




STANDARDS	 RSPCA ASSURED	UK LEGAL MINIMUM	 RED TRACTOR	 SOIL ASSOCIATION ORGANIC	WELFARE IMPACT
YEAR OF PUBLICATION	2023		2022	2024	
ENVIRONMENT					
SPACE REQUIREMENTS (HOUSED)	Ewes <60kg 1.65 to 1.8sqm Ewes 60kg+ 1.8 to 2.1sqm Lambing pens 2sqm Ewes + 2wk lambs <60kg 1.95 to 2.55sqm Ewes + 2wk lambs 60kg+2.55 to 2.7sqm Ewes + 6wk lambs <60kg 2.7 to 3.0 sqm Ewes + 6wk lambs 60kg+3.0 to 3.3sqm Creep area 2wks 0.15 Creep area 4wks 0.4 Hoggets <30kg 1.05 30-40kg 1.2 40+ kg 1.5 Rams 2.25 to 3.0	The freedom of movement of animals, having regard to their species and in accordance with established experience and scientific knowledge, shall not be restricted in such a way as to cause them unnecessary suffering or injury.	Sheep must have space to allow all livestock to lie down simultaneously, ruminant, rise, turn around and stretch without difficulty. Recommended space allowances: 45-65kg Ewe: 1-1.2sqm Ewe with lamb: 1.8-2sqm 60-90kg Ewe: 1.2-1.4sqm Ewe with lamb: 2-2.2sqm Lamb 0-3mnths: 0.5-0.6sqm Lamb 3-12mnths: 0.75-0.9sqm Rams: 1.5-2sqm	Gives the minimum space allowances for sheep and lambs as a total of both lying area/indoor area and outdoor exercise area (excluding pasture). Min 4sqm per sheep, 0.85sqm for lambs	Sufficient space is required to enable sheep to perform a wide range of important natural behaviours, such as walking, self-grooming and socially interacting. Increasing space allows sheep to avoid aggressive flock-mates
SLATTED FLOORS	Fully slatted floors are prohibited	Not mentioned	Permitted. Newborn lambs on slats must have bedding. Artificially reared youngstock (orphan lambs) must have a non-slatted, bedded lying area.	Fully slatted floors are prohibited	Slatted floors are less comfortable for lying, whereas bedding allows sheep to rest more comfortably – research has shown that sheep prefer to lie on straw than wooden slats
HUSBANDRY					
FEED	15cm/sheep if ad lib forage Concentrates: Growing sheep (<50 kg) 35cm Small ewes (50-70 kg) 45cm Large ewes (>70 kg) 50cm Rams/wethers 50cm All sheep must derive as much of their nutritional requirements as possible from grazing at pasture, routine feeding of high levels of concentrates is not allowed	Harmful effects of competition must be minimised	10-15cm for forage Growing sheep 30cm Small ewes 45cm Horned sheep 45cm Medium 45cm Large sheep 50cm No requirement for pasture access	Recommend 45cm for concentrates, 12-15cm for forage. If ad lib minimise bullying Sheep must have permanent access to pasture where appropriate	Feed space impacts on welfare through competition; especially when feed is supplied infrequently (e.g. supplementary concentrates) this becomes a valued and competitive resource. 'Displacements' where individuals are pushed off food, can reduce intake and create hunger
SHEARING	Specifies procedures relating to shearing. This must be done at least once a year and must protect ewes if carried out in winter. Also gives standards for improving biosecurity around shearing.	Not mentioned	Must be satisfied that any contractors used for e.g. foot trimming, shearing, artificial insemination are competent	Not mentioned	Shearing is important for many breeds of sheep to regulate temperature, however it is a stressful event requiring close interactions with humans, and physical handling. Standards can help protect the welfare of sheep during this stress
BREEDING TECHNOLOGIES	Only allows artificial insemination by a vet or skilled and trained person under direction of a vet. Gives details on use of progesterone sponges and prohibits their use on ewe lambs. Prohibits electroejaculation.	Natural or artificial breeding or breeding procedures which cause, or are likely to cause, suffering or injury to any of the animals concerned, must not be practised. This does not preclude the use of natural or artificial breeding procedures that are likely to cause minimal or momentary suffering or injury or that might necessitate interventions which would not cause lasting injury	Must be satisfied that any contractors used for e.g. foot trimming, shearing, artificial insemination are competent	No use of breeding hormones. Any person carrying out AI should be trained and competent. Embryo transfer prohibited	The use of some breeding techniques, such as electroejaculation for rams, can be painful for sheep. Anyone carrying out techniques such as artificial insemination also has the potential to cause pain and discomfort to ewes, and standards requiring training or skills to carry this out helps protect welfare
VET CARE	Must have a Veterinary Health and Welfare Plan. Must have a vet visit once a year for sheep for slaughter, twice a year for breeding ewes	No vet inspection frequency set	Must have a Livestock Health Plan. Vet visits at least once a year, see all animals, and undertakes a written annual livestock health and performance review.	Strongly recommend consultation with vet on health planning and review where any improvements can be made annually	Routine vet visits and a written health plan allow proactive health management of a flock, where farmers and vets can focus on health conditions specific to the farm. These can help prevent frequency of health issues, and therefore poor welfare, for sheep
LAMB WELFARE					
LAMB HEALTH AND CARE	Outlines issues such as adequate colostrum (first feed within 2 hours of birth), forage from 8 days of age, the rearing of orphan lambs, adoption (including prohibiting yoking). Milk feeds 4x daily for orphan lambs during their first week, then 3x daily. Weaning from 6 weeks of age	Not mentioned	Outlines colostrum provision (within 6 hours of birth) and forage from 8 days of age. Artificially reared lambs must be weaned according to milk replacer manufacturers guidelines.	Outlines colostrum provision (recommend first feed within 6 hours of birth). Weaning from 45 days (6.4 weeks)	Lambs, particularly orphan lambs, are at a vulnerable stage. Adequate colostrum is vital for health, as this provides early immunity to lambs. Setting a number of milk feeds a day can help more closely meet the natural feeding behaviour of the lamb, and prevent prolonged hunger
CASTRATION AND TAIL DOCKING	Castration and tail docking not permitted unless welfare justification is provided. Lambs must be given long term pain relief at the time of either procedure	Over 3 months of age, an anaesthetic must be used. No requirement for pain relief below this age	Permitted. No pain relief required for some methods of castration and tail docking	Castration and tail docking must not be routine, requires choosing breeds where these are not necessary. Pain relief and/or local anaesthetic is required for all types	Castration and tail docking are painful procedures; both at the time of the event, and after this as the tissue dies off. Where these are carried out, pain relief can reduce the welfare impact. Standards requiring a move away from these procedures will improve welfare long term
TRANSPORT					
TRANSPORT REQUIREMENTS	Under 8hrs journeys only. Vehicles must have bedding. Electric goads prohibited. Space allowances of 0.3-0.6sqm per sheep during transport. Loading ramp no more than 20%	Maximum transport times of 28hrs with a rest break halfway, space allowances of 0.2-0.5sqm per sheep. Loading ramp no more than 50%	Legal maximum journey length (up to 28hrs with a rest break) stocking densities, and ramp angle. Electric goads prohibited	Journey duration must be kept to a minimum, journeys over 8hrs must be justified. Legal maximum stocking densities. Electric goads prohibited. No mention of ramp incline	Transport is a stressful event for sheep, with fatigue increasing with length of journey. This makes maximum journey times important for protecting welfare. Other factors such as space per sheep, and angles of loading ramps, affect the risk of falls, injury and comfort
MARKETS AND COLLECTION CENTRES	Prohibits sales at markets and passing through collection centres	Legislation covering welfare at markets	Permitted. Detailed standards for both livestock markets and collection centres	Markets are discouraged but allowed. Specifies that when at market the handling, care and welfare of the animals is the responsibility of the livestock owner. Collection centres should be avoided.	Markets and collection centres pose a number of welfare challenges to sheep. Animals are transported and loaded/unloaded twice, all stressful events. There are disease spread risks between sheep. Markets are noisy, with lots of people, and often dogs present, which sheep find stressful to be close to
SLAUGHTER/KILLING METHOD					
PRE-STUN SLAUGHTER	Compulsory that all animals are stunned prior to slaughter	Exceptions for religious slaughter which can be not stunned prior to slaughter	Compulsory that all animals are stunned prior to slaughter	Compulsory that all animals are stunned prior to slaughter	Pre-stunning ensures that an animal in unconscious and cannot feel pain before slaughter up until the point of death.
AUDITING					
WELFARE OUTCOME MONITORING	On-farm annual welfare outcome assessment carried out, using the AssureWel protocol for 9 measures of welfare	Not required	Not required	On-farm welfare outcome assessment may be carried out, using 6 measures of welfare	Welfare Outcome measures are animal-based metrics that reflect aspects of their welfare. They include body condition, cleanliness, mortality rates, and levels of castration and tail-docking on-farm