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FINAL REPORT OF A MISSION  
CARRIED OUT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM  
FROM 25 JUNE to 3 JULY 2007  
IN ORDER TO ASSESS THE SYSTEM OF CONTROLS  
ON ANIMAL WELFARE AT SLAUGHTER  
AND DURING KILLING

*Please note that factual errors in the draft report have been corrected. Clarifications provided by the UK Competent Authorities are given as footnotes, in bold, italic type, to the relevant part of the report.*





## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*This report describes the outcome of a mission carried out by the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) in UK, from 25 June to 3 July 2007.*

*The objectives of the mission were to evaluate the measures taken to ensure the implementation of the requirements for animal welfare at the time of slaughter and killing in Council Directive 93/119/EC and how checks of these requirements had been integrated with the requirements for control laid down in Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 of the European Parliament and Council. In addition, a follow-up of the recommendations made in report DG/(SANCO)/9213/2003 regarding slaughter was carried out.*

*The report concludes that the CCA have put in place a well organised and overall satisfactorily implemented system of controls on animal welfare at slaughter and during killing. In general, the efficiency of official controls ensured a good level of compliance with animal welfare. There were some exceptions where incomplete supervision or training of OVs and incomplete procedures resulted in certain animal welfare issues not being adequately addressed; in particular, the effectiveness of electrical stun/kill methods for cattle which was already the subject of a recommendation in a previous report, and high frequency electrical stunners of poultry. A few legislative gaps in relation to the movement of live animals from slaughterhouses were also identified.*

*The report makes a number of recommendations addressed to the competent authorities of the UK, aimed at rectifying the identified shortcomings and further enhancing the control measures in place*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The mission took place in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) from 25 June to 3 July 2007. The mission team comprised two inspectors from the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) and one national expert from a Member State. The inspection team was accompanied during the whole mission by representatives from the Central Competent Authorities (hereafter: CCA).

The mission was undertaken as part of the FVO's planned mission programme in a series of missions on animal welfare at the time of slaughter. An opening meeting was held on 25 June 2007 with the CCA. At this meeting, the objectives of, and itinerary for, the mission were confirmed by the inspection team, and additional information required for the satisfactory completion of the mission requested.

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE MISSION

The objectives of the mission were to evaluate the measures taken to ensure the implementation of the requirements for animal welfare at the time of slaughter and killing in Council Directive 93/119/EC<sup>1,2</sup> and how checks of these requirements had been integrated with the requirements for controls laid down in Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 of the European Parliament and Council<sup>3</sup>. In addition, a follow-up of the recommendations regarding animal welfare slaughter made in report DG/(SANCO)/9213/2003 was carried out. This report is available under its reference number on the DG Health and Consumer Protection website [http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/index_en.htm).

In pursuit of these objectives, the following sites were visited:

COMPETENT AUTHORITY VISITS			Comments
Competent authority	Central	2	Opening and final meetings with representatives from the CCA.
	Regional / Divisional	3	Meetings with representatives of the Regional Offices of the Meat Hygiene Service (MHS) and with representatives of Animal Health were organised in West Anglia and in Scotland.
Slaughterhouses		2	Cattle, electrical stun/ killing.
		1	Turkeys, gas stun/killing
		1	Broilers, electrical water bath stunning.
		1	Ducks, electrical water bath stunning.

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<sup>1</sup> All legal references in this report refer, where applicable, to the latest amended version.

<sup>2</sup> Council Directive 93/119/EC of 22 December 1993 on the protection of animals at the time of slaughter or killing, OJ L 340, 31.12.1993, p 21, (hereafter: Directive 93/119/EC).

<sup>3</sup> Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules OJ L 165, 30.04.2004 corrected and republished in OJ L 191, 28.05.2004, p.1, (hereafter: Regulation (EC) No 882/2004).

### **3. LEGAL BASIS FOR THE MISSION**

The mission was carried out under the general provisions of Community legislation and, in particular: Article 14 of Directive 93/119/EC and Article 45 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004.

### **4. BACKGROUND**

Previous FVO missions covering animal welfare at slaughter were carried out in 2003 (reference number DG(SANCO)/9213/2003) and in 2006 (reference number DG (SANCO)/8190/2006).

Report 9213/2003 concluded that supervision of welfare at slaughter was generally adequate but recommended a further assessment on the effectiveness of the electrical stun/killing system for cattle. In response to this recommendation, the CCA indicated that:

- an assessment by an independent welfare consultant had been performed at the slaughterhouse visited;
- MHS staff would be provided with instructions on the signs of an effective stun-kill by this equipment;
- a long term scientific study to consider the factors affecting the efficiency of the stun would be considered.

Subsequently the CCA indicated that research funded by them on the commercial equipment in use was not permissible. Thereafter the CCA received a report on a study conducted by a University Veterinary School. On the basis of this report, the CCA considered the effectiveness of the stun/kill procedure satisfactory. Specific instructions were not provided to the CA staff.

Report 8190/2006 described the ineffective stun of some animals with this method, and the need for close monitoring by the Official Veterinarian (OV) to ensure that backup stun was carried out.

### **5. MAIN FINDINGS**

#### **5.1. Legislation**

Although a comprehensive check of national legislation was not carried out, during the evaluation of the control systems for animal welfare the following was noted:

- A new Animal Welfare Act that came into force in April 2007 in England and Wales has introduced the principle of "duty of care". The CCA indicated that this legislation applies to all vertebrate animals under the control of man. The practical consequence of this new legislation is that enforcement action can be taken to prevent any form of suffering of animals, while before this Act, enforcement action could be taken only when it was demonstrated that an animal was actually suffering. A similar Animal Health and Welfare Act was passed by the Scottish Parliament in 2006.

- Article 7 of Directive 93/119/EC requires that the CA ensures that persons employed in the slaughter process possess the necessary skill, ability and professional knowledge. National legislation lays down the provisions for the licensing of slaughtermen that is granted by the MHS on the basis of a certificate of competence. The certificate of competence is issued by the OV's or by a Veterinary Officer from Animal Health following an assessment of the competences acquired working under the directions of a licensed slaughter man or of a veterinarian.
- There are certain requirements in national legislation which are more restrictive than those in Directive 93/119/EC, as:
  - there are specific requirements for slaughterhouses with shackle lines and the maximum time for which birds can be suspended is defined. National legislation lays down the minimum time before dressing of carcasses can start, to ensure that bleeding has ended.
  - National legislation has provisions for the killing of pigs and birds within slaughterhouses by exposure to gas mixtures. This method is only permitted for killing and not for stunning. In the case of birds, handling is reduced to a minimum as they are unloaded from the crates and shackled at the end of the process.
  - National legislation has detailed requirements for slaughtering by a religious method, which is permitted only within slaughterhouses.
  - There are detailed provisions for killing of birds outside slaughterhouses with gas (e.g. for culling end of lay hens on farm).
- There are specific requirements for killing animals for disease control. Among the methods approved, ventilation shutdown can be authorised by the Secretary of State (in England only) under exceptional circumstances and only when any other method is impracticable. The CCA pointed out that such method, never used so far, was introduced in 2006 primarily to safeguard human safety in the event of a highly pathogenic and dangerous viral strain of Avian Influenza. Article 3 of Directive 93/119/EC indicates that animals shall be spared any avoidable excitement, pain or suffering during slaughter or killing and Annex E indicates that in addition to the methods permitted under Annex C, the CA may, in compliance with the general provisions of Article 3, permit the use of other methods for killing conscious animals, ensuring in particular that if methods are used which do not cause immediate death, appropriate measures are taken to kill the animals as soon as possible, and in any event before they regain consciousness, nothing more is done to the animals before it has been ascertained that they are dead.
- Point 8 of Chapter III of Section II of Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 854/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council<sup>4</sup> requires that animals that are

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<sup>4</sup> Regulation (EC) No 854/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 laying down specific rules for the organization of official controls on products of animal origin intended for human consumption (OJ L 226, 25.6.2004, p. 83. Corrected and republished in OJ L 226, 25.06.2004, p. 83.

presented to a slaughterhouse for slaughter must as a general rule be slaughtered there, and that in exceptional circumstances, such as a serious breakdown of the slaughter facilities, the OV may allow direct movement to another slaughterhouse. Scottish legislation permits live animals to be moved from a slaughterhouse in all circumstances. The Scottish CA explained that there are no animal health restrictions under Scottish legislation in such instances and additionally, they have interpreted Regulation (EC) No 854/2004 as not directly applicable to the slaughterhouse operator. The consequences for animal welfare are that if the journey is not properly planned its duration is unduly prolonged and there might be unnecessary stress due to additional handling for reloading and unloading.

- Throughout Great Britain (GB), in the event of a breakdown of the slaughter line poultry can be sent back to the farm of origin if it is not possible to slaughter them in another slaughterhouse. The CCA pointed out that this measure, although contrary to Regulation (EC) No 854/2004 is aimed at safeguarding the welfare of animals in extreme situations, and that under a national rule feeding cannot be suspended for more than 24 hours.

## **5.2. Competent authorities**

### *5.2.1. Organisation and responsibilities*

The organisation of the Competent Authorities (hereafter: CA) in relation to animal welfare controls is described in a forthcoming report concerning the country profile of UK on food and feed safety, animal health, animal welfare and plant health (ref. DG(SANCO)/8029/2006- MR – final) that will be available under this reference on the DG Health and Consumer Protection website [http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/country\\_profiles\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/country_profiles_en.cfm).

The following are some details of the CA of England and Scotland concerning this mission and their tasks related to animal welfare at the time of slaughter and killing.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (hereafter: DEFRA) is the UK CCA responsible for animal welfare policy, in particular in relation to legislation, international relations and for issuing codes of practice. In Scotland legislation, implementation, and control are devolved to the Scottish Executive for the Environment Rural Affairs and Development (SEERAD). The Food Standards Agency (hereafter: FSA), an independent non-Ministerial Government department, is the CCA in UK for controls on feed and food legislation.

Supervision of animal welfare within slaughterhouses is performed by Official Veterinarians (OVs) employed by veterinary practices that are contracted by the Meat Hygiene Service (hereafter: MHS). MHS is an executive agency of the FSA and has five Regional Offices throughout GB.

Animal welfare at slaughter and during killing elsewhere than in slaughterhouses as in farms, knackeries and hatcheries, is supervised by Veterinary Officers from Animal Health (former State Veterinary Service), an executive agency of DEFRA with 24 Divisional Offices in GB.

OVs at slaughterhouses and Veterinary Officers of Animal Health have the responsibility of taking enforcement actions in case of breaches of animal welfare at slaughter and during killing. OVs can recommend the revocation or suspension of

the slaughter man's licence. If a breach is related to transport, the OV must inform and provide to the relevant Local Authority Trading Standards documented evidence. Breaches that might be related to the farm of origin of the animals must be documented and referred to the Divisional Veterinary Manager of Animal Health (an Agency of DEFRA).

Coordination between DEFRA and the MHS is ensured formally at central level through Service Level Agreements. Formal and informal contacts are established between MHS and Animal Health at local level.

More detailed information on the above authorities is available at the DEFRA web pages concerning welfare at slaughter, also providing links to the websites of the other competent authorities:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/welfare/farmed/slaughter.htm>

#### *5.2.2. Training of CA staff*

Article 6 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 requires that staff performing official controls receive, for their area of competence, appropriate training to carry out controls and that they are kept up to date and receive regular additional training.

The induction course for the initial qualification of OVs working in slaughterhouses includes a module on animal welfare. These courses are provided by two University Veterinary Schools. Yearly compulsory refresher courses are delivered by the MHS for qualified OVs and for Official Auxiliaries.

Overall the OVs met showed a good level of knowledge in relation to animal welfare. However, the training did not provide specific information on the use of certain commercial electrical equipment, i.e. the three-cycle stun/killing equipment for cattle and the high frequency water bath stunners for poultry.

#### *5.2.3. Documented procedures*

Article 8 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 requires that official controls are carried out according to documented procedures containing information and instructions for the staff.

MHS have produced a Manual for Official Controls, which is available on the internet and is continuously updated. This manual also contains the forms that OVs have to fill in daily and monthly (daily and monthly welfare assessment reports) to demonstrate the animal welfare controls performed and the corrective actions taken where deficiencies are detected.

Several other documents are available to support OVs in their job, such as:

- Codes of practice issued by the CCA, one for red meat and one for poultry meat production, under previous legislation. The CCA indicated that these are currently under revision and explained that the delay in releasing new versions is due to the need to ensure consistency with changes in EU and domestic legislation.
- DEFRA has issued and published on the internet a guidance note on the licensing of slaughtermen, which is a task of the OVs.

- Also available on the internet, is the guidance "on the slaughter of cattle which are injured or showing signs of abnormalities", published by the British Cattle Veterinary Association and prepared in collaboration with DEFRA, FSA and MHS. This booklet provides practical support to veterinarians and farmers when faced with the decision to transport injured live animals to a slaughterhouse or not in order to safeguard their welfare. A further guidance on the subject of fitness for transport and covering all species is included in a DEFRA publication of December 2006.
- There are also several detailed leaflets produced by a charity organization. These are commented on by DEFRA before their publication and provide practical information and advice on several technical issues, e.g. on the methods of stunning and killing in use, on the signs for monitoring effective or ineffective stun/kill and on the maintenance of the various equipment.

It was noted that:

- The OVs met were using the manual of official controls effectively and the instructions and guidance available.
- There were no instructions/guidance in relation to the use of certain commercial equipment used for stun/killing cattle with electricity and for stunning poultry with high frequency current. OVs were relying on the instructions provided by the manufacturers and the setting for operating such equipment was decided by the slaughterhouse operators. In relation to poultry, the CCA pointed out that for high frequency water bath stunners the variety of equipment available makes it difficult to provide proper guidance, and that DEFRA is currently sponsoring research on this issue.

#### *5.2.4. System of supervision*

In order to verify the effectiveness of official controls and to ensure that effective action is taken when needed, as required by Article 8 (3) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004, the following procedures are in place:

- Direct supervision of the OV working in the slaughterhouse is performed by a Local Veterinary Manager of the contractor (i.e. by the OV's employer).
- At the regional level of the MHS, a Veterinary Advisor assesses the consistency of the reports and enforcement programmes that OVs must send monthly.
- Internal audits in the form of on the spot visits to slaughterhouses are performed periodically by a special audit unit (Verification and Audit Unit) from the headquarters of the MHS. The aim of these audits is to assess the MHS delivery of official controls and how effective the OV is in ensuring that the enforcement action taken is proportionate and timely.
- Audits are also performed by the FSA on MHS, in the form of on the spot inspections to assess the standard of official controls performed.

### 5.3. Animal welfare at slaughter within slaughterhouses

#### 5.3.1. System of official controls

The system of official controls on animal welfare within slaughterhouses established by the MHS and laid down in the manual provided to OV's is based on daily assessments, monthly reports and periodical audits of the slaughterhouses.

- At least daily inspection and verification of compliance with welfare legislation has to be performed by the OV. Non compliances are recorded in the daily welfare assessment reports as well as in daybooks. These two documents are used to fill in the monthly welfare assessment report which is submitted to the MHS regional office. OV's must fill in and keep up to date a so called "enforcement programme"; this is a monthly summary of all the non-compliances identified and of the enforcement actions and deadlines agreed; this document is also sent to the MHS regional office. Data collected from the monthly reports are sent to the Animal Welfare section of DEFRA by the regional MHS offices. This replaces the biannual report that the MHS produced and published until 2003.
- In addition to daily checks, OV's in slaughterhouses must produce a complete audit report, with a minimum frequency every two to twelve months. The frequency is determined on a risk basis assessed partly on pre-set risk factors, determined by the regional level of the MHS, and on the outcome of previous audits. The historical level of compliance of the previous ten months is also taken into account. Several elements are assessed in this audit, and animal welfare is one of them, contributing to the total score awarded by the establishment, which determines the frequency of the next audit. In relation to animal welfare, several aspects are evaluated. However, the system of risk assessment does not adequately identify risks associated with animal welfare, as requested by Article 3(1)(a) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004, which might influence the level of monitoring of certain stunning methods. Additionally, with such a system of scoring, animal welfare standards might be poor while all other aspects of the slaughterhouse are good, thus masking a bad animal welfare score.

#### 5.3.2. Effectiveness of official controls

Article 4(2)(a) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 requires that the CA ensures the effectiveness and appropriateness of official controls. With the exceptions described below, no major deficiencies were seen in relation to transport, unloading, lairaging, and handling of animals in the slaughterhouses visited. Supervision by the OV's on animal welfare was overall adequate and they ensured that the structures and the procedures in place were also overall satisfactory. Several examples of adequate enforcement actions were seen in both regions visited.

- In relation to the transport of poultry, the height of the crates was insufficient as birds could not stand, as required by Annex I, Chapter II, point 1.2 to Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005<sup>5</sup>. Guidance from DEFRA indicates that, provided that there is sufficient space above the birds for airflow, birds do not need to

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<sup>5</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 of 22 December 2004 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations and amending Directives 609/609/EEC and 93/119/EC and Regulation (EC) No 1255/97, OJ L 3 of 5.1.2005, p. 1

stand erect during transport as their safety and stability is best ensured when they squat<sup>6</sup>.

- In one slaughterhouse, some crates were insufficiently cleaned, contrary to the requirement of Annex I, Chapter II, point 1.1(c) to Regulation (EC) No 1/2005. According to the Manual for Official Controls, OV's are responsible for monitoring and enforcement on the cleaning process by undertaking on the spot checks of approximately 25% of vehicles and crates in white meat slaughterhouses.
- Stocking densities of crates were in compliance with the requirements laid down in Chapter VII of Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 1/2005. However, the stocking densities had been established by the slaughterhouse operators and had not been verified by the OV's. One OV was not aware of the stocking density laid down in Regulation (EC) No 1/2005. The Manual for Official Controls indicates that the slaughterhouse operator must have procedures in place to guarantee welfare of animals at arrival and the OV has to verify compliance.
- The OV of one slaughterhouse could not demonstrate whether the slope of the internal ramp of two-deck lorries used to transport cattle was in compliance with the requirement of Point 1.4(a) of Chapter III of Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 1/2005, as this had not been checked. There are instructions in the Manual for Official Controls to verify compliance with legislation on unloading facilities, and DEFRA guidance provides details on ramps.
- In a slaughterhouse where poultry were killed with a gas mixture, the equipment had been modified by the slaughterhouse operator so that concentrations of carbon dioxide higher than 30% by volume, which is the maximum permitted by national legislation, could be used without triggering the warning system and the mechanism that stops the entry of birds in the chamber, also required by national legislation. Additionally, the recording system of gas concentration only recorded carbon dioxide readings below 30%. Although the CA indicated that these deficiencies had been noted by the OV one week before this mission and oral warning had been given, this had not been recorded. Article 54(3)(a) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 requires written notification of remedial action requested in case of non compliance. Following the FVO visit, a letter was sent to the slaughterhouse operator requiring immediate rectification of the deficiencies.

In the two slaughterhouses visited where adult cattle were stunned/killed using electricity it was noted that:

- The operator of one of the two slaughterhouses, which had also been visited during the previous FVO mission, had subsequently commissioned a study on

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<sup>6</sup> *In their response to the draft report the UK Authorities noted that poultry tend to sit or squat during transport and according to a recent Finnish study allowing poultry room to stand during transport results in more injuries due to animals climbing over each other and falling over. Additionally, Article 6 point 2 of the European Convention on the Protection of Animals during International transport states that the means of transport or container shall be designed and constructed so as to provide animals with adequate space to stand in their natural position, except for poultry other than day-old chicks. This view conflicts with Regulation (EC) No 1/2005.*

the stunning equipment. The conclusions of the study were overall satisfactory in relation to the welfare of animals but indicated that some animals survived the cardiac arrest, and that further research was needed.

- OVs at both slaughterhouses indicated that they had received general training and guidance on electrical stunning but nothing specific on the effects of this particular stun/kill equipment. One OV considered more important to monitor the positive corneal reflex while for the other OV the return of rhythmic breathing was more significant. They pointed out that slaughtermen had been instructed to use the backup pistol in case of doubt. In one slaughterhouse a slaughter man was checking the corneal reflex on each animal exiting the stunning box; in the other slaughterhouse the corneal reflex was checked during hoisting and only upon request by the FVO team.
- Out of nine animals observed in one slaughterhouse, one showed positive corneal reflex and was immediately re-stunned at the exit of the stunning box; movements were seen during hoisting of a second animal, which was re-stunned as well. In the other slaughterhouse four out of eleven animals observed showed a positive corneal reflex after stunning or during bleeding. Paddling during bleeding was observed in five animals and mouth movements in four. One animal showed neck tension during bleeding. None of these animals were re-stunned with the backup pistol. All the above observations may lead to the conclusion that these animals were either ineffectively stunned or they were regaining consciousness during hoisting.
- Records of official controls and audit assessments of both slaughterhouses indicated that occasionally re-stunning was deemed to be required and that staff were trained to do it in case of doubt.

From a sample of auditing reports and other relevant documentation, concerning also slaughterhouses not visited during this mission, it was noted that:

- Records of official controls were overall well kept and consistent. Where non-compliances had been identified, adequate corrective actions had been requested and monitored.
- The welfare assessment in the monthly reports and audits were in most cases consistent with other records, with the exception of one slaughterhouse. In this slaughterhouse the most recent audit performed reported a welfare score as excellent even though there had been oral and written warnings regarding certain non-compliances, which had not been taken into account in the audit.

### *5.3.3. Measures supplementary to inspections*

In all slaughterhouses visited there were animal welfare officers belonging to the slaughterhouse staff. They had received qualified specific training and were responsible for monitoring compliance with the legal requirements and good practice. Four out of five slaughterhouses visited had written procedures in place (animal welfare policy) for both normal and emergency operations.

### *5.3.4. Emergency slaughter*

In relation to the emergency slaughter of animals and in particular for red meat species, there are precise and detailed instructions provided by the CCA, supporting

both farmers and veterinarians in the judgement on the fitness for transport of injured animals to a slaughterhouse.

A review of a sample of documents accompanying either live animals or carcasses of animals which had been slaughtered on farm, showed that instructions were followed and that the OV's at the slaughterhouses were checking that the conditions of transport were complied with.

#### *5.3.5. Religious slaughter*

Following an amendment to national legislation in 1999 concerning ritual slaughter, DEFRA issued guidance in consultation with the Joint Working Group of Departments and Muslim Organizations.

This guidance, available on the internet, reminded consumers and interested operators that slaughter by the Islamic method can only be performed by a licensed Muslim slaughter man, and only in an approved slaughterhouse which is under official veterinary supervision. It also clarified that slaughter is not permitted in any other place, even for personal consumption, and that only cattle, sheep, goats, turkeys, chickens, hens, guinea-fowl, ducks, geese and quail may be slaughtered using the Islamic method.

#### **5.4. Animal welfare supervision during slaughter on farm**

Although slaughter on farm by the owner for personal consumption is legally permitted for all species, the requirements related to welfare, hygiene and animal-by products are discouraging this practice for red meat species. Animal Health officers provide guidance and advice to farmers, and a help-line has been set up to further inform farmers and the general public on the requirements.

Killing of animals on farm in emergency must be performed by a competent person, either a veterinarian or a professional slaughter man but if necessary also by the farmer in order to avoid delays and suffering of the animal.

In relation to slaughtering of poultry on farm for the local seasonal sale, the CCA indicated that this activity benefits from the exemption laid down in Article 1(3)(d) of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004<sup>7</sup>. This exemption implies that premises do not need to be approved, there is no obligation of the presence of an official veterinarian, and the slaughtering does need to be notified in advance to the CA. As a consequence animal welfare checks can only be organised on the basis of information gathered from various sources and on the basis of the results of the previous year inspections.

In both regions visited a review of a sample of inspection reports made by the Animal Health veterinary officers indicated that the most common deficiencies were related to the lack of licenses for some slaughtermen and to non compliant stunning equipment. Remedial actions had been requested in writing and such premises had been re-inspected the following year.

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<sup>7</sup> Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 laying down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin OJ L 139, 30.04.2004, p. 55. Corrected and republished in OJ L 226, 25.06.2004, p. 22.

## **5.5. Animal welfare supervision during killing for disease control**

In the UK there is one generic contingency plan outlining the framework for responding to outbreaks of all listed exotic diseases. This plan is supported by further documentation and several operational instructions, which are available also on line. These have been issued by DEFRA, by Animal Health and by an animal welfare charity organisation with the support of the CA.

In the event of a disease outbreak, decisions are taken at central level on the basis of information provided by the Divisional Office(s) involved concerning species, number of animals and farm assessment.

Each Animal Health Divisional Office has to ensure the permanent availability of the necessary staff, equipment and material through contracts signed by the central level. Nevertheless, Animal Health staff are also prepared to directly cull animals if necessary, and the special gas containers and the percussive instruments to kill birds are owned by the CA. Staff contracted include local handlers and catching teams, licensed slaughter men and marksmen. The CA pointed out that, if necessary, veterinary officers can train more staff on the spot. On each site where culling has to be carried out, at least one OV is responsible for assuring animal welfare and on each occasion a welfare record has to be completed. During the visit at the Divisional Office visited some examples of records referring to recent outbreaks of Avian Influenza were seen. They describe the method used, the number of birds culled, the checks performed on the death of birds and on the efficiency of the culling teams.

At least once a year each office is audited by the Contingency Planning Division from the headquarters of Animal Health to ensure their readiness and preparedness for contingency. At the Divisional Office visited the most recent audit had been carried out in February 2007. This report identified certain areas where improvement was recommended.

The most recent training course which included animal welfare during culling was undertaken in March 2006. DEFRA have also produced a number of training aids including a CD detailing how special gas containers should be used and an interactive video, both of which highlight the importance of animal welfare at killing.

The CCA pointed out that there is ongoing research to find practical solutions for culling birds, with particular regard to their welfare.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

- (1) Requirements of national legislation which are more restrictive than those in EU legislation provide a more detailed legal framework which allows for the implementation of good standards of animal welfare. In particular the system of licensing slaughter men fulfils the requirements of Article 7 of Directive 93/119/EC. However, the possibility of permitting the movement of animals from a slaughterhouse, either to another slaughterhouse where there are no exceptional circumstances to do so, or back to a farm, does not comply with Point 8 of Chapter III of Section II of Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 854/2004. The use of ventilation shut down for killing poultry on farms as a method of last resort, in situations where other methods cannot be deployed

and with the safeguard that it is only carried out under the written authorisation of the secretary of state, is compatible with the requirements of Article 3 and Annex E to Directive 93/119/EC.

- (2) Training of CA staff was generally comprehensive and of a high standard, although the practical implementation of specific methods for stun/killing of cattle with electricity was not included. This topic was also inadequately covered by documented procedures, which were otherwise generally good.
- (3) Despite the CA commitment to provide OV's with specific instructions on the electrical stunning of cattle following mission 9213/2003, there was insufficient information available to ensure that effective monitoring is carried out. As this system does not ensure that all animals are effectively stunned/killed and there is the possibility of return to consciousness, careful monitoring is therefore important to ensure compliance with Article 3 of Directive 93/119/EC.
- (4) In relation to the height of the crates for transporting poultry, these were not in compliance with the requirement of Point 1.2 of Chapter II, Annex I of Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 and guidance on this topic was misleading.
- (5) In relation to the electrical stunning of poultry, although the CCA is sponsoring research on the different types of high frequency electrical water baths, and a specific code of practice is under revision, they have not yet determined the strength and duration of the current for electrical water baths using high frequency current, contrary to Annex C, II(3)B(1) to Directive 93/119/EC.
- (6) Although certain checks are carried out on a risk basis, this only partly fulfils the requirements of Article 3(1)(a) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 since the risks associated with animal welfare have not been adequately identified.
- (7) Measures to verify the effectiveness of checks were mostly adequate, as required by Article 8(3) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004. However, in a small number of cases the system of supervision by the other levels of the CA failed to identify the incomplete implementation of the CCA procedures.
- (8) In relation to checks on the welfare of poultry slaughtered on farm, the system set up by the CA was adequate, with corrective actions taken when necessary.
- (9) Concerning the procedures for dealing with disease outbreaks there is a strong focus on animal welfare, which is one of the many concerns which a CA has to deal with when such emergencies take place.

### **6.1. Overall conclusion**

The CCA have put in place a well organised and overall satisfactorily implemented system of controls on animal welfare at slaughter and during killing. In general, the efficiency of official controls ensured a good level of compliance with animal welfare. There were some exceptions where incomplete supervision or training of OV's and incomplete procedures resulted in certain animal welfare issues not being adequately addressed; in particular, the effectiveness of electrical stun/kill methods for cattle which was already the subject of a recommendation in a previous report,

and high frequency electrical stunners of poultry. A few legislative gaps in relation to the movement of live animals from slaughterhouses were also identified.

## **7. CLOSING MEETING**

A closing meeting was held on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2007 with representatives of the Central Competent Authorities. At this meeting, the main findings and conclusions of the mission were presented by the inspection team. In their reaction to these findings, the CCA underlined the exceptional circumstances when ventilation shut down might be authorised and the involvement of the CCA in the ongoing research on the welfare of birds during culling and on methods for stunning and killing.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **To the competent authorities of the United Kingdom**

Within 25 working days of receipt of the report, the Competent Authorities are requested to present a plan of actions, including a timetable for their completion, to address the following recommendations.

The Competent Authorities should take measures to ensure that:

- (1) Legislation concerning the movement of animals from slaughterhouses complies with Point 8 of Chapter III of Section II of Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 854/2004.
- (2) Strength and duration of the current for electrical water baths where high frequencies are used, is determined as laid down in Annex C, II(3)B(1) to Directive 93/119/EC.
- (3) The risks associated with the welfare of animals at slaughter are adequately identified, as required by Article 3(1)(a) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004.
- (4) Checks are adequately verified as required by Article 8(3) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004.
- (5) Crates for transporting poultry have sufficient space to allow birds to stand in a natural position, as required by Annex I, Chapter II, Point 1.2 to Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005.
- (6) Improved training and documented procedures are provided to official veterinarians working in slaughterhouses (as required by Articles 6 and 8 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004), in particular where the commercial equipment for stun/killing adult cattle with electricity is used, to enable official veterinarians to ensure effectively the compliance with Article 3 of Directive 93/119/EC.

## **9. COMPETENT AUTHORITY RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

The competent authority's response to the recommendations can be found at:

[http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/ap/ap\\_united\\_kingdom\\_7337\\_2007.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/ap/ap_united_kingdom_7337_2007.pdf)