheet).

Furthermore, there have been significant changes to the relevant animal welfare legislation over the period of 2010 – 2015 which means that the resulting data is not directly comparable.

Following the changes in legislation, revised guidance and requirements along with a different enforcement approach were introduced which is likely to have had an impact on the number of non-compliances.

A record of the changes to the legislation are below:

- 2010 – 31 December 2012 - Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or killing) Regulations 1995 (WASK) and Animal Welfare Act 2006 applicable in England and Wales.
- 1st January 2013 - Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or killing) Regulations 1995 (WASK) no longer applies in England and Wales.
- 20 May 2014 - Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing Regulations (WATOK) comes into force in Wales
- 5 November 2015 - Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing Regulations (WATOK) comes into force in England.

Animal welfare non-compliances are categorised using 2, 3 and 4. A full definition of these scores is included in the [Manual for Official Controls](#), chapter 2.3, section 3.4.3. But in summary they are defined as:

<b>Score</b>	<b>Descriptor</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>2</b>	Minor non-compliance - No immediate risk to welfare	Low risk of compromising animal welfare or an isolated low risk situation that poses no immediate risk to the welfare of animals.
<b>3</b>	Serious non-compliance - Potential risk to welfare	Potential to risk of significantly compromising animal welfare but where there is no immediate risk to animals. This may lead to a situation that poses a risk to animals, causing pain, distress or suffering.
<b>4</b>	Critical non-compliance - Welfare critical	Poses a serious and imminent risk to animal welfare or one where avoidable pain, distress or suffering has been caused.

## **Background**

The FSA is responsible for the delivery of official controls in approved meat establishments (slaughterhouses, cutting plants and game handling establishments) subject to veterinary control within England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This work is carried out for the FSA by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in Northern Ireland through a Service Level Agreement. The FSA was also responsible for this work in Scotland until 30 March 2015.

The FSA monitors and enforces welfare compliance in approved slaughterhouses on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in England and on behalf of the Welsh Government through a Service Level Agreement. The FSA has a zero-tolerance approach to animal welfare breaches and all staff are instructed to take prompt and proportionate enforcement action where breaches are identified. This means that we apply the enforcement hierarchy in a way that allows us to take informal enforcement action where breaches are minor and where we believe that this will be effective in avoiding future non-compliance, and take formal action, in cases where non-compliance falls into the most severe categories which may have caused pain or suffering or where informal enforcement has not resulted in subsequent compliance by the business operator.

FSA official veterinarians and meat hygiene inspectors, either employed by the FSA, or supplied through an approved contractor, are typically present during processing of animals. They carry out a range of duties, including ante-mortem and post-mortem checks (checks on live animals and carcasses and offal) which include checks on the health and welfare of animals presented for slaughter. These official control duties ensure that food business operators have produced meat in accordance with regulatory requirements, with a health mark applied to show that meat is safe to enter the food chain.

Welfare non-compliances identified at the slaughterhouse but suspected to be caused during transport or at the place of origin (i.e. farm/ market) can be detected by FSA officials during ante-mortem or post-mortem checks; these non-compliances are recorded within the FSA system and referred to the relevant enforcement authorities with responsibility for transport and farm compliance (Local Authorities, Trading Standards and the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA)).