

Explanatory note

The current version of the RSPCA Welfare Standards for Sheep that RSPCA Assured scheme members are required to implement is dated June 2020. Due to changes in recent legislation, they have now been amended and updated, which includes the addition of a number of new standards and guidance (information boxes).

These changes will be incorporated into a revised edition of the RSPCA Welfare Standards for Sheep which are due later this year.

All the amendments made to the June 2020 version of the standards are listed below and been labelled as NEW or REVISED.

RSPCA Assured scheme members have three months from the date of this letter to fully implement these changes (i.e. by July 2022) unless otherwise stated by the standard, or required by law.

RSPCA Farm Animals Department

19/04/2022

Please note:

All standards in the June 2020 edition that are not shown below or are shown but do not have a label next to them remain unchanged in the new edition. Due to the amendment process, some existing standards have been re-ordered and therefore re-numbered.

Casualty animals

H 10.1 Each farm must have:

- a) provisions for the prompt, humane slaughter/killing of casualty sheep,
- b) a trained, competent, full-time member of staff or a licensed slaughterman that is able to carry out the procedure, and
- c) the names and contact details of those able to carry out the procedure recorded in the VHWP.

H 10.1.1 **REVISED** Where the member of staff/slaughterman responsible for killing the casualty sheep is unable to attend to the sheep without delay, a veterinary surgeon must be called immediately to carry out the procedure.

H 10.2 If there is any doubt as to how to proceed in relation to H 10.1, the veterinary surgeon must be called at an early stage to advise whether treatment is possible or whether humane slaughter/killing is required to prevent suffering.

H 10.3 **NEW** An Emergency Procedures Action Plan must be detailed in the Veterinary Health and Welfare Plan (see standard H 1.1) to address situations where mass culling may be required, for example in response to a major disease outbreak.



NEW Where mass culling is required, for example in response to a major disease outbreak, prompt identification and action can prevent considerable suffering. Producers need to outline measures to ensure this is achieved as part of an Emergency Procedures Action Plan. It is particularly important that due attention is paid to welfare in such circumstances as advised by the attending veterinary surgeon.

H 10.4 If an animal is in severe pain that is uncontrollable, then the animal must be humanely slaughtered/killed immediately.



It is not illegal to kill/slaughter an animal to prevent further severe suffering if a method of humane killing/slaughter is available on the premises and there is somebody competent to undertake the procedure. However, for non-emergency casualty killing/slaughter, a slaughterman's licence is required where a captive bolt pistol is used (see standard H 10.6).

H 10.5

REVISED Anyone carrying out emergency slaughter/killing of sheep must:

- a) have access to the latest version of the Humane Slaughter Association's (HSA) guide: *Emergency Slaughter* or, in the case of lambs, the HSA's guide: *On-Farm Humane Killing of Neonate Pigs, Goats and Sheep*,
- b) be familiar with its content, and
- c) follow its guidance where appropriate (see information box below).



NEW With reference to H 10.5 c), the Humane Slaughter Association's documents should complement and support these RSPCA welfare standards for sheep. However, if there is a conflict between the HSA guidance and what is required under these RSPCA standards, the requirements set out in these standards are to be followed.

H 10.6

REVISED Equipment for the slaughter/killing of animals must be:

- a) maintained according to the manufacturer's instructions,
- b) easily accessible to the relevant member of staff,
- c) checked at least monthly to ensure good working order, and
- d) checked immediately prior to the first use of the day to ensure good working order.

H 10.7

REVISED **LEGAL** Casualty sheep requiring emergency euthanasia must only be humanely killed using the following methods (which are listed in no particular order):

- a) Free bullet
- b) Shot gun
- c) Penetrative captive bolt followed swiftly by pithing or bleeding such that the animal dies without regaining consciousness
- d) non-penetrative captive bolt for lambs weighing under 6kg only, provided that the device is capable of delivering a force equivalent to or greater than 107 Joules.
- e) non-penetrative captive bolt for lambs weighing between 6-10kg only, followed immediately and swiftly by pithing or bleeding such that the animal dies without regaining consciousness
- f) Chemical euthanasia by overdose of an anaesthetic drug carried out by veterinary surgeon.



NEW Lambs under 6kg live weight can be *killed* using a non-penetrative captive bolt, i.e. bleeding or pithing is not required. For lambs weighing 6kg and over, but less than 10kg, a non-penetrative captive bolt may be used but as a simple *stunning* method only, and therefore pithing or bleeding must also be carried out immediately, such that the animal dies without regaining consciousness.

For clarity, lambs weighing over 10kg cannot be stunned or killed using a non-penetrative captive bolt device in any situation.



NEW With reference to the methods of emergency slaughter listed in standard H 10.7, it is advised that national laws are checked to ascertain which methods are permitted under national law in the country in question.

H 10.8

NEW A permitted method of emergency slaughter (see standard H 10.7) must also be available as a back-up method for use in the event that the primary method is unavailable, i.e. for occasions where it is not possible to use the primary method (e.g. due to failure).



NEW **LEGAL** Manual blunt force trauma cannot legally be used to kill lambs of any age or weight in England and Wales, including in emergencies (see standard H 10.7 for a list of permitted methods).

H 10.9 **REVISED** Non-ambulatory sheep, which are unable to stand/rise unaided, must be killed without being moved, unless:

- a) they can be lifted without causing further suffering, and
- b) where there is full body support.



NEW A sheep is considered non-ambulatory when the animal cannot rise or is unable to stand unaided.

H 10.10 **LEGAL** All carcasses must:

- a) be disposed of according to current legislation,
- b) disposed of in-line with the relevant Defra code of good agricultural practice (air, water, soil) if on-farm, and
- c) have a record kept in the VHWP of how and where they were disposed.