



**AUGUST** 2023

**RSPCA welfare standards**

Sheep



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# Introduction

The *RSPCA welfare standards for sheep* are used to provide the only RSPCA-approved scheme for the rearing, handling, transport and slaughter/killing of sheep. The *RSPCA welfare standards for sheep* take account of UK legislation, government welfare codes, scientific research, veterinary advice, recommendations of the Farm Animal Welfare Committee (FAWC) and the practical experience of the farming industry.

- **Freedom from hunger and thirst** by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
- **Freedom from discomfort** by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
- **Freedom from pain, injury or disease** by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
- **Freedom to express normal behaviour** by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
- **Freedom from fear and distress** by ensuring conditions and care which avoid mental suffering.

The standards are based upon the 'Five Freedoms' as defined by FAWC. Although these 'freedoms' define ideal states, they provide a comprehensive framework for the assessment of animal welfare on farm, in transit and at the place of slaughter, as well as representing an important element of farm assurance requirements.

These freedoms will be better provided for if those who have care of livestock practise/provide:

- **caring and responsible planning and management**
- **skilled, knowledgeable and conscientious stockmanship**
- **appropriate environmental design**
- **considerate handling and transport**
- **humane slaughter.**

## Guide to the use of the RSPCA welfare standards

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- The numbered requirements are the standards, all of which must be complied with.
- Boxed sections (indicated by ⓘ) give additional information, including: providing the reasoning behind a standard, expand on a standard, state how a standard can/will be assessed and/or highlight areas where the standards will be reviewed in the future.
- It is expected that all relevant UK legislation regarding farm animal husbandry and welfare on-farm, during transport, and at the abattoir, will be fully implemented in addition to the RSPCA welfare standards.
- **Farmers are required by law to have a thorough knowledge of the Defra *Code of Recommendations for the Welfare of Livestock: Sheep*.**



## RSPCA Farm Animals Department

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The RSPCA's Farm Animals Department develops the RSPCA welfare standards for farm animals. These detailed documents are intended to represent 'best practice' in the care and welfare of farm animals.

The RSPCA works to continually develop and improve the welfare standards using a range of information, including the latest scientific research and practical farming experience. We regularly consult with other animal welfare and agricultural scientists, veterinary surgeons, and farming industry representatives. This helps to ensure that the RSPCA welfare standards continue to be at the forefront of farm animal care and welfare, and are also achievable on commercial farms.

The standards also take account of feedback from RSPCA Assured Assessors who audit scheme members, and the scheme members themselves.

We always value constructive feedback and ideas for improvement from those who are implementing the RSPCA welfare standards. Comments/feedback can be discussed with RSPCA Farm Animals Department scientific staff, by contacting them on the below details:

Address: Farm Animals Department  
Parkside  
Chart Way  
Horsham  
West Sussex  
RH12 1XH

Phone: 0300 123 0183

Email: [farm-animals@rspca.org.uk](mailto:farm-animals@rspca.org.uk)

The RSPCA does not approve equipment, but sets standards to ensure any equipment permitted for use is managed appropriately to safeguard the welfare of animals.



## RSPCA Assured

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RSPCA Assured is the RSPCA's farm assurance and food labelling scheme. RSPCA Assured assesses and approves farms, hauliers and abattoirs that meet all of the applicable RSPCA welfare standards. (Please note that RSPCA Assured does not approve equipment).

Products from animals reared, transported and slaughtered under the RSPCA Assured scheme can be labelled with the scheme's food label: 'RSPCA Assured'. Use of the RSPCA Assured name and mark are strictly subject to RSPCA Assured membership, traceability, licence fee and artwork approval.

Membership of the scheme is subject to an annual fee and successful assessment.

RSPCA Assured is a charity in its own right and not for profit. Any surplus income goes back into improving farm animal welfare.

**Any queries relating to the operation of the RSPCA Assured scheme (e.g. administration, assessments etc.) should be directed to the RSPCA Assured office:**

**Phone: 01403 286170**

**Email: [help@rspcaassured.org.uk](mailto:help@rspcaassured.org.uk)**

# Food and water

Livestock need to have ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and promote a positive state of well-being.

## Food

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- FW 1.1** **LEGAL** Sheep must be fed a wholesome diet that is:
- appropriate to the species
  - suitable for their:
    - age
    - stage of production
  - provided in sufficient quantity to maintain good health
  - able to satisfy their nutritional needs.
- FW 1.2** **LEGAL** Sheep must have access to fresh food each day, except when required by the attending veterinary surgeon.
- FW 1.3** No feedstuffs containing mammalian or avian derived protein are permitted, with the exception of milk and milk products.
- FW 1.4** Sheep must be provided with adequate suitable fibre to allow them to ruminate.
- FW 1.5** Diets and grazing strategies for sheep (with the exception of unweaned lambs) must be planned with the intention of optimising forage intake, with concentrates and other feed supplements only provided if and when they are necessary.



**It is recognised that there may be times when supplementary feeding is required to adequately meet the sheep's nutritional needs. For example, when the available grass or conserved forage is low in quantity/quality, or when nutrient demand is high (e.g. ewes in late pregnancy). Standard FW 1.5 does not prevent the use of supplementary feeding. However, planning should be undertaken to ensure forage intake is optimised as far as possible; for example, through good grassland management.**

- FW 1.5.1** During the grass growing season, climatic conditions allowing, all sheep must derive as much of their nutritional requirements as possible from grazing at pasture.
- FW 1.6** The routine feeding of diets high in concentrates is not permitted (see standard FW 1.5).



**A high level of concentrates is defined as greater than 0.4kg of concentrate feed per day. Finishing lambs using high levels of concentrates would count as routine use.**

- FW 1.6.1** If high levels of concentrates are necessary to supplement the diet during specific periods of an animal's production cycle then:
- they must be introduced gradually
  - the concentrates must be split over two meals, and
  - sufficient levels of good quality roughage must still be provided (see standard FW 1.4).

**FW 1.7** All stored foods, such as conserved forage and concentrates, must be palatable and of good quality.

**i** The quality of conserved forages can be determined by their look and smell, or more formally by sending samples to a laboratory for testing. The quality of concentrates can be judged by reviewing their constituents/ingredients. Further information about such analyses can be found in AHDB Beef & Lamb's BRP Manual *Feeding the Ewe*.

**FW 1.8** Producers must have a written record of the constituents of compound feeds and feed supplements.

**FW 1.9** Efforts must be made to avoid sudden changes in the type and quantity of food.

**i** Consistency in the frequency and timing of feeds throughout the day is also strongly recommended as this further supports stable rumen function and good health.

**FW 1.10** Sheep must be fed so that their body condition is likely to sustain full health and normal reproductive capacity over their maximum foreseeable life span.

**i** As a general rule, no animal should, at any time, have a body condition score less than 2.

**FW 1.11** When being fed ad lib forage from troughs sheep must be provided with a minimum of 15cm trough space per head.

**FW 1.12** When being fed supplementary concentrates from troughs, all sheep must be able to eat at the same time, with the following minimum feed space allowances provided:

| Type of sheep          | cm/head |
|------------------------|---------|
| Growing sheep (<50 kg) | 35      |
| Small ewes (50–70 kg)  | 45      |
| Large ewes (>70 kg)    | 50      |
| Rams/wethers           | 50      |

**FW 1.12.1** **LEGAL** There must be sufficient trough space or feeding points to minimise aggression due to competition.

**i** The trough space allowances set out in standards FW 1.11 and FW 1.12 are minimum requirements. Trough space allowances should be such that competition for feed is minimised and feed intake is optimised. Account should be given to the number of animals present, their size/weight, whether they have horns, are shorn or pregnant, and other relevant factors such as ease of access to the feeders.

**i** Floor feeding is permitted, providing food is placed on a clean, dry surface.

**FW 1.13** Food troughs must be kept thoroughly clean by:

- a) removing any uneaten food prior to the addition of fresh feed
- b) washing them at suitable intervals to maintain hygienic conditions.

**FW 1.13.1** Automatic feeding equipment must be cleaned at least once a week.

**FW 1.14** **LEGAL** To prevent the introduction and potential spread of disease, procedures must be in place to prevent the contamination of all stored animal feeds.



**Procedures to satisfy FW 1.14 may include the use of lids on feed storage bins and food hoppers.**

**FW 1.15** Stored foods, including hay and silage, must be protected from contamination by cats.

**FW 1.16** **LEGAL** Control practices must be in place to minimise access to poisonous plants and unsuitable feedstuffs.

**FW 1.17** Sheep must not be kept for longer than 24 hours in an environment that is nutrient deficient, e.g. holding pens, stubble or exhausted root crops without adequate nutritional supplementation.

**FW 1.18** Sheep which have difficulty eating due to having loose, damaged or missing teeth must be:

- supplied with food which they are able to eat, e.g. sufficiently long grass or concentrates
- closely monitored to ensure they do not lose condition.



**Poor condition of the teeth can be painful and lead to problems eating, undernutrition and loss of body condition. Proactive culling should be considered as an option if such sheep are not able to thrive.**

**FW 1.19** Extra care and attention must be paid towards the condition of the teeth when sheep are fed on root crops to ensure the welfare of broken mouth ewes is not compromised.

## Water

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**FW 2.1** Sheep, including lambs, must be provided with continuous access to an adequate supply of clean, fresh drinking water each day, except when required by the attending veterinary surgeon.

**FW 2.2** At least one drinking space per 20 animals must be provided.



**A drinking space is defined as the amount of space required by a single sheep whilst drinking, or as an individual bowl/bucket. Where troughs are used, a linear space allowance of approximately 5–10cm per animal should be provided. This space allowance will vary depending on whether the sheep are horned, shorn, etc. The higher end is recommended for ewes in late pregnancy and early lactation. Troughs should allow for the highest likely demand.**

**Sheep will require different volumes of water depending on their diet, age and stage of production and the climate, and it is important to provide for these needs. For example, a ewe in late pregnancy should have access to at least 4.5 litres of water a day, whereas a ewe in early lactation should have at least 10 litres a day. Dairy ewes will require a greater drinking space allowance both due to the increased volume of water required but also the peak in demand for water seen after milking.**

**FW 2.3** If non-mains water sources are used (e.g. rivers or boreholes), advice must be taken regarding its suitability for drinking, including potential disease risk.



**Natural open water sources (e.g. rivers) are not recommended as a source of drinking water.**

**Since sheep prefer drinking from still water, rather than flowing water, and due to the difficulty in ensuring natural water sources are uncontaminated, it is recommended that other water sources are used. However, due to the appreciation that this is difficult in some remote and extensive systems natural water sources are still permitted.**



**It is important to stress that water quality may change over time and therefore one should not rely on past analysis. Water testing should be conducted routinely under normal circumstances and any unusual situation such as changes in the smell, clarity or taste of the water or changes in the animals, such as their eating or drinking habits, loss of performance, or health problems should immediately trigger the need for testing.**

**FW 2.4** Provision must be made to ensure an emergency supply of suitable drinking water in case normal supplies fail, for instance due to freezing, drought, etc.



**Emergency provision may consist of having a bowser on-farm, or the ability to contact the water supplier to request a bowser, an IBC water tank or access to a natural source unlikely to be affected by the disruption caused to the usual supply, e.g. a river.**

**FW 2.5** Water bowls and troughs must be kept thoroughly clean and managed in a way which ensures that they are capable of dispensing sufficient clean water at all times.

**FW 2.6** Water bowls and troughs must be sited to avoid lambs drowning.

# Environment

The environment in which livestock are kept needs to take into account their welfare needs and be designed to protect them from physical and thermal discomfort, fear and distress, and allow them to perform their natural behaviour.

**E 1.1** Where management systems, designs or layout of facilities are not covered in the *RSPCA welfare standards for sheep*, these must be referred to, and discussed with, the RSPCA Farm Animals Department before they can be considered for certification.

**E 1.2** **LEGAL** There must be nothing in the sheep's environment that is likely to cause injury or distress to the animals that can be avoided.



**Injury is defined as damage severe enough for the formation of obvious scar tissue and to an extent significantly greater than would be caused by accidental bumps and scratches.**

**E 1.3** **LEGAL** Except where preservatives with an insecticide are used, sheep must not come into contact with toxic fumes or surfaces, for example from paints, wood preservatives or disinfectants.

## Buildings

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**E 2.1** For all accommodation, the following information must be accurately recorded on the farm site plan:

- a) total floor area, and
- b) the number of sheep that can be accommodated in relation to age, weight, feeding and drinking space, and bedded lying area.



**Where practical, this information should also be displayed at or near the entrance to the entrance of each building.**

**E 2.2** All electrical installations at mains voltage must be:

- a) inaccessible to sheep
- b) well insulated
- c) safeguarded from rodents
- d) properly earthed
- e) tested at least once a year.



**By law, electrical installations need to be tested every 3 years as part of the Electrical Installation Condition Report. However, at least once a year, the 'trip switch' should be tested to ensure it is in correct working order.**

- E 2.3** **LEGAL** Internal surfaces of housing and pens must be made of materials which can be readily cleansed and disinfected or be easily replaced when necessary.

**i** Where earth floors are present, they should be managed to optimise sheep comfort and to ensure they are not a source of environmental contamination to the sheep e.g. through appropriate rest periods.

## Thermal environment and ventilation

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- E 3.1** Efforts must be made to ensure that the thermal environment is not so hot or so cold as to significantly affect production or cause distress.

**i** As a guide, comfortable temperatures can range between  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $+25^{\circ}\text{C}$  for healthy, adult, fully fleeced sheep with good body condition (this range is much narrower if they are shorn: within the range of  $+20^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $+30^{\circ}\text{C}$ ). However, climatic conditions will affect this range, for instance, if air speed is high and the fleece is wet, then the lower temperature for comfort will rise (i.e. the temperature at which a sheep is comfortable in those conditions will be higher). For newborn lambs, the environmental temperature should not be below  $+20^{\circ}\text{C}$  or above  $+30^{\circ}\text{C}$ . This temperature range will change as the lambs age and will be dependent on their body condition, fleece length and climatic conditions.

- E 3.1.1** Procedures intended to prevent and treat hypothermia in newborn/young lambs must be:

- a) documented in the VHWP, and
- b) implemented on farm when conditions require it.

**i** When temperatures are predicted to fall below the lower critical temperature of lambs then steps to reduce the risk of hypothermia are to be taken. These may include housing, the provision of additional bedding or supplementary heating, the use of windbreaks/ shelters and/or lamb jackets.

If hypothermia is suspected to have occurred then the lamb should be treated accordingly, for example thoroughly dried, warmed in a warming box and fed or given a dose of glucose depending on its responsiveness. Planned treatments should be discussed beforehand with a veterinary surgeon and further guidance can be found in AHDB Beef & Lamb's BRP Manual *Reducing lamb losses for Better Returns*.

- E 3.2** Buildings must be effectively ventilated so as to avoid high humidity, condensation and draughts.

**i** Good ventilation is essential as sheep are particularly susceptible to respiratory diseases. Properly designed ventilation will permit the free circulation of air above sheep height and avoid draughts at sheep level.

- E 3.3** When sheep are housed, aerial contaminants must not reach a level at which they are noticeably unpleasant to a human observer.



It is recommended that meters or testing tubes are used to evaluate the levels of dust and ammonia in the housed environment. Dust should not exceed 10 mg/m<sup>3</sup> and ammonia levels should not exceed 25 ppm. Where the use of meters or testing tubes are not possible, sensory evaluation should be used to assess air quality using the standardised protocol below:

| Score | Description   |
|-------|---|
| 0     | Zero: odour and dust not noticeable; easy to breathe.   |
| 1     | Weak: odour and dust hardly noticeable; can breathe without effort.   |
| 2     | Moderate: odour and dust distinct; experience watery eyes and/or coughing.                                    |
| 3     | Strong: odour and dust irritating; experience stinging eyes and/or mouth, and/or excessive coughing/sneezing. |

## Lighting

- E 4.1** **LEGAL** In all housing, adequate lighting, whether fixed or portable, must be available to enable all sheep to be thoroughly inspected at any time.



**NEW** With reference to E 4.1, adequate lighting includes being able to inspect sheep clearly for injuries and allow farm workers to carry out their jobs effectively.

- E 4.2** Housed sheep must have access for the normal period of daylight hours to an area designed to be lit to a level of 100 lux at sheep eye level.
- E 4.3** **LEGAL** During housing, a period of low level lighting must be provided to promote resting behaviour.

## Lying area/space allowance

- E 5.1** Housed sheep, including lambs, must be kept on, or at all times have access to, a lying area that is:
- bedded to a sufficient extent to avoid discomfort, and
  - LEGAL** well drained and/or maintained so that it is kept dry.

**E 5.2** Fully slatted housing is not permitted.



**Fully slatted systems are not suitable for animals with cloven hooves, even when bedding is provided.**

**E 5.3** The lying area must be of sufficient size to accommodate all sheep lying down together at the same time in normal resting postures.

**E 5.4** Pen shape and space allowance of sheep housed in groups must take into account the presence or absence of horns.

**E 5.5** The minimum space allowances for housed sheep must be as follows:

| Type and weight (kg)                 | Bedded lying area (m <sup>2</sup> per animal) | Total area (m <sup>2</sup> per animal) |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Ewes</b>                          |   |  |
| <45 to 60                            | 1.1 to 1.2                                    | 1.65 to 1.8                            |
| 60 to >90                            | 1.2 to 1.4                                    | 1.8 to 2.1                             |
| <b>Lambing pens</b>                  | 2   | 2                                      |
| <b>Ewes with lambs up to 2 weeks</b> |   |  |
| <45 to 60                            | 1.3 to 1.7                                    | 1.95 to 2.55                           |
| 60 to >90                            | 1.7 to 1.8                                    | 2.55 to 2.7                            |
| <b>Ewes with lambs up to 6 weeks</b> |   |  |
| <45 to 60                            | 1.8 to 2.0                                    | 2.7 to 3.0                             |
| 60 to >90                            | 2.0 to 2.2                                    | 3.0 to 3.3                             |
| <b>Creep area</b>                    |   |  |
| 2 weeks                              | 0.15  | 0.15                                   |
| 4 weeks                              | 0.4   | 0.4                                    |
| <b>Hoggets</b>                       |   |  |
| < 30                                 | 0.7   | 1.05                                   |
| 31 to 40                             | 0.8   | 1.2                                    |
| > 40                                 | 1.0   | 1.5                                    |
| <b>Rams</b>                          | 1.5 to 2.0                                    | 2.25 to 3.0                            |



**Where a range of weights and space allowances are allocated a rough sliding scale should be used so animals at the lower end of the weight range may be kept stocked at the lower end of the space allowance and animals at the upper end of the weight range should be kept at the higher end of the space allowance.**

**Lambing pens and creep areas are expected to be fully bedded; otherwise sheep are expected to have a total area 1.5 times the bedded lying area.**

**E 5.6** Sheep must not be closely confined except in the following circumstances, and even then only for the shortest period of time necessary:

- for the duration of any examination, routine test or veterinary treatment, such as blood sampling or administering medication (including vaccination and dipping)
- while they are being fed on any particular occasion
- for the purpose of body condition scoring, marking, washing, weighing
- while accommodation is being cleaned
- while they are awaiting loading for transportation.

- E 5.6.1** Close restraint of ewes (involving 'yoking') for the purpose of lamb fostering is prohibited (see standards H 7.16 to H 7.19).
- E 5.7** When rams are newly introduced to each other, they must be put in an area small enough to prevent head-to-head combat, but only for a period of time necessary to allow familiarisation and reduction of aggression to occur.

## Lambing accommodation

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- E 6.1** Suitable facilities, whether indoors or outdoors, must be available to accommodate lambing sheep.



**Suitable lambing areas/facilities are important for the health and welfare of both the ewes and lambs, to ensure comfort and minimise the risk/spread of disease.**

- E 6.2** When indoor lambing facilities are used, there must be enough lambing space/pens to accommodate the number of ewes lambing (see standard E 5.5).



**Accommodation for ewes that are lambing should provide sufficient space/pens for the expected number lambing. However, providing more space/pens is recommended to allow for variation in expected demand.**

- E 6.3** Indoor lambing pens must be managed hygienically to ensure the bedding is dry and to minimise the spread of disease.



**With regards to E 6.3, wet/dirty bedding should be removed and fresh bedding added. Consideration should also be given to the application of lime. When individual lambing pens are used, best practice is for the pen to be completely cleaned out, disinfected and fresh bedding added between each ewe.**

- E 6.4** When lambing outdoors, fields must be:
- well sheltered (see standard E 3.1.1)
  - well drained
  - managed in line with any disease control programme in the VHWP (see standard H 1.1), and
  - situated to facilitate regular inspection of all stock.

## Pasture

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- E 7.1** When sheep are kept outdoors, to ensure comfort and limit the build-up of mud or dung on the fleece, there must be an area to which they have ready access that is:
- grassed or straw covered
  - LEGAL** well drained and dry, and
  - of sufficient size to accommodate all sheep lying down together at the same time in normal resting postures.

**i** Particular care and attention needs to be given to E 7.1 in the case of sheep fed on fields of root crops.

**E 7.2** Procedures must be in place to minimise poaching of pasture/outdoor areas to which sheep have access.

**i** Even though sheep must have access to a sufficient dry area for lying, it is still important that other accessible areas do not become overly wet/poached.

As well as causing problems in terms of the sheep's comfort, wet/poached areas of ground can also increase the risk of diseases such as lameness and internal parasites e.g. fluke. Options for minimising poaching include moving sheep out of areas at risk of becoming poached, reducing stocking density, and considering the placement of gates, feeders and water troughs.

**E 7.3** **LEGAL** All sheep must have access to enough effective shade and shelter for all animals to use at any one time.

**i** Shade and shelter can be natural or artificial, as long as it can accommodate all animals, is available at all times, and provides effective protection against prevailing conditions.

**E 7.4** When siting shelters, shelter belts and fences, efforts must be made to minimise the risk of sheep being trapped in snow or being unable to access shelter.

**E 7.5** As far as is practicable, sheep must be:

- a) prevented from gathering in places where they may be buried by snow
- b) shepherded into safer areas whenever heavy snowfalls are forecast.

**E 7.6** When heavy rains are forecast, sheep must be removed from areas that are likely to flood.

## Fencing

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**E 8.1** All fencing must be adequately inspected and maintained.

**E 8.2** Electric fences must be designed, installed, used and maintained so that contact with them does not cause more than momentary discomfort to the sheep.

**E 8.3** Electric mesh fencing must not be used for horned sheep.

**E 8.4** **NEW** Invisible 'virtual' fencing and associated electric shock collars are prohibited.



**NEW** The RSPCA has concerns about the use of virtual fencing. For example, there is a lack of visual stimuli to demarcate the fenceline and the audible cue used to 'train' the animals to the fenceline has the potential to cause a startle response, even without an electric shock. Further, there is the risk that sheep on extensive systems could be inspected less frequently due to the ability of stock-keepers to move the fences remotely via GPS. There are also significant concerns regarding virtual fencing where sheep are chased outside of the 'safe' zones, e.g. by dogs, loud noises or other such disturbances, which would not only cause mental and physical distress for the sheep but could also lead to sheep running into more dangerous situations where physical barriers are not present. This is an area under review.

## Handling facilities

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- E 9.1** There must be appropriate holding and handling facilities on the site for:
- a) the number of sheep, and
  - b) the nature of the procedures routinely carried out.
- E 9.1.1** All holding and handling facilities (whether indoors or outdoors) must minimise stress and prevent injury to the animals passing through the system.
- E 9.2** Races and gates must be designed and operated so that animals can move through them unhindered when required.
- E 9.3** When operating gates and catches, every effort must be made to reduce excessive noise that may cause distress to the animals.
- E 9.4** If a problem relating to standard E 9.3 is identified, noise reduction mechanisms must be fitted as necessary.
- E 9.5** To minimise the risk of slips and falls, flooring in handling areas must be non-slip.

## Disposal of waste

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- E 10.1** Animal waste and effluents must be stored and disposed of in such a way as to:
- a) minimise the risk of spread of disease to other animals or humans, and
  - b) avoid polluting the environment.
- E 10.2** Muckheaps in fields must be fenced off to prevent direct access by grazing livestock.
- E 10.3** Units must have written waste management procedures (manure, slurry, all farm waste and general rubbish).
- E 10.4** Waste materials of any nature must not be a risk to animal health.

## Climate change and animal welfare



The issues relating to climate change have the potential to significantly affect the welfare of farm animals. The RSPCA believes that it is now appropriate to react to, think ahead on, and consider what can reasonably be done to mitigate any negative effects that adverse weather conditions may have/be having on the welfare of farm animals now, and in the future.

Examples of important considerations include:

- the need to plan forage provision keeping in mind the possibility of prolonged dry periods resulting in less grass for grazing and preservation
- providing extra shelter to avoid animals seeking out shelter for longer periods of time, which may mean that they do not consume enough to meet their needs
- adjusting the timing of feeding to offset problems associated with feeding during the hottest parts of the day
- ensuring that drinking water systems are working efficiently (e.g. not leaking)
- being aware of the threat from more insect-borne diseases
- the need to ensure that the farm buildings can withstand more severe weather conditions
- taking measures to reduce the risk of flooding, such as maintenance of ditches.

**E 11.1** **NEW** Producers must be able to recognise signs of heat stress in sheep.



**NEW** Signs of heat stress in sheep include:

- increased drinking
- panting
- weakness/inability to stand
- disorientation
- collapse

**E 11.2** **NEW** On days where the local temperature is likely to cause heat stress in sheep, or is expected to be over 28°C.

- a) additional checks must be made on all sheep to monitor for signs of heat stress
- b) action must be taken to reduce the risk of heat stress (see information box below).



**NEW** Steps to reduce the risk of heat stress include:

- handling or moving sheep during the cooler times of the day (i.e. in the morning or evenings) rather than in the middle of the day
- Providing additional drinking water
- Providing artificial shade where natural shade is limited
- Reducing stocking densities where sheep and/or lambs are housed

# Management

**A high degree of caring, responsible management and stockmanship is vital to ensure good animal welfare. Managers and stock-keepers need to be thoroughly trained, skilled and competent in animal husbandry and welfare, and have a good working knowledge of their system and the livestock under their care.**

- M 1.1** All records and other documentation that the *RSPCA welfare standards for sheep* require the producer to keep and maintain must be made available on request.

## Managers

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- M 2.1** Personnel with responsibility for the management of approved establishments must be named and recorded in the VHWP.

- M 2.2** Managers must ensure that all stock-keepers:

- a) have access to a copy of the current version of the *RSPCA welfare standards for sheep*
- b) are familiar with its content, and
- c) understand and apply its content.



**If managers and/or stock-keepers are in any doubt as to the meaning or intention of a standard, or require clarification on any standard, they are strongly advised to contact the RSPCA Farm Animals Department for advice.**

- M 2.3** Managers must:

- a) develop and implement a suitable training programme for stock-keepers with regular updates. The programme must include an induction for new staff to ensure:
  - i. they are suitably trained and competent for their specific area of responsibility
  - ii. they are familiar with the plans and procedures related to sheep husbandry and welfare before undertaking duties unsupervised.
- b) keep records of all relevant training (including in-house) within the VHWP, including:
  - i. stock-keeper name
  - ii. date of induction, review and/or additional training
  - iii. details of training undertaken
  - iv. training provider.
- c) undertake an annual review of stock-keepers' need for further training and,
- d) implement refresher training whenever an issue related to staff performance and competence is identified.

- M 2.4** Managers must:
- a) ensure that the Veterinary Health and Welfare Plan (see standard H 1.1) is:
    - i. implemented
    - ii. updated annually, and
    - iii. that the required data is recorded appropriately.
  - b) maintain records of production data and use of medication, which must include:
    - i. documentation on all incoming and outgoing stock on the farm, and
    - ii. **LEGAL** types and quantities of medicines used.
- M 2.5** Managers must develop and implement a transport plan to an RSPCA Assured approved abattoir which:
- a) includes a method of identification of animals (see standard M 6.1), and
  - b) minimises waiting time for the sheep.
- M 2.6** Managers must:
- a) develop and implement plans and precautions to cope with emergencies such as fire, flooding, heavy snow and interruption of supplies (e.g. food, water, electricity), and
  - b) provide an emergency action board sited in a prominent position that is visible to all farm staff and the emergency services, which must include:
    - i. the procedures to be followed by those discovering such an emergency
    - ii. the location of water sources for use by the fire services, and
    - iii. a map grid reference, GPS coordinates, and postcode for the location of the unit.
- M 2.7** Should an emergency require the removal of livestock to non-RSPCA Assured approved premises, RSPCA Assured must be informed immediately.

## Stock-keepers

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- M 3.1** Prior to being given responsibility for the welfare of livestock, stock-keepers must have received appropriate training for their specific areas of responsibility. Evidence of this must be provided on request.

 **Please note, M 3.1 includes temporary staff.**

 **It is strongly recommended that stock-keepers undertake formal, verifiable training in their areas of responsibility. This can be achieved by attending relevant courses awarded/run by Lantra, City & Guilds Land Based Services (NPTC), agricultural colleges/universities, and/or national/local veterinary practices. A letter from the farm's private vet detailing which procedures each member of staff is competent to undertake would also be acceptable.**

- M 3.2** All stock-keepers must:
- understand the times and circumstances where sheep are prone to welfare problems on their own unit
  - be able to demonstrate their competence in recognising and dealing with welfare problems relating to a)
  - have appropriate knowledge and understanding specific to their area of work and those listed under M 3.3
  - be able to recognise signs of normal behaviour, abnormal behaviour, fear, and pain, and
  - be able to recognise signs of common diseases and understand their prevention and control, and to know when to seek veterinary help.

- M 3.3** All stock-keepers must have knowledge of the following:
- what constitutes good nutrition and dental condition in sheep
  - body condition scoring
  - the functional anatomy of the normal foot, its care and treatment
  - the times/circumstances when the risk of internal and external parasites is increased, and how to prevent and treat infestations
  - lambing, including when to provide assistance and when to seek veterinary help,
  - care of the newborn lamb, including colostrum management, how to avoid mismothering, and how to prevent and treat hypothermia, and
  - administration of drugs and vaccines, particularly orally and via injection.

- M 3.4** Stock-keepers must be able to demonstrate competence in handling animals in a positive and compassionate manner.

- M 3.5** **REVISED** Stock-keepers must be able to demonstrate their proficiency in any procedures they might carry out which have the potential to cause suffering, e.g. oral dosing, injections, dipping, lambing, stomach tubing, castration, tail docking, marking, shearing, breeding procedures (such as artificial insemination and cycle synchronisation), and the on-farm slaughter/killing of casualty sheep (see standard H 10.7).

## Handling

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- M 4.1** Sheep must be handled:
- quietly and calmly at all times
  - only as firmly as is necessary to keep the animal safe and under control, and
  - with care to avoid unnecessary pain or distress.
- M 4.2** The behaviour of sheep must be taken into account when they are being moved, so as to avoid unnecessary fear or distress and potential compromises to their welfare.



- **As flock animals, sheep are attracted to the sight of other sheep and find isolation stressful**
- **Sheep are easily startled by sudden movements and sudden/loud noises**
- **Sheep may balk at apparent dead ends, shadows and changes in the colour/pattern of flooring.**

**M 4.3** Sheep must not be caught by the fleece alone, nor lifted or dragged by the fleece, limbs, ears or tail, nor roughly handled by the horns.



**Horns, particularly of young sheep, can be damaged or broken if sheep are roughly handled by them.**

**M 4.4** Sheep must be handled or restrained by means of a hand or an arm under the neck (holding, but not pulling, the neck wool if necessary) with the other arm placed on or around the rear.

**M 4.5** Electric goads must not be present or used on any site.

**M 4.6** Sticks must not be used for hitting sheep.



**Sticks or other benign (non-harmful) handling aids may only be used as extensions of the arms.**

**M 4.7** Heavily pregnant ewes (those in the last two months of pregnancy) must:

- a) only be handled when absolutely necessary, and
- b) be handled with care to avoid distress and injury which may result in premature lambing.



**The last two months of pregnancy is a critical time for the ewe as this is when the vast majority of foetal growth occurs. It is therefore important to minimise stress during this time. Handling should be kept to a minimum, and only when necessary, such as to monitor their body condition or to administer veterinary treatments.**

## Shearing

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**M 5.1** Every adult sheep of a wool breed must have its fleece removed at least once per year.

**M 5.2** Those shearing sheep must have undertaken formal verifiable training to ensure they are appropriately trained and competent.



**Standard M 5.2 applies to both farmers undertaking their own shearing and contract shearers. Formal verifiable training can be obtained by attending a relevant course awarded/run by British Wool, Lantra and/or an agricultural college/university. This may be an international provider.**

**Managers are responsible for ensuring both stock-keepers and contract shearers have undertaken the required training and carry out shearing to a high standard.**

- M 5.2.1** Industry Guidance on Shearing has been produced for farmers and shearing contractors by a number of industry organisations (National Association of Agricultural Contractors, National Farmers' Union Cymru, National Farmers' Union Scotland, Farmers' Union of Wales, British Wool, National Farmers' Union and National Sheep Association – available through their websites). This guidance must be:
- made available
  - read and understood, and
  - implemented, where necessary
- by those undertaking sheep shearing.
- M 5.3** When shearing, care must be taken not to nick or cut the skin; particular care must be taken not to cut the teats of young female sheep and not to injure the penis/sheath and/or scrotum of ram lambs.
- M 5.4** If, when shearing, a wound occurs:
- effective treatment must be given immediately, and
  - by a veterinary surgeon when necessary.
- M 5.5** Between flocks, to minimise the risk of spreading diseases such as caseous lymphadenitis (CLA) and sheep scab, shearers must:
- clean and disinfect their shearing equipment, and
  - change or clean and disinfect their footwear and outer protective clothing.
- M 5.6** Sheep must not be shorn if the prevailing weather conditions are such that the loss of fleece will compromise their welfare, unless sufficient steps can be taken to ensure their welfare is adequately protected.



**If sheep are likely to suffer from cold stress following shearing, they should be housed and only turned out when climatic conditions have improved and sufficient regrowth of fleece has occurred.**

**Defra's Code of Recommendations for Sheep states that 15–20mm of fleece should be present before turn out following winter shearing.**

**The fleece can also act as insulation against heat, so consideration should equally be given to the potential for heat stroke if shearing is undertaken during periods of hot weather. Sufficient water and shade should be provided to prevent this.**

## Identification

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- M 6.1** Sheep must be marked for identification purposes in accordance with current legislation.
- M 6.2** All identification procedures must only be undertaken:
- by trained, competent personnel
  - using appropriate, well-maintained equipment, and
  - in a way that minimises the risk to welfare both during and after the procedure.
- M 6.3** Ear tags must be:
- fitted under hygienic conditions, and
  - positioned according to the manufacturer's instructions, avoiding blood vessels and ridges of cartilage and allowing room for growth of the ear in lambs.



It is recommended that ear tags are fitted at birth, once sufficient time has passed for the lamb to have fed and bonded with the ewe. In order to avoid infection, the ear tag and applicator should be clean and disinfected prior to fitting. Where possible, ear tags should not be fitted during periods of hot weather to reduce the risk of flystrike.

- M 6.4** If electronic boluses are used for identification purposes a written procedure must be in the VHWP (see standard H 1.1) outlining:
- the precise protocol to be followed, and
  - the measures taken to minimise the risk to welfare.



Measures taken to minimise the risk to welfare include close monitoring of the sheep for a period of at least two weeks following insertion of the bolus.

- M 6.5** Aerosols or paints used for temporary marking must be non-toxic.

## Equipment

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- M 7.1** When equipment is installed which affects animal welfare, stock-keepers must be able to:
- demonstrate an ability to operate the equipment
  - demonstrate the ability to carry out routine maintenance
  - recognise common signs of malfunction, and
  - demonstrate knowledge of action to be carried out in event of a failure.
- M 7.2** All automatic equipment must be thoroughly inspected by a stock-keeper or other competent person, at least twice daily to check that there is no defect in it.
- M 7.3** **LEGAL** Where a defect is found in the automatic equipment:
- the defect must be rectified immediately, or
  - if this is impracticable, such measures must immediately be taken (and must be maintained until the defect is rectified) to safeguard the sheep from suffering unnecessary pain or distress as a result of the defect.
- M 7.4** **LEGAL** Where the automatic equipment includes a ventilation system, the system must contain:
- an alarm which will give adequate warning of the failure of that system to function properly (and will operate even if the principal electricity supply to it has failed)
  - additional equipment or means of ventilation (whether automatic or not) which, in the event of such a failure of the ventilation system, will provide adequate ventilation so as to prevent the livestock from suffering unnecessary distress as a result of the failure.

## Inspection

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- M 8.1** When sheep are housed, stock-keepers must inspect their livestock and the equipment upon which such stock depend at least twice daily.
- M 8.2** When sheep are on lowland pasture, stock-keepers must inspect the flock at least once a day, with increased checks undertaken at times when the risk of welfare problems is increased.



In relation to M 8.2, times of increased risk include:

- pre- and post-lambing
- when the likelihood of flystrike is increased
- during adverse weather conditions
- when sheep may be at a greater risk of becoming trapped or entangled, for example if they are being kept in an area with a large amount of brambles, if double fencing is used (where sheep may try to reach grass between the fences), or if wire mesh fencing is used with horned sheep or in lambing fields.

**M 8.3** **LEGAL** When sheep are on upland or hill pastures, they must be inspected as frequently as is necessary to avoid welfare problems, ideally once a day.

**M 8.4** Lambing ewes must be inspected at least twice a day.

**M 8.5** Following inspections, stock-keepers must:

- a) record observations if a problem is identified
- b) deal with any welfare problems appropriately and without delay, and
- c) record any actions taken.



**Welfare problems of sufficient severity, that they should have been noticed on previous inspections and dealt with, shall be taken by the RSPCA Assured Assessor as evidence of negligence of duties by the stock-keeper.**

**Stock-keepers should be aware of environmental factors that might cause sheep to be missed out during inspections (e.g. lambs hidden inside hollow trees).**

## Farm dogs

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**M 9.1** Dogs, including working dogs, must:

- a) be properly trained, or undergoing training
- b) not cause injury or distress to sheep, and
- c) be kept under control at all times.

**M 9.2** All farm dogs must be provided with:

- a) ready access to clean, fresh drinking water at all times
- b) sufficient quantities of an appropriate diet that maintains health and wellbeing
- c) shelter which protects from inclement weather and is clean, dry and draught-free
- d) clean, comfortable bedding
- e) regular appropriate vaccination and treatment for internal and external parasites with the dates and exact treatments recorded in the VHWP (see standard H 1.1)
- f) an annual veterinary health check, and
- g) swift veterinary advice/attention as necessary in the event of illness or injury.



In addition to the requirements set out in M 9.2, consideration should also be given to the following important needs for farm dogs:

- ensuring dogs have company of other dogs and/or humans for at least 8 hours of every day
- ensuring that if dogs are not actively working, they have sufficient exercise every day (depending on their age and state of health) to keep them fit and healthy, and to do work as and when needed
- ensuring when there is a need to contain dogs on occasions, that care is taken to ensure that dogs are not at risk of injury or distress e.g. through inappropriate tethering or close confinement in an unsuitable environment.

**M 9.3** Farm dogs must not be allowed to scavenge on carcasses or animal parts, including placentae.

## Sourcing of livestock

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**M 10.1** All sheep presented for slaughter must have spent their entire lives on RSPCA Assured farms, except in the circumstances set out in standard M 10.2.

**M 10.2** In the case of new members of the RSPCA Assured scheme only:

- a) All stock on the farm at the time of approval must subsequently have a dwell period of at least 90 days on RSPCA Assured farms from the date of approval before qualifying as RSPCA Assured animals for the purposes of labelling after slaughter.
- b) If the animals are moved prior to the 90 days, they can still retain their RSPCA Assured status if they are moved to other RSPCA Assured approved farms using RSPCA Assured approved transport (including the producer's own transport), and the total dwell time on approved farms totals 90 days before slaughter.
- c) From the approval date onwards, any store animals brought onto the farm and intended for the food chain under the RSPCA Assured label must be sourced from an RSPCA Assured approved farm.
- d) Animals that have not completed the 90 day dwell time on RSPCA Assured farms may be registered on the store stock register as 'RSPCA Assured' provided that:
  - i. it is stated that they still have dwell days to serve on RSPCA Assured farms prior to slaughter, and
  - ii. the number of dwell days remaining is stated.



**Animals can still be transferred between farms, as long as all premises are RSPCA Assured certified. If finishers have problems in sourcing RSPCA Assured stock, please contact the RSPCA Assured office where information on RSPCA Assured approved sheep breeders is held.**

## Livestock worrying

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The RSPCA recognises the devastating impact livestock worrying can have on sheep flocks and sheep farmers, causing stress and injury to sheep and, in some cases, loss of life. The Society takes livestock worrying very seriously and works to raise awareness of the issue among dog owners; promoting responsible 'on the lead' dog walking near livestock and reminding owners to ensure their home/garden is secure so that their dogs do not escape.

Members can find information and advice on how they can help prevent worrying incidents and what to do if they occur at [www.sheepwatch.co.uk](http://www.sheepwatch.co.uk).

In line with this advice, it is recommended that signage is used to alert dog owners/walkers to the presence of sheep in fields and these signs are changed as and when the sheep are moved. It is also recommended that worrying incidents are reported to the police to help prevent this issue recurring and so that statistics on the problem can be collated.

## Agricultural shows

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- M 11.1** If sheep are taken to shows, procedures must be in place to ensure their welfare needs are suitably met.



In relation to M 11.1, procedures must cover:

- feed and water provision
- prevention of cold/heat stress
- space allowance and provision of a dry, bedded lying area
- handling
- transport, and
- biosecurity.

It should be noted that the standards laid out in this document are seen as the minimum required to meet the animal's welfare needs.

- M 11.2** Practices and procedures which may be detrimental to welfare and have no purpose other than cosmetic enhancement are prohibited.

## Protection from other animals

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- M 12.1** A written Wild Animal Control Plan (WACP) must:
- a) be in place, and
  - b) be implemented on farm.

**M 12.2** Levels of potentially harmful wild animals (e.g. rodents and birds) must be managed humanely to avoid:

- a) the risk of disease spread to livestock
- b) damage to livestock buildings and the services on which livestock depend
- c) contamination and spoilage of feed.



**In England and Wales, the following legislation applies to the management of wildlife:**

- **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981**
- **Animal Welfare Act 2006**
- **The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017**
- **Protection of Badgers Act 1992**
- **Pests Act 1954**
- **The Spring Traps Approval (England) Order 2018**
- **The Spring Traps Approval (Wales) Order 2019**
- **The Small Ground Vermin Traps Order 1958**
- **Food and Environment Protection Act 1985**
- **The Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986**
- **Animals (Cruel Poisons) Act 1962**

**Equivalent legislation applies in Scotland and Northern Ireland.**

**M 12.3** The primary means of protecting livestock from wild animals, as documented in the WACP, must be by:

- a) physical exclusion methods
- b) the removal of elements in the vicinity that might encourage the presence of wild animals, and
- c) maintaining units in a clean and tidy condition to minimise the risk of wild animals gaining access to the unit.



**Physical exclusion measures are the most humane and effective methods of providing protection from wild animals. Measures should only be applied after the area has been checked and cleared of elements that could encourage the presence of wild animals, as applying some measures can interfere with rodent behaviour and encourage them to spread to other areas. Humane methods of protecting livestock from other animals include:**

- **construction/maintenance of fencing appropriate for excluding the wild animals in question**
- **removal of shelter/cover (e.g. weeds, heaps of rubble, broken equipment etc.) in the area surrounding the livestock buildings**
- **removal/protection of obvious food sources**
- **maintenance of drains**
- **maintenance/proofing of buildings against wild animals**
- **storing bedding away from livestock.**

**i** Rodents are less likely to inhabit an area if there is no cover or food supply. Reduced food availability will also increase the likelihood of rodents consuming bait, where applied. When stores or livestock buildings are empty, the opportunity should be taken to clean spaces and introduce any necessary controls before restocking.

- M 12.4** Where any lethal method of control is being considered, a site survey of the unit must be carried out before applying the control i.e. bait or traps, identifying:
- the type, level and extent of the problem species
  - any non-target animals likely to be present (including pets and children), and
  - any maintenance and proofing issues.
- M 12.5** Where any lethal method of control is used, its use must have taken into account the results of the site survey (see standard M 12.4).
- M 12.6** The WACP must include provisions that specifically exclude the following methods of control:
- snaring
  - gassing, and
  - vertebrate glue traps.
- M 12.7** Long-term baiting must not be used as a routine rodent control measure.

**i** In relation to standard M 12.7, site plans should therefore highlight potential high risk areas for wild animal activity (rather than permanent baiting locations).

Long-term baiting should not be necessary if bait traps are applied effectively. Long-term baiting can contribute to bait resistance in rodents.

However, where bait traps are applied effectively and the requirements of standard M 12.3 have been implemented, and there continues to be problems with protecting livestock from wild animals, it is appreciated that continued baiting may be necessary. However, this should be part of a continued review of the need to bait following the requirements of standard M 12.4.

**i** The RSPCA is opposed to the use of poisons that cause animal suffering and it is important not to rely solely on the use of rodenticide. The RSPCA is concerned about the welfare of all animals that have the capacity to suffer, and therefore all alternative forms of deterrent and humane control should be exhausted before resorting to the use of poisons for rodents.

**i** Any baiting programme should be considered carefully and justified in risk assessments for each location where used. Consideration should be given to using non-toxic baits to ascertain the presence of rodents, which may necessitate the use of rodenticide.

- M 12.8** When bait and/or traps are used, records of the use must be kept and:
- state the location of the bait/traps
  - state what bait/traps were used
  - state the volume/number of bait/traps placed
  - state the name of the person who placed the bait/trap
  - be retained for at least two years.
- M 12.9** Bait and traps must:
- be placed in suitable positions, and
  - be sufficiently protected to avoid harming non-target animals.
- M 12.10** Bait must be used according to the manufacturer's instruction for:
- storage
  - usage, including areas of use and replenishment, and
  - disposal.
- M 12.11** Traps must be:
- used according to the manufacturer's instructions
  - maintained in good order
  - disposed of appropriately if no longer fit for purpose, e.g. have broken, and
  - stored safely and securely.
- M 12.12** Bait points must:
- be monitored regularly, and
  - records of monitoring be kept including:
    - levels of activity at each bait point
    - any missing or disturbed bait
    - the name of the person responsible for monitoring the bait points.
- M 12.13** Trap points must:
- be monitored at least twice a day, ideally at dawn and dusk, and
  - records of monitoring must be kept including:
    - level of activity at each trap
    - any missing or disturbed traps, and
    - the name of the person responsible for monitoring the traps.
- M 12.14** Any injured, sick or dying wild animals found – that have been targeted for control – must be humanely dispatched immediately to prevent further suffering.



**Regular replenishment of bait will help prevent sub-lethal doses, which can result in a build-up of resistance to the active ingredient.**

**M 12.15** Where bait is used, dead animals must be disposed of safely, in line with the manufacturer's product label.



**Safe disposal of wild animals that have died as a result of poisoning reduces the risk of secondary poisoning in non-target species, such as domestic and other wild animals (including birds), that may consume the carcasses.**

**M 12.16** Once treatment is complete, all traps and traces of bait must be:

- a) removed
- b) disposed of/stored according to the manufacturer's instructions.

**M 12.17** Managers must ensure that all stock-keepers:

- a) have access to a copy of the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use *UK Code of Best Practice: Best Practice and Guidance for Rodent Control and the Safe Use of Rodenticides*
- b) are familiar with its content, and
- c) understand and apply its content.



**Producers are strongly encouraged to complete the free, self-study training course on rodent control available at: <http://rodentcontrolonfarms.co.uk/login/index.php>**

**The content of the course is based on a LANTRA course and is approved by the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use. Further information is available in the AHDB document *Rodent Control on Farms: A practical guide to effective and responsible use of bait rodenticides*.**

**M 12.18** Wild animal control must be covered by the farm Control of Substances Hazardous to Health assessment, where required.

**M 12.19** Domestic animals must not have access to the unit, other than farm dogs and cats.

**M 12.20** Farm cats must be:

- a) in healthy condition, and
- b) regularly wormed (record to be kept in medicine book).

**M 12.21** Domestic pets, wild animals and birds must not have any access to any sheep carcasses, which must be disposed of in line with the appropriate legislation.

The environment in which livestock are housed must promote good health.

## Health and welfare planning

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- H 1.1** All sheep units must have a written Veterinary Health and Welfare Plan (VHWP) that is developed, reviewed and updated:
- as required and in any case at least annually, and
  - in consultation with the attending veterinary surgeon and, where appropriate, other suitably qualified persons, for example a nutritionist.
- H 1.1.1** All protocols and plans laid out in the VHWP must be implemented as necessary.
- H 1.2** **REVISED** The VHWP must be specific to the individual farm and include:
- the names and specific roles of all personnel involved with the care of sheep on the farm
  - a biosecurity and biocontainment policy for reducing the risk of introducing disease and controlling the spread of infectious diseases between stock, which must include disease investigation and surveillance, the introduction of new or hired stock and the isolation of stock with infectious disease (see Appendix 3)
  - a vaccination plan which includes details of any vaccines that will be used, target animals, timings and whether boosters are required
  - an internal and external parasite control plan (see standard H 2.2)
  - a lameness control plan (see standard H 3.1)
  - a breeding management plan that details the health and welfare needs of the ewes, lambs and rams including protocols for bringing in hired rams and husbandry procedures specific to lambing time (e.g. colostrum protocols)
  - procedures for the management of casualty animals, including methods for humane emergency slaughter and contact details of those trained to carry this out
  - an emergency action procedures plan addressing situations where mass culling may be required, for example in response to a major disease outbreak (see standard H 10.3)
  - an effective procedure for identifying animals that are undergoing/have undergone treatment, which is known to all farm staff, and
  - LEGAL** procedures for the safe disposal of pharmaceutical waste, needles and other sharps, in accordance with the relevant waste disposal regulations.
- H 1.3** Pain relief must be provided when any procedure performed on an animal is likely to cause pain during and/or after the procedure, for example a traumatic lambing, or if an animal is suffering from a condition which is likely to be painful, for example severe lameness.
-  **Long-acting pain relief is provided off licence for sheep at the discretion of the farm's vet. Any vets wishing to obtain advice about the use of these drugs in sheep should contact the manufacturers of the drugs.**
- H 1.4** Sheep producers must arrange for at least:
- one veterinary visit per year for finishing units
  - two veterinary visits per year for breeding units.
- H 1.4.1** The timing of visits relating to standard H 1.4 must be such that maximum health, welfare and management advantage is achieved.



**Producers are strongly encouraged to request a summary of the areas discussed during each veterinary visit as well as the action points, if not routinely provided by the veterinary surgeon.**

**H 1.5** The individual farm VHWP must:

- a) identify and list all the health and welfare conditions currently affecting and likely to affect the flock (see standard H 1.6)
- b) document (i) how, (ii) when, and (iii) how often each condition will be monitored
- c) record the type of animal affected (i.e. age, stage of production etc.)
- d) record the level of each condition for the farm
- e) set a threshold limit for the level of each condition for the farm
- f) monitor the level of each condition for the farm
- g) for each condition, develop and implement a plan designed to prevent any increase in, and/or reduce the average level of that condition for the farm (a prevention plan) including the method of control to be used, and
- h) ensure treatment plans are developed for the health and welfare conditions listed in standard H 1.6.

**H 1.5.1** If any conditions exceed the agreed threshold limits established in the VHWP they must be reviewed and revised in consultation with the relevant advisor to address any problems which have been identified.



**In addition to reviewing the environment, management and veterinary care of sheep when health and welfare problems arise, consideration should be given to whether genetics may be a contributory factor, and hence whether changes in the farm's policy on genetics in the flock would be beneficial.**

**For example, there is evidence that some breeds/strains of sheep are more resistant to some parasites and some health conditions, such as foot rot. Similarly, lambing ease varies between breeds/strains, as does suitability to different environments. There are also concerns about the potential welfare problems resulting from double muscling in some sheep.**

**Producers are encouraged to provide feedback on these issues to sheep breeders.**

**H 1.6** **REVISED** The following health and welfare conditions, where applicable to the unit, must be listed in the VHWP (see standard H 1.1):

- a) metabolic disease (pregnancy toxemia/ketosis and hypocalcaemia)
- b) problems at lambing (vaginal prolapse, dystocia, 'ringwomb')
- c) injuries
- d) body condition
- e) prevalence of lameness
- f) incidence of mastitis
- g) internal and external parasites, covering, as a minimum, gastro-intestinal worms, liver fluke, blowfly (flystrike) and scab mites
- h) mortality – including sudden deaths, those humanely killed as unfit, and unexplained losses where a carcass isn't found (black losses)
- i) the main disease problems known or suspected to be present on-farm including any of the five "Iceberg Diseases" listed in the information box below.



**NEW** AHDB have identified five 'Iceberg Diseases' where the majority of cases may be subclinical when present on-farm. These are:

- Border disease
- caseous lymphadenitis (CLA)
- Maedi Visna (MV)
- ovine paratuberculosis (or ovine Johne's disease)
- ovine pulmonary adenocarcinoma (OPA or Jaagsiekte)

For more information see the AHDB "Iceberg disease of ewes" technical manual.



**NEW** Humane endpoints are required for the treatment plans for poor body condition and lameness (see standards H 3.5 and H 4.1.1).

A humane endpoint is an agreed point at which an animal is humanely euthanised due to, for example, unmanageable pain, because it is not responding to treatment, or because future treatments are unlikely to be effective.

For example, a humane endpoint for a sheep suffering from severe lameness could be if the sheep is still unable to bear weight on the affected foot four days after the recommended treatment (and the provision of suitable pain relief).

Humane endpoints are not currently required for the other treatment plans for the conditions listed in H 1.6, however producers are encouraged to consider these during discussions with their vet.

**H 1.7** All sudden deaths, disease outbreaks and sheep humanely killed as unfit, must:

- a) be recorded, including the date of death and suspected or known cause
- b) be reported to the veterinary surgeon, if appropriate
- c) be investigated appropriately, and
- d) have the outcome and action recorded.

**H 1.8** Flock performance data must be continuously monitored for signs of disease or production disorders.



**Resistance to endoparasite treatments in sheep is a serious problem and can result in ineffective control and suffering in the animals. Producers are strongly encouraged to apply the key principles of the Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep programme. Further information can be found at [www.scops.org.uk](http://www.scops.org.uk) . The key principles of SCOPS can be found in Appendix 1.**

**H 1.9** **REVISED** **LEGAL** Any injured, ailing or distressed sheep must be:

- a) segregated
- b) treated without delay, and
- c) humanely killed if they do not respond to appropriate treatment.

**H 1.9.1** In relation to H 1.9, veterinary advice must be sought when needed.

- H 1.10** Hospital pens must be constructed to facilitate:
- effective cleaning of surfaces, and
  - the possible removal of a carcass from the pen.
- H 1.11** Hospital pens must:
- be thoroughly cleansed and disinfected after each use, and
  - have disposable contents removed and disposed of according to the biosecurity and biocontainment plan.

## Parasite control

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- H 2.1** All practical measures must be taken to prevent or control external and internal parasitic infestations.
- H 2.2** **NEW** The VHWP must include a Parasite Control Plan (see standard H 1.2 d) which must include:
- the identification of farm specific internal and external parasites that could affect sheep,
  - the monitoring procedures to determine the proportion (%) of the flock affected (for the parasites identified under a),
  - specific methods of control that:
    - aim to prevent such parasites affecting the flock and,
    - reduce/eradicate them where they are already present
  - specific quarantine procedures for sheep arriving and/or returning to the farm to prevent the spread of any parasites, including:
    - a risk assessment for sheep bringing parasites onto the farm, and
    - parasite treatments based on the completed risk assessment



**NEW** For guidance on how to complete a parasite risk assessment for sheep arriving on farm, see the '*Quarantine treatments and procedures*' guide on the SCOPS website. Available at: <https://www.scops.org.uk/workspace/pdfs/quarantine-procedures-and-treatments.pdf>

- H 2.2.1** **NEW** With regard to standard H 2.2 c), treatment protocols, including target animals, treatment timings and medicines to be used, must be detailed within the Parasite Control Plan.
- H 2.3** **NEW** When administering anthelmintics orally, stock keepers must:
- calibrate the dosing gun prior to each treatment session, and
  - dose at the rate recommended for the heaviest sheep in the group
- H 2.4** Where infestations such as fly strike or sheep scab mite are likely to occur, sheep must be given routine treatment using effective methods as laid out in the VHWP.



**REVISED** Plunge dips are one option used to control sheep scab mite, but consideration should be given to the environmental contamination risks of dipping and its correct application for it to be effective. The use of alternatives, for example injectable substances, should also be considered.

Please note:

- organophosphate products are not licensed for use in jetties or showers.
- to buy or use sheep dip products in the UK, a certificate of competence is required under the Medicines (Exemptions for Merchants in Veterinary Drugs) Order 1998.

**H 2.5** When dipping is carried out, operators must:

- a) minimise stress to the animals
- b) safeguard human health and safety
- c) use and replenish the dip properly, and
- d) dispose of the dip safely and responsibly.

## Lameness

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**H 3.1** The VHWP must include a preventative lameness control plan which must include:

- a) the identification of all conditions that could affect foot health on-farm, including current farm specific diseases
- b) specific methods of control to help prevent such diseases entering the flock, or reduce them where already present
- c) consideration must be given to the relevant elements of the 5 Point Plan (where footrot with or without contagious ovine digital dermatitis (CODD) is implicated), including:
  - i. the rapid treatment of clinical cases – including protocols for the use of footbaths and injectable antibiotics, and protocols for the cleaning and disinfection of hoof paring equipment
  - ii. a pasture management plan for the avoidance of spread of infectious disease
  - iii. quarantine procedures for incoming animals
  - iv. a culling policy to improve flock resilience against footrot and prevent chronic lameness cases developing, and
  - v. a vaccination plan to provide flock immunity
- d) a target prevalence for lameness, tailored to the individual farm.



**It should be noted that:**

- in relation to H 3.1 b), routine hoof paring is not recommended
- in relation to H 3.1 b), foot inspection should be carried out on an individual basis at the following times:
  - during quarantine
  - for diagnosing a case of lameness, and
  - for monitoring the effectiveness of treatment for lameness
- in relation to H 3.1 c) ii, affected individuals should be isolated where possible and the unaffected sheep moved onto clean pasture.



**NEW** For details of the 5 Point Plan, see Appendix 7.

- H 3.2** Where hoof paring is necessary:
- a) it must only be carried out by someone competent to do so, and
  - b) equipment must be cleaned and disinfected in between each use according to the lameness control plan protocol (see standard H 3.1 c) ii.).

- H 3.3** Lameness scoring according to the WOA protocol (Appendix 4) must be carried out at least:
- a) three times a year for breeding ewes and rams
  - b) twice for groups of lambs post-weaning and prior to slaughter, and the results recorded in the VHWP.



**The timing of lameness scoring should take into account high risk times of year for lameness in the flock.**

- H 3.4** Any lame animals detected must be:
- a) immediately inspected with the cause identified
  - b) appropriately treated without delay, and
  - c) isolated where infectious causes are suspected.
- H 3.5** **NEW** The lameness treatment plan (see standard H 1.2 e) ) must include a humane endpoint which has been determined in consultation with a veterinary surgeon (see information box below standard H 1.6).
- H 3.6** **NEW** Lame sheep that can put little or no weight on one or more of their legs are not fit for transport and must not be transported, except for veterinary treatment (see standard T 2.1).
- H 3.7** **NEW** Sheep identified as chronically lame (please see the information box below) must:
- a) not be used for further breeding, and
  - b) be treated appropriately, and either:
    - i. where lameness improves with treatment, be culled from the flock at a time when the health and welfare of other animals will not be impacted, or
    - ii. where lameness does not improve with treatment, be humanely killed on farm (see standard H 10.4).

See information box below.



**NEW** A chronically lame sheep is any animal that:

- a) fails to respond to recommended treatment(s), and/or,
- b) has experienced two bouts of lameness in a season.

Please note that a sheep with a lameness score of 0 would be considered as chronically lame if they have recovered from a second bout of lameness within a season. A “season” is defined as the production cycle for that year e.g. from tuppung to tuppung.



**NEW** Standard H 3.7 b) i) seeks to reduce the impact of culling a ewe which has responded to treatment for lameness on unweaned lambs by ensuring sheep are culled from the flock at an appropriate time (i.e. post weaning). These animals may be sent for slaughter, providing they meet the requirements set out in the transport and slaughter sections.

Standard H 3.7 b) ii) reinforces that it is unacceptable to keep an animal which is not responding to treatment, including effective pain relief, and that these animals are not fit for transport and will therefore require euthanasia on farm.

**H 3.8** At least one permanent member of staff, named in the VHWP, must have undergone appropriate, verifiable training in sheep footcare.



**Verifiable training may be available through attendance of courses run at agricultural colleges, universities or local veterinary practices. A written vet's letter acknowledging the staff member's competency to correctly pare hooves, knowledge of basic foot conditions, appropriate use of routine footcare procedures etc. is also acceptable.**

**H 3.9** Prior to housing, sheep must:

- a) be in a dry condition,
- b) be checked for lameness,
- c) receive treatments, and
- d) be isolated as necessary, according to H 3.1 c).

**H 3.10** A footbathing facility must:

- a) contain a treatment with an antibacterial agent at the appropriate concentration, which is regularly topped up or replaced
- b) be designed and managed to keep animals standing in the treatment solution for as long as recommended in the manufacturer's instructions
- c) have a non-slip entry and exit surface, and
- d) have an area of hard-standing post-footbathing.

**H 3.11** Antibiotic agents must not be used in footbaths.

**H 3.12** Stock-keepers must:

- a) have access to copies of the most recent publications of:
  - i. AHDB *Beef and Lamb Reducing lameness for Better Returns* and
  - ii. *The Lameness 5 Point Plan*
- b) be familiar with the contents of a) i. and ii., and
- c) implement the recommendations of a) i. and ii. where relevant.

## Body condition scoring

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**H 4.1** A body condition maintenance plan must be included in the VHWP, which sets out how under- and over-conditioned ewes will be managed to ensure they achieve a BCS suitable for their stage of production.

**H 4.1.1** **NEW** The poor body condition treatment plan (see standard H 1.5 h)) must include a humane endpoint which has been determined in consultation with a veterinary surgeon (see information box below standard H 1.6).

**H 4.2** Body condition change in sheep must be carefully:

- a) planned
- b) maintained, and
- c) recorded in the VHWP when body condition scores are <2 or >4

according to the stage of production cycle.



**As a general rule, no animal should, at any time, have a body condition score less than 2.**

**H 4.2.1** **NEW** Where a sheep has a body condition score of less than 2:

- a) an investigation must be carried out to determine the cause of weight loss,
- b) action is taken immediately to improve the sheep's body condition score

**H 4.2.2** **NEW** Sheep with a body condition score of less than 2 are not fit for transport and must not be transported, except for veterinary treatment (see standard T 2.1).

**H 4.3** **REVISED** Body condition scoring must be undertaken at least at the following times during the ewes' production cycle:

- a) at weaning
- b) 10 weeks before tupping
- c) 4–6 weeks before lambing

and the results recorded in the VHWP (see standard H 4.1 c) ).



**REVISED** It can also be useful to body condition score ewes at other important points in their production cycle e.g. lambing. Rams should also be body condition scored on a regular basis, particularly 10 weeks before tupping.



Body condition scoring is recognised as a key management tool for sheep producers. It can be used to inform decision making about the sheep's management and feeding, such as whether certain animals need separating from the main flock and given supplementary feeding. This supports the maintenance of appropriate ewe body condition throughout the production cycle, which leads to improved ewe health and, in turn, improved lamb health and performance.

Guidance on body condition scoring can be found in AHDB Beef and Lamb's Sheep BPR Manual *Managing ewes for Better Returns*; and the 1–5 scoring system used can be found in Appendix 5. The Manual also provides the following guidance on target body condition scores for the different stages of production:

|                          | Hill | Upland  | Lowland |
|--------------------------|------|---------|---------|
| Weaning                  | 2.0  | 2.0     | 2.5     |
| Tupping                  | 2.5  | 3.0     | 3.5     |
| Mid pregnancy            | 2.0  | 2.5     | 3.0     |
| Late pregnancy           | 2.0  | 2.5     | 3.0     |
| Lambing                  | 2.0  | 2.5     | 3.0     |
| Eight weeks post lambing | 2.0  | 2.0–2.5 | 2.5–3.0 |

## Breeding procedures

**H 5.1** **NEW** Prior to breeding, health inspections must be carried out at least 10 weeks prior to tupping to ensure ewes:

- are in a fit state of health to maintain gestation and,
- can be expected to rear two lambs to weaning without increased risk of mortality for the ewe or lambs.

**H 5.2** **NEW** Prior to breeding, health inspections must be carried out at least 10 weeks prior to tupping to ensure rams are able to maintain body condition of at least a score 2 throughout tupping.



**NEW** In relation to standards H 5.1 and H 5.2, health checks carried out 10 weeks prior to tupping should include: lameness scoring, dental exams, body condition scoring, udder conformation, and checking for small or soft testes, as appropriate.

For more information, see the AHDB better returns guide for rams, available at:

<https://ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/ram-mot-leaflet>

and ewes, available at:

<https://ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/managing-ewes-for-better-returns>

**H 5.3** **NEW** Breeding must be planned to ensure:

- caesarean sections do not become a routine procedure
- vaginal prolapses are not a common condition.



**NEW** More than one caesarean section for a ewe will be considered a routine procedure for that animal.

- H 5.3.1** **NEW** If the farm sees more than 1% of vaginal prolapses in one season/lambing/year then this condition must be addressed in the VHWP (see standard H 1.6).
- H 5.4** Artificial insemination must only be performed by a veterinary surgeon, or a trained and competent individual under the direction of a veterinary surgeon.
- H 5.5** Transcervical and/or intrauterine (laparoscopic) artificial insemination must not be carried out.
- H 5.6** Where used, progesterone sponges must be:
- administered by a trained and competent person, in line with the manufacturer's instructions
  - inserted with care, using lubricant
  - inserted hygienically, ensuring the ewe is clean, and using clean sponges and a clean and disinfected applicator, and
  - removed with care, with a veterinary surgeon consulted if the sponge string cannot be found or has been pulled out.
- H 5.6.1** Progesterone sponges must not be used on ewe lambs.
- H 5.7** The use of electroejaculation in rams is not permitted.



**Alternative ways of collecting semen for analysis are available. The use of an artificial vagina and oestrous 'teaser' ewe is generally considered best practice.**

- H 5.8** Devices such as ram harnesses must be:
- made of suitable material
  - properly fitted, and
  - visually checked at least once a day and adjusted, if necessary, to avoid causing injury or discomfort.
- H 5.9** During pregnancy, the use of scanning techniques to determine foetal numbers must be considered.
- H 5.10** Producers using harnesses/trusses to treat vaginal prolapse must:
- use them according to a protocol outlined in the VHWP
  - record their use including the date they were fitted and removed
  - visually check ewes fitted with a harness daily for signs of discomfort and lambing, and
  - remove the harness on seeing the first signs of lambing.

## Pregnancy and lambing

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- H 6.1** Heavily pregnant ewes (those in the last two months of gestation) must be handled with extra care and attention (see standard M 4.7).
- H 6.2** The lambing environment must be kept clean and well maintained throughout the lambing period.

**H 6.3** Prior to providing a lambing ewe with assistance the stock-keeper must:

- a) ensure the foetus is correctly presented, and
- b) ensure the ewe's cervix is adequately dilated to deliver the lamb without significant damage.



**NEW** When assisting a lambing ewe, stock keepers should wash their hands and wear suitable gloves to reduce the risk of spreading infectious diseases, such as **Enzootic Abortion in Ewes (EAE)**, to other sheep in the flock or introducing new infections to the ewe.

**H 6.4** When a stock-keeper experiences difficulty in delivering a lamb, assistance must be sought immediately from a suitably qualified individual.

**H 6.4.1** Contact details of those trained and competent to provide emergency assistance during a difficult lambing must be kept in the VHWP.

**H 6.5** Embryotomy must be carried out:

- a) on dead lambs only, and
- b) only by a veterinary surgeon.

## Care of newborn lambs

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**H 7.1** Stock-keepers must:

- a) have access to a copy of the AHDB Beef and Lamb booklet, *Reducing lamb losses for Better Returns* (Sheep BRP manual 14, 2015)
- b) be familiar with its content, and
- c) implement its recommendations where relevant.

**H 7.2** Lambs must receive a sufficient amount of colostrum in the first 24 hours after birth, with the first feed occurring within 2 hours of birth.



**Colostrum provides lambs with energy, key nutrients and antibodies to protect against disease. It also helps support lamb health and growth, and can reduce the need for antibiotics later on.**

**Colostrum should be consumed as soon as possible after birth, as the lamb's ability to absorb the antibodies decreases with time. As a guide, lambs should receive 250ml per kg bodyweight in the first 24 hours in around 4 to 5 feeds, with 50 ml per kg body weight received in the first 2 hours. The need to manually provide colostrum can be assessed through regularly watching for lambs having uninterrupted suckles from the ewe and checking their stomachs for fullness.**

**Colostrum quality is also important and should be considered where possible. Simple pen-side tests can be done using a colostrometer.**

**Lambs most at risk of inadequate colostrum intake are triplets, small lambs (<3.5kg at birth), weak lambs, those much smaller than their sibling or those that have been rejected by the ewe.**

**H 7.3** Alternative sources of colostrum must be available to give to lambs if their dams' colostrum is of insufficient quantity or quality.



**NEW** For more information on colostrum, including alternative sources, please see Appendix 8.

**H 7.4** Stock-keepers must:

- a) be competent in the use of stomach tubes for feeding lambs,
- b) use stomach tubes only when biologically necessary, and
- c) have knowledge of all other recovery techniques in the event of lamb hypothermia.



**It is important to stomach tube lambs properly as incorrect technique may result in drowning the lamb. Suckling results in optimum colostrum antibody uptake and thus should be the method of preference.**

**H 7.5** Lambs must have access to palatable and nutritious solid food, including forage (which may be grass), from 8 days of age.

**H 7.6** When lambs are housed, forage must be supplied separately to the bedding material.

**H 7.7** Lambs must not be weaned before:

- a) 6 weeks of age
- b) they are achieving a suitable growth rate.



**Deciding when to wean depends on many factors, such as forage availability, ewe condition and lamb growth rates. For weaning to be successful, lambs should be at least three times their birthweight (this is equal to approximately 250g daily weight gain).**

**Each farm will have different considerations and should include these in their breeding management plan (see standard H 1.2 f)).**

**H 7.8** Orphan lambs must be fed a suitable milk substitute at least four times daily in the first week, and at least three times daily in weeks 2 to 4, to ensure they remain hydrated and in good body condition.

**H 7.9** Milk substitute must be mixed according to the manufacturer's instructions unless prescribed otherwise by the attending veterinary surgeon.

**H 7.10** Where automatic feeding equipment is provided, lambs must be trained in its use to ensure an adequate intake of food.

**H 7.11** Where lambs are fed as a group it must be ensured that:

- a) for ad-lib systems there are enough feeders to ensure all lambs can get sufficient intake without unnecessary competition, and
- b) for other systems there is space for all lambs to access the food/milk at the same time without unnecessary competition.

**H 7.12** When artificial rearing is practised, lambs must be individually checked at least three times a day.

- H 7.13** Automatic feeding equipment must be cleaned at least once a week.
- H 7.14** Equipment and utensils used for liquid feeding must be thoroughly cleansed daily and must be effectively sterilised.
- H 7.15** For at least the first three weeks of life, to facilitate inspection and limit the spread of disease, housed lambs must be kept:
- in small groups
  - with lambs of a similar age.



**H 7.15 is particularly important for lambs from multiple births (twins, triplets etc.).**

- H 7.16** Close restraint of ewes (involving 'yoking') for the purpose of lamb fostering is prohibited.
- H 7.17** Practices and procedures for fostering lambs must be planned prior to the start of lambing, and details, including success rates of different methods, must be recorded in the VHWP (see standard H 1.1)
- H 7.18** If lambs are fostered onto ewes, frequent checks (several times in any 24 hour period) of the ewes and lambs must be made.



**Further information on fostering methods and artificial rearing can be found in The Moredun Foundation News Sheet: *Effective Fostering and Artificial Rearing of Sheep* (Feb 2004). Available at: [www.moredun.org.uk](http://www.moredun.org.uk)**

- H 7.19** Regardless of the practice/procedure used, if fostering has not been successfully achieved within 48 hours, alternatives such as well managed artificial rearing (see standards H 7.3 to H 7.14), must be applied.
- H 7.20** An isolation pen for sick lambs must be available and meet the requirements laid out in H 1.10 and H 1.11.

## Potentially injurious husbandry procedures

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- H 8.1** Practices and procedures which may be detrimental to welfare and have no purpose other than cosmetic enhancement are prohibited.



**This can include the delaying of shearing to maintain an animal's fleece where this is not in the interest of the animal's welfare.**

- H 8.2** Potentially injurious husbandry procedures must not be carried out, with the exception of:
- those done for therapeutic reasons by a veterinary surgeon
  - those outlined in H 8.4 to H 8.7.

**H 8.3** **REVISED** Potentially injurious husbandry procedures, including castration and tail docking (see standards H 8.4 to H 8.7), must be detailed in the VHWP (standard H 1.1), including:

- a) details of the method/s used to carry out each procedure
- b) an annual review of:
  - i. How each procedure could be reduced, replaced and refined (see information box below),
  - ii. whether each procedure remains necessary
  - iii. the pain relief protocols used for each procedure.



**NEW** The 3Rs approach – Reduction, Replacement and Refinement – is applied with the aim of preventing painful procedures being carried out on animals.

The 3Rs should be the centre of discussions with your farm vet and potential buyers regarding the need to tail dock and castrate lambs.

Examples of each include:

**Reduction:** only castrating a proportion of males, e.g. later born ram lambs, and only tail docking replacement ewe lambs.

**Replacement:** replacing castration with flock segregation and replacing tail docking with increased flock inspection and improved pasture management.

**Refinement:** implementing more staff training on how to carry out these procedures or using the short-scrotum method of castration.



**NEW** The RSPCA is working to phase out the practices of routine tail docking and castration. However, it is acknowledged that prohibiting these procedures at this time could lead to detrimental impacts on animal welfare, such as an increased number of pregnant ewe lambs at slaughter and high incidence of flystrike in lowland flocks. This is an area under constant review and we encourage producers to think critically about these procedures.

**H 8.4** Castration is not permitted without farm-specific permission from the RSPCA's Farm Animals Department (FAD). Requests for permission to castrate lambs, together with information about the welfare-related reasons for the request (see information box below), must be submitted in writing to the RSPCA FAD on an annual basis. FAD will consider the information provided and may need to visit the farm before making a decision.



Circumstances in which permission to castrate lambs will not be granted include:

- for ram lambs that will be slaughtered before reaching sexual maturity
- if management practices enable flock segregation according to sex
- if castration is only being undertaken to satisfy meat buyers' (e.g. retailers'/processors') specifications.

A pro-forma, including advice on the information that needs to be sent to the RSPCA, is available from the RSPCA Farm Animals Department or RSPCA Assured Assessors

**H 8.5** If castration is permitted (see standard H 8.4):

- a) it must be performed by a trained, competent person
- b) from September 2020, long-acting pain relief (such as a non-steroidal) must be provided, and
- c) it must only be carried out using the following methods:
  - i. application of a rubber ring between 24 hours and 7 days of age only
  - ii. in the event of the failure or unintentional omission of the rubber ring technique, by the use of an approved bloodless castrator, between 24 hours to 8 weeks of age only
  - iii. surgically by a veterinary surgeon using effective pre- and post- operative pain relief.

**i** Due to the nature of rubber ring constriction, lambs experience pain in two stages; immediately following application of the ring and over the course of the following hours as the ring continues to constrict. As such, it is recommended that both local anaesthetic and a longer acting non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) are given. Furthermore, the short-scrotum method of castration has been shown to cause less pain at the time of ring application compared with standard rubber ring application and has similarly successful outcomes. Therefore, the short-scrotum method accompanied with both short-acting and long-acting pain relief injected into the neck of the scrotum or as indicated by the manufacturer is strongly recommended. See Appendix 6.

**H 8.6** Tail docking is not permitted without farm-specific permission from the RSPCA Farm Animals Department (FAD). Requests for permission to tail dock lambs, together with information about the welfare-related reasons for the request (see information box below), must be submitted in writing to the RSPCA FAD on an annual basis. FAD will consider the information provided and may need to visit the farm before making a decision.

**i** A pro-forma, including advice on the information that needs to be sent to the RSPCA, is available from the RSPCA Farm Animals Department or RSPCA Assured Assessors.

**i** The risk of fly strike can often be reduced through various means other than tail docking, including:

- carefully timed application of appropriate fly deterrent chemicals
- crutching
- avoiding soiling of the rear end, e.g. through reducing worm burdens, considering diet etc.
- genetic selection of breeds/strains of sheep with lower risk of fly strike.

Evidence that producers are undertaking these steps will have to be provided prior to permission being given to tail dock.

- H 8.7** If tail docking is permitted (see standard H 8.6):
- a) it must only be performed by a trained, competent person
  - b) from September 2020, long-acting pain relief (such as a non-steroidal) must be provided
  - c) **LEGAL** it must be ensured that a sufficient length of the tail is retained to cover the vulva in the female and the anus in the male sheep, and
  - d) it must only be carried out using the following methods:
    - i. application of a rubber ring between 24 hours and 7 days of age only
    - ii. thermocautery, which must only be used under veterinary advice, from 24 hours to 8 weeks of age only.



**It has been shown that both short-acting and long-acting pain relief are effective at reducing the pain experienced by lambs during tail docking. For best effect it is recommended that both types of pain relief are given. Efforts should be made to administer pain relief to both sides of the tail at the level of ring application or as indicated by the manufacturer. See Appendix 6.**

## Medications/Vaccinations

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- H 9.1** Medicines must be:
- a) clearly labelled, and
  - b) stored in accordance with the label instructions.
- H 9.2** Medicines must be kept in a secure, lockable store which is safe from animals, children and birds.
- H 9.3** The medicine store must be separate from food producing areas.
- H 9.4** A nominated person must:
- a) be responsible for the management of the medicine store, and
  - b) keep appropriate records for stock control purposes.
- H 9.5** **LEGAL** Any medicines used must be:
- a) authorised for use in the UK, and
  - b) applied in accordance with UK and EU legislation.



**It is recommended that producers obtain, read and, where appropriate, apply the advice contained within the latest version of the *Guidelines on Responsible Use of Antimicrobials in Sheep Production*, issued by the Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture (RUMA) alliance ([www.ruma.org.uk](http://www.ruma.org.uk)).**

- H 9.6** Antibiotics must only be used when necessary and always used responsibly.



**Prevention is better than cure. It is the implementation of prevention strategies alongside the adoption of farming practices that prioritise and promote animal welfare that are key to reducing antibiotic use.**

**For more information on this issue, please see the RSPCA information sheet *Antimicrobial resistance and farm animal welfare* available at [www.rspca.org.uk](http://www.rspca.org.uk).**

- H 9.6.1** The use of antibiotics on-farm must be reviewed annually and this review must form part of the VHWP (see standard H 1.1).



**When reviewing the use of antibiotics on-farm, the following should be considered:**

- the different classes of antibiotic drug used
- which group/s of animals were treated, and for which condition/s
- the number of animals treated per occasion
- the total amount of each individual drug within a class that was used (in mg/kg or mg/pcu) per occasion
- a specific section covering all the above for 'Critically Important Antibiotics' (CIAs).

**A group of animals refers to animals of a similar age and/or stage of production.**

**This review is intended to highlight which groups of animals are suffering from particular diseases and therefore aid the development and implementation of targeted prevention strategies.**

- H 9.6.2** In light of the findings of the antibiotic use review (see standard H 9.6.1), an action plan must be drawn up aimed at reducing the use of antibiotics on the farm through improvements in animal husbandry.

- H 9.7** **NEW** The prophylactic use of antibiotics is not permitted.



**NEW** Prophylactic treatment is intended to prevent sickness or disease developing in a group of healthy animals where a veterinary surgeon has identified that there could be a high risk of bacterial infection. We believe that, in ruminants, there should be no need for the prophylactic use of antibiotics when following these standards. However, we acknowledge there may be very exceptional circumstances, e.g in the case of an emergency, such as a transport accident, where a veterinary surgeon may feel it is in the best interests of the affected animal's welfare for antibiotics to be given preventatively. We would expect these occasions to be extremely rare and limited to only a few animals.

**Metaphylactic treatment is intended to control disease spreading in groups of animals where some are already showing clinical signs of disease and is not covered by standard H 9.6.1.**

- H 9.8** All personnel involved in the administration of animal medicines must be competent to do so.

## Casualty animals

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- 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** In relation to H 10.1, 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** An emergency procedures action plan must be detailed in the Veterinary Health and Welfare Plan (see standard H 1.2) to address situations where mass culling may be required, for example in response to a major disease outbreak.



**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 10.7).**

- H 10.5** Anyone carrying out emergency slaughter/killing of sheep must:
- 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*
  - be familiar with its content, and
  - follow its guidance where appropriate (see information box below).



**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** Equipment for the slaughter/killing of animals must be:
- maintained according to the manufacturer's instructions,
  - easily accessible to the relevant member of staff,
  - checked at least monthly to ensure good working order, and
  - checked immediately prior to the first use of the day to ensure good working order.

**H 10.7** **LEGAL** Casualty sheep requiring emergency euthanasia must only be humanely killed using of 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.



**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.**



**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 in the country in question.**

**H 10.8** 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).



**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** 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.



**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.

# Welfare Outcome Assessment

Welfare standards for farm animals are primarily based on 'inputs', i.e. they describe what must be provided to the animals in terms of certain resources, such as housing, space, feed, veterinary care and management practices. However, it is important to know what effect these inputs are having on the welfare of the animals and therefore look at the 'outcomes' of these inputs, i.e. the impact of these inputs on the health, physical condition and behaviour of the animals themselves. This practice is known as 'Welfare Outcome Assessment'.

**i** RSPCA Welfare Outcome Assessment has been developed for sheep and offers a practical and scientifically informed method to provide a more objective, animal-focussed picture of the level of welfare being achieved on-farm for certain key welfare measures. The welfare measures selected for assessment are listed in Appendix 4.

**i** The following information is applicable to RSPCA Assured members only:

Members of the RSPCA Assured scheme will receive a Welfare Outcome Assessment as part of their routine RSPCA Assured farm assessment visits. Additional Welfare Outcome Assessments may also be undertaken by RSPCA staff as part of the RSPCA Assured certification process.

**WA 1.1** It must be ensured that a Welfare Outcome Assessment is conducted:

- a) according to the protocol in Appendix 4
- b) using the assessment form in Appendix 4 or, in the case of RSPCA Assured scheme members, the scheme's equivalent current Welfare Outcome Assessment form
- c) on a regular basis or, for RSPCA Assured scheme members, during each scheme assessment visit
- d) by i) a suitably competent person that is independent from the direct management of the farm and, ii) in the case of RSPCA Assured scheme members, by the relevant scheme personnel.

**i** With reference to standard WA 1.1 c), Welfare Outcome Assessments should be carried out approximately every 12 months.

**i** With reference to standard WA 1.1 d) i) a suitable person to conduct the assessment would be a qualified vet; a relevant, independent consultant with a good knowledge of sheep welfare and production; a Farm Assurance Scheme Assessor; or the company fieldsman (or, if the company does not have a Fieldsman, someone with an equivalent role within the company).

**WA 1.2** A completed copy of the Welfare Outcome Assessment form (see standard WA 1.1 b)) or a record of the results must be kept:

- a) on farm
- b) for a minimum of five years, and
- c) must be made available on request.

**WA 1.3** With regards to WA 1.2, the document left on farm must include the following information:

- a) the date of the audit
- b) the group of animals audited
- c) the name, organisation and job title of the person who undertook the assessment
- d) the age of the herd at the time of the assessment
- e) any action to be taken (see standard WA 1.4), and
- f) the signature of the person undertaking the audit.

**WA 1.4** Any health/welfare issue identified as an area of concern must be included within the VHWP (see standard H 1.1).



**The Welfare Outcome Assessment will not always provide a definitive farm level prevalence of welfare for the measures assessed. The assessment has been designed to identify areas of welfare concern that are likely to be more wide-spread on the farm and therefore warrant further investigation and careful monitoring. Welfare Outcome Assessments can also indicate areas where welfare is being safeguarded.**

# Transport

Animal transport systems need to be designed and managed to ensure livestock are not caused unnecessary distress or discomfort. The transport and handling of livestock needs to be kept to an absolute minimum. Personnel involved in transport need to be thoroughly trained and competent to carry out the tasks required of them.

## Livestock markets

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- T 1.1 Sheep must not:
- be presented for sale at livestock markets, or
  - pass through collection centres.



Sheep that are presented for sale at livestock markets or pass through collection centres will automatically lose their RSPCA Assured status.

- T 1.2 Sheep, including lambs, must not be exported live overseas, either directly from the farm of origin, or indirectly via a third party.
- T 1.3 Producers must be able to provide verification of compliance with standard T 1.2 on request.
- T 1.4 Producers must notify any auction markets they use that the animals they sell are not for export.

## Casualty animals

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- T 2.1 **LEGAL** A sick or injured animal may only be transported if it:
- is being taken for veterinary treatment, and
  - is suitable for loading, travelling and unloading.
- T 2.1.1 If in doubt of an animal's fitness to travel, a veterinary surgeon's advice must be sought prior to transport.
- T 2.2 Hauliers must:
- have access to a copy of the Defra booklet, *Welfare of Animals During Transport – Guidance Notes: Part 2a, Fitness to Transport*
  - be familiar with its content
  - implement its recommendations.

## Training

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- T 3.1 Personnel in charge of sheep transporters must:
- have completed an approved training course, preferably validated
  - be able to demonstrate competence in handling sheep when loading and unloading them, and while in transit.
- T 3.1.1 Managers of livestock hauliers must use the Humane Slaughter Association's training programme *The Road Ahead – livestock welfare in transit* as part of their staff training programme.

- T 3.2** Animal handlers, including drivers, must be trained to:
- understand the stress factors sheep are likely to encounter
  - appreciate how sheep react towards other sheep
  - appreciate how sheep react towards humans and dogs
  - appreciate how sheep react towards strange noises, sights, sounds and smells, and
  - appreciate how erratic driving impacts animals in transit.



**Drivers need to be aware of the effect that their driving style has on the welfare of livestock on-board their vehicle. In particular, they should make every effort to corner smoothly and pull away/stop as gently as possible.**

**It is recommended that all transporters of animals, even for journeys under 65km and farmers transporting their own stock, undertake the Transport of Animals by Road (Short Journeys) course, offered by NPTC, or have received equivalent training through attendance of a course at an agricultural university or college.**

- T 3.3** The behaviour of sheep must be taken into account when they are being moved, so as to avoid unnecessary fear and distress.



- **Sheep have a wide field of vision and can see moving objects at a long distance, so wherever possible their far vision should be restricted**
- **Sheep have acute hearing so should not be subjected to loud noise**
- **Sheep are gregarious animals and should not be left in isolation while in transit.**

## Handling/loading/unloading

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**Sticks and flags may be used as benign handling aids, i.e. as extensions of the arms. Well trained dogs may also be used.**

- T 4.1** Sticks must not be used for hitting sheep.
- T 4.2** The presence and use of electric goads is not permitted on any vehicle or unit.
- T 4.3** All handling systems must be designed and operated so as:
- not to impede movement of the sheep
  - to reduce the incidence of noise.
- T 4.4** Sheep must not be driven unless the way forward is clear.
- T 4.5** Loading facilities must provide a ramp of no more than a 20% incline.

- T 4.6** To prevent animals from falling or jumping off, or slipping, both loading ramps and tail boards must:
- be fitted with side gates
  - have foot battens that are suitably spaced, and
  - be covered with straw or an alternative suitable material.

**T 4.7** If a loading ramp is to be modified or newly installed, a reverse ramp must be provided.



**When a 'reverse ramp' is installed, it is the vehicle that negotiates the incline until the tailgate is level with the ground and animals walk straight into or out of the vehicle on the level. Purpose built loading bays should be designed such that the vehicle ramp is level during loading.**

**T 4.8** Races and gates must be designed and operated so as not to impede the movement of sheep.

**T 4.9** Gates and catches must be baffled to reduce the noise when they shut.

## Transport

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**T 5.1** The timing of transport for any purpose must be planned between haulier and producer, and slaughterhouse if applicable, to minimise travelling and waiting time for the sheep.

**T 5.2** All hauliers must have a written *Standard Operating and Emergency Procedure* to implement during transportation (see Appendix 2).

**T 5.3** Sheep must be unloaded immediately at the slaughterhouse.

**T 5.4** Sheep must:

- be transported in their on-farm social groups (established at least one week prior to transport)
- not be mixed at the abattoir.

**T 5.5** Sheep must not be transported for more than 8 hours from the first sheep loaded to the last sheep unloaded.

**T 5.6** Sheep must have access to:

- water up to the point of transport
- food up to 4 hours before loading onto the lorry.

**T 5.7** The floors of all vehicles must be covered with sufficient bedding in order to provide comfort and reduce the likelihood of injury.

**T 5.8** An on-farm record must be maintained of all welfare incidents, e.g. deaths or serious injuries, during transit and kept within the VHWP.

**T 5.9** All welfare incidents must be recorded and reported to:

- the driver
- the haulier
- the slaughterhouse manager
- the farm manager

before the next consignment from the same source is collected.

- T 5.10** All incidents relating to standard T 5.9 must be investigated and the outcome recorded.
- T 5.11** Where causes of incidents relating to standard T 5.10 have been identified, prompt action must be taken to prevent them recurring.
- T 5.12** All transporters must have a 'livestock capacity document' on board at all times.



**The livestock carrying capacity document provides data on the size of the transporter and the calculated carrying capacity of the vehicle for different livestock species under different climatic conditions.**

- T 5.13** **LEGAL** Sheep must be penned within the lorry in groups of a similar age and size.
- T 5.14** The following groups must not be mixed during transport:
- unfamiliar rams over 6 months of age
  - unfamiliar weaned lambs under 3 months of age
  - polled and horned sheep.
- T 5.15** Sheep must be slaughtered as close as possible to their place of production.

## Transport space allowances

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- T 6.1** On journeys longer than 3 hours, sheep must have enough space in which to lie down.



**Research suggests that sheep weighing 30 to 40kg require a space allowance of at least 0.27 to 0.3m<sup>2</sup> per sheep in order to lie down in transit. Correspondingly, greater space will be required by heavier sheep.**

- T 6.2** The following minimum space allowances must always be provided during transport:

|                      | Weight (kg) | Area (m <sup>2</sup> per animal) |
|----------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>Shorn</b>         | <54         | 0.3                              |
|                      | >55         | 0.45                             |
| <b>Unshorn</b>       | <54         | 0.4                              |
|                      | >55         | 0.6                              |
| <b>Pregnant ewes</b> | <54         | 0.5                              |
|                      | >55         | >0.5                             |

- T 6.3** Transporters must provide minimum headroom of 10cm above the highest point of the animal, when standing in a natural position.
- T 6.4** Ewes in the last two months of pregnancy must not be transported to slaughter. The only exception is for emergency/casualty slaughter or disease control.
- T 6.5** Appropriate lighting, whether natural or artificial, must be available when loading and unloading sheep to enable sheep to be thoroughly inspected at any time.
- T 6.6** **LEGAL** There must be no sharp edges or protrusions on any vehicle, internally or externally, that are likely to cause injury or distress to an animal.
- T 6.7** Air quality and air flow must be maintained on vehicles in a way that does not negatively affect the welfare of the animals.

# Slaughter/killing

All slaughter/killing systems need to be designed and managed to ensure livestock are not caused unnecessary distress or discomfort. The pre-slaughter handling of livestock needs to be kept to an absolute minimum. Personnel involved in the slaughter need to be thoroughly trained and competent to carry out the tasks required of them.

- S 1.1** **NEW** Sheep being sourced for slaughter must:
- have travelled directly from the farm, and
  - not have come via a livestock market or collection centre.

## Management and training

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- S 2.1** Managers must develop and implement an animal welfare policy.
- S 2.1.1** The animal welfare policy (see standard S 2.1) must include written procedures regarding:
- maintaining animal welfare in the abattoir
  - the responsibilities and duties of staff, and
  - emergency procedures, including for escaped, trapped or injured livestock.
- S 2.2** The animal welfare policy must be reviewed at least annually and updated when necessary.
- S 2.3** **LEGAL** Managers must appoint at least one trained Animal Welfare Officer (AWO), who is responsible for the implementation of the animal welfare policy (see standard S 2.1).
- H 2.3.1** **LEGAL** All AWOs must:
- hold a certificate of competence for all operations they are responsible for overseeing
  - have attended the Bristol University Animal Welfare Officer training programme, or other similar recognised, named, validated course on animal welfare at abattoirs
  - keep a record of actions taken to improve animal welfare in the abattoir for which they are responsible.
- S 2.4** Managers, in conjunction with the AWO (see standard S 2.3), must:
- develop and implement a training programme for all staff involved in the handling and slaughtering animals
  - ensure that these staff are properly trained and competent to carry out their duties.



**For staff undertaking the following operations, a certificate of competence in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009<sup>1</sup> can be used to demonstrate compliance with standard S 2.4 b):**

- the handling and care of animals before they are restrained
- the restraint of animals for the purpose of stunning or killing
- the stunning of animals
- the assessment of effective stunning
- the shackling or hoisting of live animals, and
- the bleeding of live animals.

<sup>1</sup>Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing, Article 7, Paragraph 2.

**S 2.5** When developing the staff training programme (see standard S 2.4 a)) the following areas must be included, as appropriate:

- a) sheep welfare
- b) sheep behaviour
- c) handling and movement of sheep
- d) lairage, including lairage conditions and care of sheep during lairage
- e) restraint of sheep
- f) slaughter/killing method/s, including emergency back-up methods
- g) assessment of an effective stun/kill
- h) bleeding.



In relation to S 2.5, The Humane Slaughter Association (HSA) *Humane Slaughter – Taking Responsibility* training package can be used to help inform the content of the training programme.

Other relevant HSA online guides can also be used, for example:

- Captive bolt stunning of livestock, and
- Electrical stunning of red meat animals

**S 2.6** **LEGAL** An AWO (see standard S 2.3) must:

- a) be present on the site at all times whilst slaughter is being carried out
- b) make frequent and thorough checks throughout the day to ensure that animals are being effectively stunned and are insensible throughout the slaughter operation.

**S 2.7** **LEGAL** Where it is suspected that animals are not being effectively stunned, the slaughter line must be stopped and immediate remedial action taken.

**S 2.8** The managers, AWOs and all slaughter staff must:

- a) have access to a copy of the current *Defra Codes of Practice* relating to slaughter
- b) have access to a copy of the current *RSPCA welfare standards for sheep*, and
- c) be familiar with and implement the relevant content of the documents listed in a) and b).

**S 2.9** The AWO must ensure that animal welfare during the slaughter process is not compromised by operator fatigue.

**S 2.10** To reduce the likelihood of operator fatigue, managers must ensure that rotation of staff is practised as necessary, and recorded.

**S 2.11** Noise must be kept to a minimum at all times in all areas of the abattoir, both from staff and equipment.

**H 2.11.1** Noise levels must be monitored by the manager or AWO.

**H 2.11.2** When acceptable noise levels are exceeded, the causes must be investigated and addressed.



Maximum decibel levels may be set in the future. Unacceptable noise levels are those which are causing fear and distress in the animals, such as startle responses or reluctance to move through the handling system.

## Casualty animals

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**S 3.1** **LEGAL** Except in exceptional circumstances, sheep that are unable to walk must be slaughtered/killed:

- a) without delay
- b) without the animal being moved, i.e. on the lorry or in the lairage pen, and
- c) using humane casualty slaughter equipment and procedures.



**Delay in killing a sheep unable to walk can only be justified in exceptional circumstances, i.e. when the welfare of other sheep would otherwise be adversely affected.**

**H 3.1.1** Appropriate, well-maintained slaughter/killing equipment must be easily accessible for use in emergencies.

**S 3.2** Casualty animals must be killed in accordance with S 8.1 or, alternatively, an injection of an overdose of a drug with anaesthetic properties, which causes immediate loss of consciousness and subsequent death, may be administered by a veterinary surgeon.

**S 3.3** A member of staff must be present to check animals on arrival and must:

- a) have access to a copy of the Defra booklet *Welfare of Animals During Transport – Guidance Notes: Part 2a, Fitness to Transport*
- b) be familiar with its content, and
- c) implement its recommendations.

## Closed circuit television

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**The use of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) in areas where live animals are present can assist those responsible for monitoring and enforcing animal welfare within the abattoir in ensuring that standards are maintained. It is strongly recommended that CCTV footage is also used for in-house training programmes and to provide an additional level of security at the abattoir.**

**S(TV) 1.1** **LEGAL** A functional CCTV system must be installed and operational to monitor animals undergoing the following processes at the abattoir:

- a) unloading from vehicles into the lairage
- b) lairaging, including the movement of animals out of the lairage towards the stun point
- c) stunning, including animals approaching the stun area
- d) shackling, and
- e) sticking.



**NEW** The RSPCA is currently reviewing Intelligent Camera Surveillance systems for use in slaughter plants. These systems can alert relevant slaughter plant staff to potential welfare concerns in real time, allowing situations to be dealt with quickly and efficiently. They can also be used to identify areas where staff require additional training or where staff safety is at risk. It is strongly recommended that slaughter plants adopt such technologies to help further safeguard animal welfare in their plant. Where such technology is being considered, please contact the RSPCA Farm Animals Department for further information.

**S(TV) 1.2** **LEGAL** CCTV cameras must be positioned to ensure a clear view of the processes being monitored is achieved at all times.

**S(TV) 1.3** **LEGAL** It must be possible to observe clearly the view from each camera at all times via one or more monitors.

**S(TV) 1.4** **LEGAL** CCTV footage must be recorded at all times where animals are undergoing any of the processes listed under standard S(TV) 1.1.

**S(TV) 1.5** **LEGAL** The recorded CCTV footage must be:

- a) retained by the abattoir for a period of at least three months, and
- b) available for viewing on site on request.



Where possible it may be useful for managers to retain CCTV footage for longer than the three months specified in standard S(TV) 1.5, for their own monitoring and security purposes.

## Lairage

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**S 4.1** Slaughterhouse managers must ensure that the premises are constructed and maintained so as to prevent any injury being caused to animals.

**S 4.2** The slaughterhouse must provide a lairage facility which:

- a) is constructed so as to provide shelter from direct sunlight and adverse weather conditions
- b) provides animals with a dry lying area (see standard S 4.3)
- c) is of adequate size and construction for the number of animals confined there (see standard S 4.3)
- d) provides adequate and draught-free ventilation
- e) is thermally comfortable for the sheep (i.e. the sheep are neither overheated nor chilled)
- f) is properly lit to permit animals to be inspected
- g) has drainage facilities for faeces and urine
- h) is able to be thoroughly cleaned between batches of animals
- i) has isolation pens in which sick or injured animals can be isolated and, if necessary, humanely slaughtered, these pens being located close to the unloading area and within easy access of the stunning area
- j) provides easy access to adequate water, which must be available at all times, and to food, if necessary (see standard S 4.5).

**S 4.3** Staff in charge of the lairage must ensure that animals confined overnight have at least the following space allowances:

| Type and weight (kg) |           | Straw bedded area (m <sup>2</sup> per animal) |
|----------------------|-----------|---|
| <b>Ewes</b>          | <45 to 60 | 1.1 to 1.2                                    |
|                      | 61 to >90 | 1.2 to 1.4                                    |
| <b>Hoggets</b>       | <30       | 0.7   |
|                      | 31 to 40  | 0.8   |
|                      | >40       | 1.0   |
| <b>Rams</b>          |           | 1.5 to 2.0                                    |



**Where ranges of weights and space allowance occur animals at the bottom of the weight range may be kept at the space allowance at the bottom of the range, however it is expected that animals at the upper end of the weight range will be kept at the higher space allowance in the range.**

**S 4.3.1** When animals are confined in lairage for shorter periods i.e. not overnight:

- a) at least two thirds of the space requirements stated in S 4.3 must be provided, and
- b) sheep must have sufficient space to turn and lie down with ease.

**S 4.4** Sheep which, because of their sex, age or origin, are likely to be aggressive must be separated from each other at lairage.

**S 4.5** Sheep must be provided with an adequate quantity of appropriate food on arrival at the lairage, and twice daily thereafter, unless they are to be slaughtered within 12 hours.

**S 4.6** Sheep in lairage pens must not be exposed to bright artificial light or direct sunlight except during antemortem inspection, which must be carried out in a minimum of 220 lux illumination.

**S 4.7** Unweaned lambs that are removed from their mother at the point of transport to slaughter must be slaughtered within 2 hours of arrival at the abattoir.

## Pre-slaughter handling

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**S 5.1** Sheep must be handled calmly and quietly, with care to avoid unnecessary excitement or distress.

**S 5.2** Races and passageways must:

- a) be designed, constructed and operated so as to encourage unimpeded forward movement of the sheep
- b) not contain any projections or unnecessary obstructions
- c) be lit appropriately, and
- d) not contain any right-angled bends.

**S 5.3** Races must have an exit gate immediately prior to the stunning area which allows sheep to be taken back to the lairage.

**S 5.4** The presence and use of electric goads in any abattoir is prohibited.

**S 5.5** Flooring must be non-slip in races and passageways.

- S 5.6** Sheep must not be driven unless the way forward is clear, and there is adequate space available for them to move into.
- S 5.7** All sheep must be slaughtered within 12 hours of their last feed.

## Slaughter equipment

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- S 6.1** The equipment used for the stunning and killing of animals, including the stunning pen and/or restraint devices, must be designed, manufactured and maintained to ensure rapid and effective stunning or killing.
- S 6.2** All slaughter equipment must be thoroughly and appropriately cleaned after use.
- S 6.3** Slaughter equipment must be checked at least once daily by an AWO to ensure it is in working order and in a good state of repair.
- S 6.3.1** Stun and slaughter equipment must be tested to ensure it is in correct working order prior to the first use of the day.
- S 6.4** A record of the check on slaughter equipment must be made.
- S 6.5** **LEGAL** Reserve equipment for the stunning and killing of animals must be:
- kept at the place of stun/killing for use in an emergency, and
  - tested at least once daily by an AWO to ensure it is in correct working order and a good state of repair.
- S 6.6** A record must be made of the check on reserve equipment.

## Stunning

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- S 7.1** All sheep must be stunned prior to slaughter using a permitted method which renders them instantaneously unconscious and insensitive to pain and maintains that state until the point of death.
- S 7.1.1** Permitted methods of stunning include:
- head-only electrical stunning
  - free bullet (stun-kill)
  - penetrative concussion, e.g. captive bolt
  - electrocution (stun-kill).

- i**
- a) **Signs of effective captive bolt stunning (one phase) include:**
- animal collapses
  - no rhythmic breathing
  - fixed, fully dilated pupils
  - no corneal reflex (i.e. no blink reaction when the surface of the eyeball is lightly touched)
  - relaxed jaw
  - tongue hanging out
- b) **Signs of effective head-only electrical stunning include:**
- i. **Tonic phase**
- animal collapses and becomes rigid
  - no rhythmic breathing
  - head is raised
  - forelegs extended and hind legs flexed into the body
- ii. **Clonic phase**
- gradual relaxation of muscles
  - paddling or involuntary kicking (can be severe)
  - downward movement of eyeballs
  - urination and/or defecation

Deviation from the signs outlined in a) or b) above may be an indication that the stun has been ineffective or that animals are beginning to recover from the stun.

- i**
- Signs of an effective stun/kill include:**
- a) **head-to-back electrical stun/kill**
- animal becomes rigid with slight tremors
  - body gradually relaxes
- b) **free bullet**
- animal collapses immediately
  - no rhythmic breathing
  - no corneal reflex
  - twitching and convulsions may start shortly afterwards.

**S 7.1.2** If there is any indication that a stun or a stun/kill has not been completely effective, or that animals are displaying signs of recovery from a stun or a stun/kill, re-stunning must take place immediately.

**S 7.2** **LEGAL** In the case of electrical stunning, or an electrical stun/kill:

- a) it must be ensured that electrical stunning equipment is delivering the appropriate current
- b) the current must be checked at the start of the stunning or stun/kill process for each batch of animals using a tester which can simulate the resistance offered by the sheep and can check the current and amperage output at the tongs, and
- c) the outcome of each check referred to in b) must be recorded.

**S 7.3** **REVISED** **LEGAL** All equipment used to deliver an electrical stun or stun-kill sheep and lambs must:

- a) have a minimum current of 1.0 amp
- b) have a minimum output of 200V
- c) be applied for a minimum of 3 seconds
- d) have an AC frequency of 50 Hz.



**NEW** In the UK, standard mains electricity operates on a sine waveform Alternating Current (AC) of 50 hertz. This is the optimum frequency for inducing cardiac arrest for a stun-kill.



To ensure electrical stunning can be effectively monitored, the law states that any electrical equipment used for stunning an animal in a slaughterhouse needs to display and record all the key electrical parameters.

**S 7.4** Sheep must only be stunned when they can be stuck immediately afterwards with a stun-to-stick interval of no more than 15 seconds.

**S 7.5** **REVISED** Techniques that lower the resistance of the sheep to the electrical current must be used, including, where fully fleeced adult sheep are being stunned, the use of pronged electrodes.



Resistance to current flow may vary, depending on the condition of the electrodes, the site of contact with the sheep's head, and how tightly the electrodes are pressed onto the head. The efficiency of current flow can be improved by regular decarbonising and cleaning of electrodes (when dry) with a wire brush.



**NEW** The fleece (wool) on adult sheep can increase the risk of mis-stuns. To reduce this risk, pronged electrodes, i.e. electrodes that have pins on their surface, are required. Such electrodes make better contact with the sheep's skin and therefore improve the effectiveness of the stun.

**S 7.6** The effectiveness of stunning must be recorded for at least 10 animals:

- a) at the very start of each day's killing, and
- b) at least every 2 hours during the killing operation.



When fewer than 10 animals are being stunned, all animals must be assessed.

**S 7.6.1** **LEGAL** The records of checks on the effectiveness of stunning must include:

- a) the name of the person undertaking the checks
- b) the number of sheep checked each time
- c) the date and time of the checks
- d) the number of non-compliant sheep, and
- e) the action taken to correct any ineffective stunning.

**S 7.7** Where sheep are stunned in group pens, the pen must:

- a) be designed to gradually decrease in size as the number of sheep decreases
- b) be adequately lit, and
- c) not be overcrowded at the start of the stunning process.

## Slaughter/killing methods

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**S 8.1** Sheep must be slaughtered/killed by bleeding out (sticking) following an effective stun (see standard S 7.1.1).

**S 8.2** Where sheep are slaughtered using an electrical stun/kill, standards S 7.2 and S 7.3 must be adhered to.

## Sticking

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**S 9.1** **LEGAL** After incision of the blood vessels, there must be no further dressing procedure on the animal for at least 20 seconds and, in any case, until all brain-stem reflexes have ceased.

**S 9.2** Sheep must be stuck using a sharp knife which is a minimum of 5 inches (12cm) long.

**S 9.3** Blood loss from the sheep must be rapid, profuse and sufficient to ensure that the animal is dead.



**Two methods can ensure achievement of S 9.3 – a chest stick (i.e. thoracic bleeding method) which is the best method, or a throat cut.**

**S 9.3.1** **LEGAL** Both carotid arteries and jugular veins (in the case of a throat cut), or the major blood vessels near the heart from which they arise (in the case of a chest stick), must always be completely severed during sticking.

**S 9.4** **LEGAL** Where one person is responsible for the stunning, shackling, hoisting and bleeding of sheep, they must complete all these operations on each individual sheep in turn.

# Appendix 1

## SCOPS principles

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The four main principles of Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep (SCOPS) as listed on the website ([www.scops.org.uk](http://www.scops.org.uk)) are as follows:

1. Always make sure any treatment you give is fully effective.
2. Try to reduce your reliance on anthelmintics using management options and monitoring where possible.
3. Avoid bringing in resistant worms and/or other parasites by following a robust quarantine routine.
4. Minimise the selection for worms that are resistant to anthelmintics when you treat sheep.

The website is an excellent source of detailed information about how these four principles can be achieved on your farm and it is recommended that you look at these and discuss them with your vet as necessary.

## Appendix 2

### Transport – standard operating and emergency procedure

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#### Items to be included:

1. RSPCA welfare standards relating to transport of sheep.
2. Procedure for loading/unloading of sheep delivery vehicles.
3. Procedure for delivery of sheep to customer sites.
4. Daily journey sheet.
5. Sheep delivery report.
6. List of good hygiene measures, including procedure for cleaning of lorries prior to collection of sheep.
7. Total quality management leaflet – if appropriate.
8. Operating procedures for roadside checks.
9. Accident procedure.
10. Out of hours telephone numbers and 'emergency procedure'.
11. Mobile phones or other communication equipment (and procedures for use).
12. Fire extinguishers.
13. Tyres – punctures – codes of practice.
14. FTA – the current version (2019 as of printing) of *The driver's handbook* including tachograph regulations.
15. Certificate of motor insurance.
16. Guidelines on correct environmental conditions during the journey, depending on length of journey and ambient temperature.
17. The current version of the Defra guidance booklet on rules for identifying sheep and goats.
18. Torch.

## Appendix 3

### Herd biosecurity

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All approved units must have a written plan describing precautions to limit the introduction of and/or spread of disease onto and within the unit (this could be considered as part of the Veterinary Health and Welfare Plan). Herd health is important from financial, welfare and food safety perspectives.

The written policy must include procedures for cleaning and disinfection of buildings and equipment, specifying the approved dilutions at which chemicals are to be used.

All such chemicals must be on the approved Defra list for the purposes of the Diseases of Animals (Approved Disinfectants) (Amendment) (England) Order 2007. Exceptions are acceptable only under veterinary direction.

The written policy must include procedures for wild animal control (see standards M 12.1 – M 12.21).

Feed stores, offices, toilets, etc., must be maintained in a clean, hygienic condition.

# Appendix 4

## Welfare Outcome Assessment

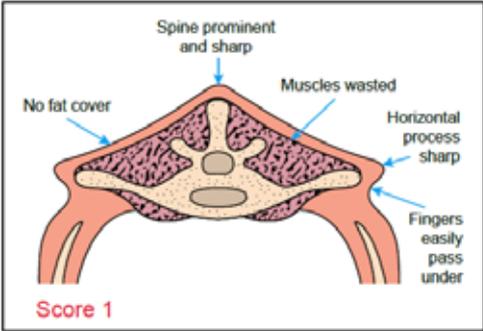
### Sheep

#### Assessment protocol



| Individual measure   | Guidance on sampling  |
|--|---|
| 1.a) Lameness  | <p>If the flock is split into more than one group select <b>ONE representative group</b> of <b>adult breeding ewes</b> to assess. Where possible, the representative group should contain ewes only. Record group type (e.g. ewes or ewes and lambs).</p> <p>Assess the group, <b>tallying</b> the number of not lame (unaffected) and lame and severely lame (affected) sheep. The aim should be to assess all animals in the group, however, it is understood that at times this may not be possible (e.g. the sheep start running or they flock and stand still). In these cases assess as many animals as possible recording all unaffected and affected animals seen.</p> <p>If the representative group is <b>ewes and lambs together</b>, aim to assess the <b>ewes only</b> in instances where lambs can be instantly identified from dams (e.g. lambs are less than 75% of dam's size). If lambs cannot be instantly identified, assess all animals in the group. Indicate when lambs have been included in the group assessment.</p> <p><b>3</b> or more sheep should to be assessed jointly with the stockperson (record assessor's score only).</p> <p>If there are a number of groups close at hand - in particular rams but also other groups of ewes, weaned lambs or hogs which can be easily observed walking – <b>consider assessing more than one group</b>.</p> |
| Flock measures   | Guidance on sampling  |
| 1. b) Lameness: severely lame sheep<br>2. Visibly thin sheep<br>3. Dirtiness<br>4. Fleece loss<br>5. Sheep needing further care<br>6. a) Tail docking (docked short) | <p>Assessed across <b>all groups on farm</b> including breeding ewes, followers, lambs and rams.</p> <p>Tally the number of animals affected.</p>   |
| Records measures   | Guidance on sampling  |
| 6. b) Castration, tail docking and ear notching<br>7. Mortality  | <p>From records (including flock health plan and Annual Health and Performance Review) and discussions with the farmer.</p>   |

| 1.a) Lameness  | Individual measure |
|--|--------------------|
| <p><b>Sample: ONE representative group of adult breeding ewes (3 or more animals assessed jointly with stockperson)</b></p> <p>Assess the individual sheep by watching them walk. Tally the number of not lame (unaffected) and lame and severely lame (affected) sheep. Score all animals within the group (excluding lambs if they can be instantly identified from dams) or as many as possible before losing track of which animals you have seen.</p> <p><b>Note: It is important to make and record a judgement on individual sheep, rather than, for example, noting that in a flock of 100 you have spotted 2 lame sheep and therefore recording the remaining 98 sheep as not lame.</b></p> <p><b>Scoring:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>0 = Good/Imperfect mobility</b><br/>Walks with even weight bearing and rhythm on all four feet, with a flat back; long fluid strides possible; or steps uneven (rhythm or weight bearing) or strides shortened; affected limb/s not immediately identifiable.</li> <li><b>1 = Lame</b><br/>Lame sheep display an uneven walking rhythm. They may also show shortened strides and obvious head nods when moving. One or more limbs may be only partially weight bearing. They may be reluctant to stand and graze whilst on their knees (but need to be seen walking to score)</li> <li><b>Severely lame - NO weight bearing on one or more limbs</b></li> <li><b>2 =</b> One or more limbs to be bearing no weight and or rested/held up when standing. They may be reluctant to stand and graze whilst on their knees (but need to be seen walking or resting/holding limb when standing to score)</li> </ul> |                    |
| 1. b) Lameness: severely lame sheep  | Flock measure      |
| <p>In addition to scoring your representative group, tally the number of any additional severely lame (score 2) sheep observed when assessing all other groups on the farm.</p>  |                    |

| 2. Visibly thin sheep   | Flock measure |
|---|---------------|
| <p>Assess the whole flock and tally the number of <b>thin</b> sheep that can be confidently identified through <b>visual assessment</b>.</p> <p>It is understood that visual assessment of body condition is very difficult; this measure will only capture extreme cases if in full fleece, which are likely to then fall into 'sheep needing further care'. Visual assessment may be more or less sensitive depending on breed and how recently the animal has been shorn.</p> <p><b>Scoring:</b></p> <p><b>Thin sheep: Record if score is less than 2 (Defra scoring).</b></p> <p>In animals with BCS less than 2, the spinous processes are sharp and prominent. Loin eye muscle has little/no fat cover. Transverse processes are sharp.</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">   </div> |               |

[www.assurewel.org/sheep](http://www.assurewel.org/sheep)

| 3. Dirty hindquarter (and belly)   | Flock measure |
|--|---------------|
| <p>Assess the whole flock and tally the number of sheep seen with a dirty hindquarter. If sheep are grazing forage crops on cultivated ground additionally assess the belly and tally the number of sheep observed with a dirty belly.</p> |               |
| <p>Visual assessment of one side and behind of the hindquarters and on cultivated ground additionally the belly.</p>   |               |
| <p><b>Scoring:</b><br/> <b>Dirty hindquarter and belly</b> An area of dirtiness (fresh and old mud or slurry) larger than hand size (10x15cm) and/or diffuse soiling of the whole area.</p>  |               |
|    |               |

| 4. Fleece loss   | Flock measure |
|--|---------------|
| <p>Assess the whole flock and tally the number of sheep seen with fleece loss.</p>   |               |
| <p>Visual assessment of one side and the hindquarters.</p>   |               |
| <p><b>Scoring:</b><br/> <b>Fleece loss</b> One or more bald areas larger than hand size (10x15cm) in any dimension on the body</p> |               |
|    |               |

| 5. Sheep needing further care   | Flock measure |
|---|---------------|
| <p>Assess the whole flock. Tally and comment on the number of sick or injured sheep (including those suffering from skin irritation) that would benefit from further intervention. Further interventions could include further treatment, hospitalisation (i.e. removal from the main flock) or culling.</p> <p>Do not include severely lame sheep within this measure they should be recorded separately under measure 1. b) <i>Lameness: Severely lame sheep</i> with any details of treatments included under comments</p> <p><b>Do not include sick or injured animals already receiving suitable care.</b></p> |               |

| 6. a) Tail docking (docked short)   | Flock Measure |
|---|---------------|
| <p>Assess the whole flock and tally the number of sheep seen where the tail has been docked short, i.e. the tail is over shortened or almost not present, the vulva is not covered by the remaining tail.</p> |               |
|  <p>image kindly supplied by AWIN</p>   |               |

| 6. b) Tail docking, castration and ear notching |   | Records |
|---|---|---------|
| a) Tail docking                                 | <p>Record if lambs are full tailed / docked / or a mixture (<b>at least 10% of another</b>)</p> <p>Record if docking takes place within 48 hours / within 7 days</p> <p>Record if docking carried out with analgesia (including anti-inflammatories) or anaesthesia</p>                             |         |
| b) Castration                                   | <p>Record if lambs remain entire, are castrated or a mixture (<b>at least 10% of another</b>)</p> <p>Record if castration takes place within 48 hours / within 7 days / older than 7 days</p> <p>Record if castration carried out with analgesia (including anti-inflammatories) or anaesthesia</p> |         |
| c) Ear notching                                 | <p>Record if ear notching is carried out</p>  |         |

| 7. Mortality   | Records |
|--|---------|
| <p>Check farm records and record the number of ewes in the last 12 months for the following categories:</p> <p>a) Number of planned culls</p> <p>b) Number of unplanned culls or casualties (died or killed on farm) in the last 12 months.</p> <p>Please, when possible, also record reasons for cull / casualty ewes.</p> <p>c) Record (when possible) Scanning percentage = number of lambs scanned / number of ewes put to the tup x 100</p> <p>d) Record Rearing percentage = number of lambs reared* / number of ewes put to the tup x 100</p> <p>Please, when possible also record main reasons for lamb losses.</p> <p><i>*reared = sold as finished or store lambs, or sold/retained for breeding</i></p> |         |

|   |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  | Welfare Outcome Assessment   |  |  |  |  |
|   |  | <b>Sheep</b>   |  |  |  |  |
| Farm name   |  | Type(s) of sheep present on farm   | Total number of animals (including any to be culled) | Current housing  |  | Predominant breed or crossbreed  |
| FF registration number  |  |  |  | 1 = housed<br>2 = at pasture (lowland)<br>3 = at pasture (upland/hill) |  |  |
| Assessment date   |  | Breeding ewes  |  |  |  | Are any of the sheep self-shedding? (please circle one)<br>YES      NO     |
|   |  | Breeding rams  |  |  |  |  |
| Assessor  |  | Lambs (<6 months)  |  |  |  | Are these sheep shedding now?* (please circle one)<br>N/A      YES      NO |
|   |  | Fattening/store lambs (≥6 months)  |  |  |  |  |
|   |  | Breeding replacements (≥6 months, M & F)                                   |  |  |  |  |
|   |  | 'Non-production' animals (i.e. wethers, teaser rams, non-breeding females) |  |  |  | Date last shorn  |
|   |  | Other  |  |  |  |  |

\*This refers to natural fleece loss only - not fleece loss due to skin conditions/parasites or injury etc.

|   |  |   |                |                         |   |
|---|--|---|----------------|-------------------------|---|
| <b>Individual measure: Lameness</b>   |  |   |                |                         |   |
| Aim to assess this measure in <b>one representative group of adult breeding ewes</b> . Assess all of the sheep in this group (excluding lambs if they are present and can be easily distinguished from the ewes), or as many of the sheep as possible before losing track of which individuals you have seen. Consider assessing additional groups, in particular the rams, if you are able to. If adult breeding ewes are not present assess at least one representative group of the alternative type(s) of sheep on the farm (e.g. fattening/store lambs etc.). Tally the number of non lame, lame and severely lame sheep seen. |  |   |                |                         |   |
| Group(s) assessed   | Total number of animals in the group     | Non lame; good/imperfect mobility (score 0) | Lame (score 1) | Severely lame (score 2) | Unable to assess?<br>1 = too extensive<br>2 = ran away<br>3 = flocked & stood still |
| Breeding ewes   | Ewes                                     |   |                |                         |   |
|   | Lambs                                    |   |                |                         |   |
|   | Were lambs assessed? (please circle one) | YES<br>NO                                   |                |                         |   |
| Additional/alternative groups (e.g. breeding rams, fattening/store lambs etc.) if possible or necessary:  |  |   |                |                         |   |
|   |  |   |                |                         |   |
|   |  |   |                |                         |   |

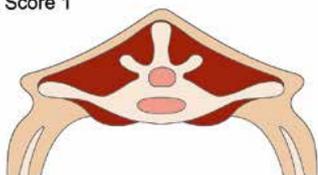
|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| <b>Flock measures</b>   |   |   |   |   |
| Assess these measures in <b>all of the groups of sheep</b> present on the farm.   |   |   |   |   |
|   | Tally the number of affected animals seen across all groups | Group ID of affected animals (e.g. breeding ewes, rams) | Comments (e.g. details of treatment/action being taken) | Unable to assess?<br>1 = too extensive<br>2 = ran away<br>3 = flocked & stood still |
| Lameness: severely lame sheep (score 2) Do not include those animals already recorded as severely lame in the above section |   |   |   |   |
| Thin sheep (BCS < 2) identified via visual assessment only  |   |   |   |   |
| Dirty hindquarters (area of dirtiness >10 x 15cm, or diffuse soiling of whole area)   |   |   | Have sheep been crutched or dagged in the last week?    | Y      N  |
| Plus, if grazing forage crops on cultivated land, Dirty belly   |   |   |   |   |
| Fleece loss (bold area >10x15cm)  |   |   |   |   |
| Tail docking: docked short (over shortened, almost not present, vulva not covered)  |   |   |   |   |
| Sheep needing further care Do not include severely lame sheep in this measure   |   |   |   |   |

|  |   |   |   |  |   |                     |   |           |
|--|---|---|---|--|---|---------------------|---|-----------|
| General comments   |   |   |   |  |   |                     |   |           |
| <b>Records measures</b>  |   |   |   |  |   |                     |   |           |
|  | Tail docking, please circle all that apply: |   |   |  | Castration, please circle all that apply: |                     |   |           |
| Farm policy  | Sheep are kept full tailed                  | Sheep have their tails docked   | Mixed: some sheep are kept full tailed & some get docked† | N/A  | Males are kept entire                     | Males get castrated | Mixed: some males are kept entire & some get castrated† | N/A       |
| Timing of procedure  | N/A   | <48 hours   | 48 hours - 7 days   |  | N/A                                       | <48 hours           | 48 hours - 7 days                                       | >7 days   |
|  | Or, if not known, provide details:          |   |   |  | Or, if not known, provide details:        |                     |   |           |
| Pain management during the procedure   | N/A   | None  | Anaesthesia   | Analgesia  | N/A                                       | None                | Anaesthesia   | Analgesia |
|  | Or, if not known, provide details:          |   |   |  | Or, if not known, provide details:        |                     |   |           |
| Is ear notching undertaken? (please circle one)  |   | YES   | NO  | †Only record as 'mixed' if at least 10% of animals can be assigned to the alternative category, e.g. record as 'mixed' if 10 out of 100 males (10%) is kept entire and all other males are castrated, but record as 'castrated' if only 1 out of 100 males (1%) is kept entire and all others are castrated. |   |                     |   |           |
| <b>Mortality over the previous 12 months - circle if any N/A</b>   |   |   |   |  |   |                     |   |           |
| Ewes - number of planned culls   | N/A   |   |   | Reasons:   |   |                     |   |           |
| Ewes - number of unplanned culls or casualties (died or killed on farm)  | N/A   |   |   | Reasons:   |   |                     |   |           |
| Scanning percentage  | N/A   | ( No. of lambs scanned: _____ /<br>No. of ewes put to the tup: _____ )<br>x 100 = _____ % |   | Main reasons for lamb losses:  |   |                     |   |           |
| Rearing percentage   | N/A   | ( No. of lambs reared*: _____ /<br>No. of ewes put to the tup: _____ )<br>x 100 = _____ % |   |  |   |                     |   |           |
| *Reared = sold as finished/store lambs, or sold/retained for breeding  |   |   |   |  |   |                     |   |           |
| <b>Changes</b>   |   |   |   |  |   |                     |   |           |
| What changes to improve welfare (in resources, management or livestock) has the farmer made in the last 12 months?   |   |   |   |  |   |                     |   |           |
| What changes to improve welfare (in resources, management or livestock) does the farmer intend to make in the next 12 months?  |   |   |   |  |   |                     |   |           |
| <b>Non-compliance</b>  |   |   |   |  |   |                     |   |           |
| Were any related non-compliances issued? (please circle one)   |   | YES   | NO  | If yes, please provide the relevant standard number(s):  |   |                     |   |           |
| <b>Further advice and support</b>  |   |   |   |  |   |                     |   |           |
| Your RSPCA Assured assessor can provide you with help and advice in relation to your assessment. Additional advice and support, in relation to any aspect of the welfare outcome assessment and your assessment results, can be provided by the RSPCA Farm Animals Department. |   |   |   |  |   |                     |   |           |
| Would the farmer like to be contacted to discuss their welfare outcome assessment results? (please circle one)   |   | YES   | NO  | If yes, please provide the farmer's preferred contact details:   |   |                     |   |           |
| This form must be kept a) on the farm where this assessment was carried out b) for a minimum of five years. Please keep this form with your records. It will be required at future RSPCA Assured assessments and RSPCA monitoring visits.                                      |   |   |   |  |   |                     |   |           |
| Carried out and signed by:   |   |   |   | Title & affiliation:   |   |                     |   |           |
| <a href="http://www.assurewel.org/sheep">www.assurewel.org/sheep</a>   |   |   |   | Sheep WOA Scoresheet_RSPCAAssured_May2019  |   |                     |   |           |



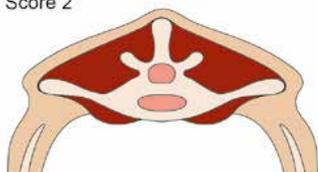
## How to Condition Score

Score 1



The vertical and horizontal processes are prominent and sharp. The fingers can be pushed easily below the transverse and each process can be felt. The loin is thin with no fat cover.

Score 2



The vertical processes are prominent but smooth; individual processes being felt only as corrugations. The horizontal processes are smooth and rounded, but it is still possible to press fingers under. The loin muscle is a moderate depth but with little fat cover.

Score 3



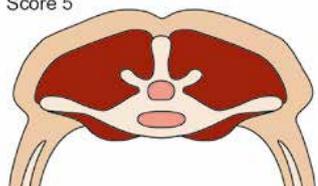
The vertical processes are smooth and rounded; the bone is only felt with pressure. The horizontal processes are also smooth and well covered; hard pressure is required with the fingers to find the ends. The loin muscle is full and with a moderate fat cover.

Score 4



The vertical processes are only detectable as a line. The ends of the horizontal processes cannot be felt. The loin muscles are full and rounded, and have a thick covering of fat.

Score 5



The vertical and transverse processes cannot be detected even with pressure; there is a dimple in the fat layers where the processes should be. The loin muscles are very full and covered with very thick fat.

### For more information contact:

**Better Returns Programme**  
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Warwickshire CV8 2TL  
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Information taken from the [lifetimewool.com.au](http://lifetimewool.com.au) scoring card.



## Appendix 6

### The use of pain relief for tail docking and castration

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Standards H 8.5 and H 8.7 require the use of long-acting pain relief if tail docking and castration are carried out on lambs.

The RSPCA is opposed to tail docking and castration, but acknowledges that these may be necessary procedures in some management systems. We require that the number of animals undergoing these procedures are minimised as far as possible (standards H 8.4 and H 8.6).

These procedures have been found to cause acute (short-term) and chronic (long-term) pain in lambs. Best practice when conducting these procedures is therefore to provide both short- and long-acting pain relief, i.e. a local anaesthetic and an analgesic, such as a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID). However, we acknowledge that current practical issues can make the application of both difficult in practice.

Although the standards strongly recommend both short-acting and a long-acting pain relief are provided (information boxes under standards H 8.5 and H 8.7), standards H 8.5 and H 8.7 only require the use of a long-acting analgesic at the time the procedure being carried out. The specific requirement to provide long-acting pain relief (and not short-acting) is due to various considerations:

1. The pain induced by these procedures is longer-lasting and thus more of a welfare concern than the more pain of shorter duration.
2. Most long-acting pain killers require one dose, under the skin, or into muscle, whereas short-term pain killers need to be injected into the area of the ring application, thus into two sites when castrating males.
3. Local anaesthetic stings upon application, which may make lambs kick out and this may make the procedure/s more difficult to carry out.
4. Analgesics have multiple applications in sheep, e.g. for chronic or severe lameness, mastitis, traumatic lambing etc., so it is hoped that becoming more familiar with this drug can benefit other sheep on the farm, under the guidance of the farm's own vet.

We acknowledge there is not currently a licence for the use of analgesics in sheep. However, such drugs can be used at the discretion of the farm vet, under the Cascade\*. Vets unsure about the use of such drugs in sheep, including dose rates, can contact the manufacturers of analgesics to get advice.

We recognise that the standard is a compromise and that best practice is the use of both short and long acting pain relief, or long acting pain relief administered 20 minutes prior to the procedures being carried out. Our hope is that as pain relief becomes more widely used in the sheep industry, more practical methods of administering the drugs can be developed (such as the administration of a local anaesthetic at the time of applying the ring through a single device) and more drugs can be licensed, so that the use of both short and long acting pain relief can become a requirement in future versions of the standards.

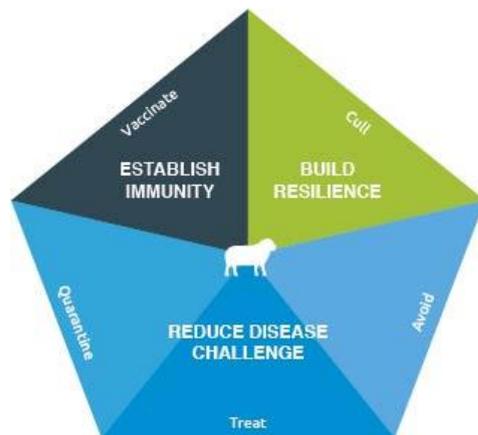
\*The cascade is a provision in the Veterinary Medicines Regulations (VMR) that allows a vet to prescribe medicines that would not otherwise be permitted. The principle of the cascade is that, if there is no suitable veterinary medicine authorised in the UK to treat the condition or for that species, the vet responsible for the animal can, to avoid causing unacceptable suffering, treat the animal using a drug authorised in the UK for use in another animal species or for a different condition in the same species.

## The Five-Point Plan

The Five-Point Plan is a tool developed by FAI Farms to help sheep farmers protect their flock against lameness caused by infectious diseases. It is recommended that the five-point plan be implemented where footrot, scald and/or Contagious Ovine Digital Dermatitis (CODD) have been diagnosed as a cause of lameness on farm. For best results, all five points of the plan must be implemented as part of a continuous lameness management strategy.

The 5 Points of the Plan fall into the following categories:

- **Build resilience**
  - Cull
- **Reduce Disease Challenge**
  - Quarantine
  - Treat
  - Avoid
- **Establish immunity**
  - Vaccinate



(1)

### Cull

Repeatedly lame sheep can develop mis-shapen feet which can have a severe impact on animal welfare and these animals should be culled to prevent further suffering. Additionally, these sheep can be reservoirs of infection on farms, resulting in the increased spread of bacterial infections in the flock. There is also a genetic component to some of the diseases which cause lameness and so repeatedly lame sheep should not be used for breeding.

### Quarantine

New sheep brought onto the farm, or sheep returning to the farm, e.g. from a show, must be quarantined to prevent new infections spreading through the flock. It is recommended that such animals are quarantined for 28 days and foot-bathed (see standard H 3.10), in either 10% zinc sulphate or 3% formalin, every five days on three occasions.

### Treat

As disease can spread rapidly through the flock it is vital that sheep receive effective treatment at the earliest sign of lameness. Effective treatment requires:

- Catching a lame sheep as soon as lameness is identified and at least within three days (see standard H 3.4).
- Inspecting the infected limb to identify the cause of lameness. The hoof can be cleaned to aid inspection but should not be trimmed.
- Treating and given pain relief (see standard H 1.3). AHDB's decision tree below, or guidance from your farm vet, can be used to indicate the best treatment options.
- Marking the affected area and recording the animal's identification number, e.g. in your Veterinary Health and Welfare Plan.
- Culling repeatedly lame sheep.



(2)

**Avoid**

Good quality handling systems are key to avoiding future lameness outbreaks. They should include hard standing areas free of stones and the aim should be to minimise the time sheep are gathered together to reduce the spread of bacteria. Handling systems should also be kept clean and disinfected between sheep, e.g. with lime powder.

Good housing and pasture management also plays a significant role in reducing the spread of bacteria. This can include:

- Reducing stocking densities
- Situating water troughs in quick-draining areas
- Moving feeding troughs to decrease ground poaching
- Identify a spare field for animals diagnosed with lameness
- Ensure bedding is kept dry throughout the housing period
- Remove any lame animals as soon as possible to prevent spread of bacteria

**Vaccinate**

There is a licensed vaccine available against footrot which gives sheep protection for 4-6 months which should ideally be given twice a year and to coincide with high risk periods such as winter housing. Discuss your vaccination programme with your vet and ensure it covers all sheep, including rams.

For more information on the five-point plan visit <https://ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/lameness-in-sheep-the-five-point-plan> or talk to your vet about how to implement it on your farm.

**References**

1. AHDB, 2020. "Reducing Lameness for Better Returns", p13. Available at: [https://projectblue.blob.core.windows.net/media/Default/Beef%20&%20Lamb/BRP\\_ReduceLame3484\\_200323\\_WEB.pdf](https://projectblue.blob.core.windows.net/media/Default/Beef%20&%20Lamb/BRP_ReduceLame3484_200323_WEB.pdf)
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## Colostrum Feeding Guide

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Colostrum is the first form of milk that is produced by the mother immediately following giving birth. Ensuring lambs have had sufficient colostrum is essential for their health and welfare.

Lambs are born without their own antibodies and therefore rely on the 'passive transfer' of antibodies from the ewe's colostrum to protect them against a variety of diseases, including clostridial diseases (a bacteria normally found in the soil and faeces). The information below, taken from the [#ColostrumIsGold](#) campaign can help farmers achieve the best results through the proper delivery of high quality colostrum.

### Ewe nutrition

Good ewe nutrition is the basis of high quality colostrum. Scanning should be used to separate twin or triplet bearing ewes to ensure they are fed a sufficient diet to maintain a good body condition score throughout pregnancy (see standard H 5.9).

Nutrition is particularly important during the last two months of pregnancy, where 75% of foetal growth and the majority of mammary gland development occurs. Poor nutrition can delay lactation, reduce milk quality and increase colostrum thickness, which can make it more difficult for lambs to suck effectively.

### Colostrum Delivery

It is essential for lambs to receive a minimum of 50 ml/kg of colostrum as soon as possible after birth and at least within 4–6 hours. After six hours, a lamb's natural ability to absorb antibodies from colostrum significantly decreases. Within 24 hours, a newborn lamb needs to receive the equivalent of 250 ml/kg body weight in colostrum (see standard H 7.2).

### Types of Colostrum

Natural colostrum from the lamb's mother is the preferred source. However, there are alternatives where this is not available, e.g. where the ewe has died, or when the mother's colostrum is of poor quality.

The quality of colostrum can be measured using a device such as the BRIX refractometer. If a ewe's colostrum scores below 26.5%, one of the alternative sources of colostrum listed below should be fed to the lamb instead.

### Ewe colostrum

Colostrum from another ewe can be fed to a lamb, preferably a ewe from the same flock to pass on immunity to farm-specific diseases. Fresh colostrum should be used as soon as possible, however it can be stored in a fridge for up to seven days or a freezer for six months (if frozen, it should be defrosted using a water bath, as a microwave will destroy the antibodies. It should also not be heated above 40°C to protect the antibodies from destruction).

### Pooled cow colostrum

Pooled cow's colostrum is another alternative source for lambs, however 30% more is required compared to ewe colostrum to give the lamb the same energy benefit. It is important to source cow colostrum from a pool (many different cows) rather than from one individual cow, as some cow's milk can contain antibodies which break down a sheep's red blood cells. Pooling colostrum therefore reduces this risk, however it is still advised that stock keepers using this colostrum source should discuss the risks of anaemia with their vet.

As with ewe's milk, cow's colostrum should be sourced from cows which have recently given birth to improve the colostrum's quality, and from farms which test for, and are at a low risk of, Johne's disease, to reduce the risk of cross infection between cattle and sheep. It should also be noted that cow colostrum is lower in energy than ewe colostrum, so this should be a consideration if it is being sourced for lambs with higher energy requirements, such as those being born outdoors.

**Artificial colostrum**

Artificial colostrum can be bought from most agricultural suppliers, however stock-keepers should be aware of the different products available and the variation in IgG (a key antibody) levels. For example, products labelled as “replacers” tend to have higher IgG content than those labelled as “supplements”. However, artificial colostrum products should only be used when natural colostrum is unavailable and stock keepers should discuss with their vet which products/brands are most suitable for use on their farm.

For further information please visit the AHDB #ColostrumIsGold pages, available at <https://ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/colostrum-is-gold-feeding-colostrum-to-calves-lambs-and-piglets> , or talk to your vet.

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