
DRAFT STATUTORY RULES OF NORTHERN
IRELAND

2026 No.0000

AGRICULTURE

**The Sheep Carcase Classification and Price Reporting
Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026**

Made - - - - xxth Month 2026

Coming into operation in accordance with Regulation 1

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in exercise of the powers conferred by section 48 of and sub-paragraphs 10(2), 15(1) and (2) and 18(1) and (2) of Schedule 6 to the Agriculture Act 2020(a) (the “Act”), makes the following Regulations.

There has been open and transparent public consultation during the preparation of these Regulations as required by Article 9 of Regulation (EC) No. 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety(b).

PART 1
INTRODUCTORY

Citation, application and commencement

1.—(1) These Regulations may be cited as the Sheep Carcase Classification and Price Reporting Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026.

(2) Regulations 2, 3, 4 and 16(1) to (3) come into operation on 26th January 2026.

(3) The following provisions come into operation on 12th February 2027—

- (a) regulation 5(b);
- (b) regulation 8(5);
- (c) regulation 12(1)(f);
- (d) regulation 13(2)(f);
- (e) regulations 14, 15 and 17;
- (f) regulation 18 insofar as it relates to automated carcase classification methods;

(a) 2020 c. 21.

(b) O.J. No. L31, 1.2.2002, p.1, as amended by Commission Regulation (EC) No. 202/2008 (O.J. No. L60, 4.3.2008, p.17)

- (g) regulation 21(3)(f);
 - (h) regulation 22(3)(h);
 - (i) regulation 26(2)(b);
 - (j) regulation 27(5)(b) to (e);
 - (k) regulation 38; and
 - (l) regulation 39(2) and (3) insofar as it relates to automated carcase classification methods.
- (4) Subject to paragraphs (2) and (3), all other provisions come into operation on 23rd February 2026.

Interpretation

2.—(1) The Interpretation Act (Northern Ireland) 1954^(a) shall apply to these Regulations as it applies to an Act of the Assembly.

(2) In these Regulations—

“aged less than 12 months” means, in relation to any sheep, that—

- (a) any documentation relating to the animal does not indicate that it is aged 12 months or more, and
- (b) the animal—
 - (i) does not have a permanent incisor erupted through the gum, or
 - (ii) is not determined to be aged 12 months or more by any method of assessment of age approved by the Department;

“approval number” means the number allocated to a slaughterhouse to indicate that it is an approved slaughterhouse;

“approved slaughterhouse” means an establishment which is—

- (a) used for slaughtering sheep, and
- (b) approved or conditionally approved under Article 4 of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 laying down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin^(b);

“authorised officer” means a person appointed by the Department for the purposes of these Regulations, but does not include a person appointed for the purpose of considering an appeal under regulation 18;

“automated carcase classification methods” means classification methods which consist of—

- (a) an apparatus, and
- (b) a formula,

and cognate terms shall be construed accordingly;

“carcase” means the whole body of a slaughtered sheep as presented after bleeding, evisceration and skinning;

“carcase presentation” refers to how the carcase is presented for classification and weighing;

“category” means in relation to a sheep, categorisation as a lamb, a hogget or a ewe by a regulated slaughterhouse having regard to guidance issued from time to time by the Department;

“classification” means the classification of carcasses in accordance with these Regulations and cognate terms are to be construed accordingly;

“cold weight” means the weight of a carcase calculated from its warm weight in accordance with regulation 10(2).

(a) 1954 c. 33 (N.I.).

(b) O.J. No. L 139 30.4.2004, p. 55.

“daily function test” means conducting a daily warm-up procedure for automated carcase classification apparatus and performing all system checks according to manufacturer instructions;

“deadweight” means purchased on the basis that the exact price is to be established once the sheep has been slaughtered, according to the weight, classification or other pre-determined criteria it is subsequently found to meet;

“the Department” means the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs;

“ear tag number” is the identification code on the identification device as defined in the Sheep and Goats (Records, Identification and Movement) Order (Northern Ireland) 2009;

“hanging presentation” refers to the manner in which the carcase is hung from the slaughter line using varying widths of hanging apparatus and varying positioning of legs;

“operator” means a person or persons carrying on the business of an approved slaughterhouse for sheep;

“regulated slaughterhouse” has the meaning given in regulation 3(2);

“supplementary payment” means a retrospective remuneration to the supplier of the animal, in addition to the price paid upon presentation of the animal at the slaughterhouse;

“visual classification” means classification which a licensed classifier carries out by eye and without the aid of an automated carcase classification method;

“warm weight” means the weight of a carcase weighed on the hook in the slaughterhouse in accordance with regulation 9.

Operators to which these Regulations apply

3.—(1) These Regulations apply to—

- (a) an operator of an approved slaughterhouse at which at least 1,000 sheep per week as a rolling annual average are slaughtered; and
- (b) an operator of an approved slaughterhouse at which fewer than 1,000 sheep per week as a rolling annual average are slaughtered and chooses to classify carcasses of sheep aged less than 12 months.

(2) In these Regulations, a “regulated slaughterhouse” is an approved slaughterhouse to which these Regulations apply.

(3) For the purposes of this regulation “rolling annual average” means the weekly average for the immediately preceding twelve months calculated by an approved slaughterhouse on a monthly basis.

Notifications by operators

4.—(1) Any person who is an operator of a regulated slaughterhouse on the commencement date of this regulation must, before the end of the period of 28 days beginning with that date, give notice to the Department in accordance with paragraph (3).

(2) Any person who becomes an operator of a regulated slaughterhouse on a date after that date must, before the end of the period of 28 days beginning with the date on which they become an operator, give notice to the Department in accordance with paragraph (3).

(3) A notice under this paragraph must be given electronically and include—

- (a) the address, telephone number and approval number of the slaughterhouse;
- (b) the full name and address of the operator;
- (c) where the operator is a partnership or has joint owners, the full names and addresses of all the partners or joint owners; and
- (d) where the operator is a body corporate, the full name, registered office address and registration number of the body.

(4) Where a change occurs in any of the particulars specified in paragraph (3), the operator must before the end of the period of 28 days, beginning with the date on which that occurs, give notice to the Department of the particulars of the change.

(5) Where a person ceases to be the operator of a regulated slaughterhouse, that person must, before the end of the period of ten days beginning with the day of the cessation give notice to the Department of—

- (a) the date of the cessation; and
- (b) the person (if any) who is taking over as operator of that slaughterhouse.

(6) Where a slaughterhouse ceases to be a regulated slaughterhouse, the operator of that slaughterhouse must, before the end of the period of ten days beginning with the day on which that occurs, give notice electronically to the Department of that cessation.

(7) A notice given under paragraph (1) in relation to a regulated slaughterhouse to which regulation 3(1)(b) applies may be withdrawn no earlier than 12 months after that notice has been given, unless the Department agrees otherwise.

(8) For the purposes of this regulation “partnership” means—

- (a) a relation which falls within the meaning given in section 1 of the Partnership Act 1890^(a); or
- (b) a limited liability partnership within the meaning given in section 1 of the Limited Liability Partnerships Act 2000^(b).

PART 2

CLASSIFICATION ETC. OF CARCASES OF SHEEP AGED LESS THAN 12 MONTHS

Methods for classification of carcases of sheep aged less than 12 months

5. The operator of a regulated slaughterhouse must ensure that the carcase of each sheep aged less than 12 months at the time of its slaughter at that slaughterhouse is classified in accordance with regulation 8—

- (a) visually by a classifier licensed under regulation 16; or
- (b) by use of an authorised automated carcase classification method pursuant to a licence granted under regulation 17.

Removal of tissue from a carcase

6.—(1) Subject to—

- (a) regulation 7; and
- (b) where veterinary requirements are applied,

the operator of a regulated slaughterhouse must ensure that no fat, muscle or other tissue shall be removed from a carcase of a sheep aged less than 12 months before weighing, classification, identification and labelling.

(2) In this regulation, “veterinary requirements” means the requirements relating to post mortem official checks in—

- (a) Regulation (EU) No 2017/625 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2017 on official controls and other official activities performed to ensure the

^(a) 1890 c. 39; section 1 was amended by the Statute Law (Repeals) Act 1998 (c. 43) and S.I. 2009/1941.

^(b) 2000 c. 12

application of food and feed law, rules on animal health and welfare, plant health and plant protection products(a); and

- (b) Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 2019/627 of 15 March 2019 laying down uniform practical arrangements for the performance of official controls on products of animal origin intended for human consumption in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2017/625 of the European Parliament (b).

Carcase presentation for the classification of carcasses of sheep aged less than 12 months

7. Schedule 1 has effect for the purpose of making provision relating to the carcase presentation for the classification of carcasses of sheep aged less than 12 months.

Classification

8.—(1) The classifications under regulation 5 must—

- (a) be carried out at the time that the warm weight of the carcase is being determined in accordance with regulation 9; and
- (b) subject to paragraphs (2), (3) and (4), classify the carcase by—
 - (i) a conformation class from the first column of Table 1; and
 - (ii) a class of fat cover from the first column of Table 2,

in Schedule 1.

(2) Each of the classes of conformation and fat cover in the first column of Tables 1 and 2 of Schedule 1 may be subdivided into three subclasses of Low (marked as “-”), Medium (marked as “=”) and High (marked as “+”).

(3) If the subdivisions permitted under paragraph (2) are not applied, fat cover class 4 may be subdivided into subclasses Low (marked as “L”) and High (marked as “H”).

(4) Subject to agreement by the Department, fat classes other than class 4 may also be subdivided into subclasses Low (marked as “L”) and High (marked as “H”).

(5) If the automated carcase classification method referred to in regulation 5(b) fails to classify a carcase, that carcase must be classified—

- (a) on the day of slaughter; or
- (b) if the required period between slaughter and weighing has expired on the day after the slaughter, as soon as possible on that day.

Weighing

9.—(1) Subject to paragraph (2), to determine the warm weight of a carcase of a sheep aged less than 12 months, it must be weighed to the nearest 100 grams as soon as possible after slaughter and not later than 60 minutes after the sheep has been stuck.

(2) Where, due to equipment failure, it is not possible to weigh the carcase within 60 minutes, the operator of the regulated slaughterhouse must follow the procedure set out in guidance issued by the Department.

Carcase weight: adjustments

10.—(1) The weight of a carcase for the purposes of recording market prices in accordance with regulation 20 is the cold weight of the carcase.

(2) The cold weight of a carcase is its warm weight as determined under regulation 9(1), reduced by 2%, but where the warm weight could not be determined under regulation 9(1), the operator of

(a) O.J. No. L 95 7.4.2017, p. 1.

(b) O.J. No. L 131 17.05.2019, p. 51.

the regulated slaughterhouse must follow the procedure to calculate the cold weight set out in guidance issued by the Department.

(3) The operator of a regulated slaughterhouse must ensure that the cold weight of each carcass which the slaughterhouse purchases is determined to the nearest 100 grams.

Identification of carcasses

11. The operator of a regulated slaughterhouse must ensure that each carcass in that slaughterhouse is allocated a kill or slaughter number which identifies the carcass and the batch of animals from which it was obtained. The same kill or slaughter number must not be allocated to a different carcass on the same date of slaughter.

Labelling of carcasses

12.—(1) The operator of a regulated slaughterhouse must ensure that each carcass classified in that slaughterhouse is labelled at the time of classification with a label containing the following information—

- (a) the identifying kill or slaughter number allocated under regulation 11;
- (b) the date of slaughter of the animal from which the carcass was obtained;
- (c) the approval number of the slaughterhouse;
- (d) the classification of the carcass determined under regulation 8(1)(b);
- (e) the cold weight of the carcass determined under regulation 10(2);
- (f) if the regulated slaughterhouse is licensed for automated classification, whether classification was carried out visually or by automated carcass classification method; and
- (g) the category of the animal.

(2) Labels—

- (a) may be located on the outside or the inside surface of the carcass; and
- (b) must be clearly legible, tamper-proof and firmly attached to the carcass.

Record keeping

13.—(1) An operator of a regulated slaughterhouse must compile and keep a record of the particulars specified in paragraph (2) relating to each carcass which is classified in that slaughterhouse.

(2) The particulars referred to in paragraph (1) are—

- (a) the information required for the label of the carcass as set out in regulation 12(1);
- (b) the warm weight in accordance with regulation 9;
- (c) the ear tag number;
- (d) a record that the communication required by regulation 21 has been effected;
- (e) where classification was carried out visually, the name, signature and classification licence serial number or approval number of the person who carried out the classification;
- (f) where classification was carried out by an automated method, the name, signature and classification licence serial number of the person responsible for monitoring classification accuracy;
- (g) if applicable, the market price as defined in regulation 20;
- (h) if applicable, any supplementary payments.

(3) The operator must retain each record for a period of 12 months from the end of the calendar year to which the record relates.

Authorisation of automated classification methods for carcasses

14.—(1) The proprietor of an automated carcass classification method may make a request that the Department authorises that method for use in regulated slaughterhouses.

(2) Subject to paragraph (6), an authorisation granted under paragraph (1) is subject to meeting the conditions and minimum requirements for an authorisation test set out in Schedule 2.

(3) Subject to paragraph (4), the Department may only authorise automated carcass classification methods based on an authorisation test during which only one hanging presentation was used.

(4) Where—

- (a) more than one hanging presentation was used in an authorisation test; and
- (b) the differences between those hanging presentations do not lead to differences in classification accuracy,

the Department may authorise automated carcass classification methods based on that authorisation test.

(5) The authorisation for an automated classification method may, in addition to the requirement under paragraph (3), be granted subject to such other terms and conditions as the Department considers appropriate.

(6) The Department may authorise an automated grading method using a process alternative to that set out in Schedule 2 provided that—

- (a) an authorisation for that automated grading method has been granted in any part of the United Kingdom;
- (b) the sample used for that authorisation test included a spread of sheep carcass classifications similar to the carcass classifications of sheep aged less than 12 months slaughtered in regulated slaughterhouses in Northern Ireland; and
- (c) the results of that alternative process fulfil the minimum requirements specified in Schedule 2.

(7) The Department may approve modifications of the technical specifications of an authorised automated carcass classification method if it is satisfied that such modification results in a level of accuracy that at least fulfils the minimum requirements for the results of an authorisation test set out in Schedule 2.

Additional provisions on classification by automated carcass classification methods

15.—(1) If a regulated slaughterhouse operates classification by using automated carcass classification methods as provided for in regulation 5(b), the operator of that slaughterhouse must keep daily control reports on the functioning of those methods.

(2) The daily control reports must include—

- (a) any shortcomings encountered; and
- (b) any actions taken where necessary.

(3) Classification by automated carcass classification methods is valid only if—

- (a) the hanging presentation is identical to the presentation used during the authorisation test; or
- (b) it is demonstrated, to the satisfaction of the Department, that using a different hanging presentation has no effect on classification accuracy by the automated carcass classification methods.

PART 3

LICENSING FOR CLASSIFICATION OF CARCASES OF SHEEP AGED LESS THAN 12 MONTHS

Licence to carry out visual classification

16.—(1) Subject to paragraph (2) the Department may grant a licence to carry out visual classification of a carcase of a sheep aged less than 12 months to any person who—

- (a) applies for such a licence, and
- (b) appears to the Department to be qualified to carry out the classification.

(2) The Department must be satisfied that the person referred to in paragraph (1) is a fit and proper person to carry out classification of carcases.

(3) The licence may be made subject to such terms and conditions as the Department considers necessary for the purposes of carrying out a visual classification.

(4) Where paragraph (5), (6) or (7) applies, the Department may suspend, alter or revoke the licence granted to a person.

(5) This paragraph applies where, as a result of the on-the-spot checks required by regulation 26 the Department ascertains a significant number of incorrect—

- (a) presentations;
- (b) classifications;
- (c) identifications; or
- (d) labellings

by that person.

(6) This paragraph applies where a person has contravened any of the terms and conditions of a licence granted to them under paragraph (1).

(7) This paragraph applies where the Department is satisfied that a person is no longer a fit and proper person to carry out classification of carcases.

(8) If during the granting of a licence, or when carrying out an on-the-spot check as detailed in regulation 26, or when exercising powers under regulation 29 or 30, an authorised officer observes that there has been an error on conformation or fat cover, the Department may ask the operator to rectify it—

- (a) on the labelling of the carcase; and
- (b) in the documents concerned.

(9) Where the Department takes any decision in relation to a licence under this regulation which gives rise to a right to appeal under regulation 18 the Department must—

- (a) inform the person of the decision in writing;
- (b) give reasons for the decision; and
- (c) inform the person of the right of appeal under regulation 18,

within a period of 28 days beginning on the day on which the decision is made.

Licence to use authorised automated carcase classification methods

17.—(1) Subject to paragraph (2), the Department may grant to the operator of a regulated slaughterhouse a licence, permitting the use of authorised automated carcase classification methods for classification of carcases at that regulated slaughterhouse.

(2) Where an operator applies for such a licence, the Department must be satisfied that—

- (a) the equipment in the regulated slaughterhouse; and
- (b) the manner of its operation

meets the standards required by regulations 8(1)(b) and 14 (read with Schedule 2).

(3) The licence may be granted by the Department subject to such terms and conditions as the Department considers are necessary to ensure compliance with the standards mentioned in paragraph (2).

(4) Where paragraph (5), (6) or (7) applies, the Department may suspend, alter or revoke a licence granted to an operator under this regulation.

(5) This paragraph applies where, as a result of the on-the-spot checks provided for in regulation 26, or when exercising powers under regulation 29 or 30, the Department ascertains a significant number of incorrect—

- (a) presentations;
- (b) classifications;
- (c) identifications; or
- (d) labellings

at a regulated slaughterhouse.

(6) This paragraph applies where the person has contravened any of the terms or conditions of that licence.

(7) This paragraph applies where the Department considers that the automated classification equipment no longer meets the standards required by these Regulations, for reasons connected with—

- (a) the equipment; or
- (b) the operator's operation of the equipment.

(8) If during the granting of a licence, or when carrying out an on-the-spot check as detailed in regulation 26, an authorised officer finds an error on conformation or fat cover, the Department may ask the operator to rectify it—

- (a) on the labelling of the carcass; and
- (b) in the documents concerned.

(9) Where the Department makes any decision in relation to a licence under this regulation which gives rise to a right of appeal under regulation 18, the Department must—

- (a) inform the operator of the decision in writing;
- (b) give the reasons for the decision; and
- (c) inform the operator of the right of appeal under regulation 18,

within a period of 28 days beginning on the day on which the decision is made.

Appeals regarding licences

18.—(1) A person may, within 21 days of the notification of a decision to which this regulation applies, appeal in writing against that decision to a magistrates' court.

(2) A person may appeal against—

- (a) a decision by the Department to reject an application by that person for a licence under regulation 16 or a licence under regulation 17;
- (b) a term or condition imposed by the Department on the grant of a licence under regulation 16 or a licence under regulation 17, or
- (c) a decision by the Department to suspend, alter or revoke a licence under regulation 16 or a licence under regulation 17.

(3) The procedure is by way of a complaint for an order, and the Magistrates' Courts (Northern Ireland) Order 1981(a) applies to the proceedings.

(a) 1981 No. 1675 (N.I. 26)

(4) On an appeal the court may either cancel or affirm the decision and, if the court affirms the decision, it may do so either in its original form or with such modifications as the court thinks fit.

PART 4

RECORDING AND REPORTING OF THE MARKET PRICES OF CLASSIFIED CARCASSES OF SHEEP AGED LESS THAN 12 MONTHS

Recording of market prices for carcasses

19. The operator of a regulated slaughterhouse which slaughters sheep aged less than 12 months, purchased on a deadweight basis, must record the market price of the classified carcasses of those sheep as defined in regulation 20.

Definition of “market price”

20.—(1) As regards carcasses of sheep aged less than 12 months purchased on a deadweight basis, “market price” means the price calculated by the regulated slaughterhouse on the basis of classification, weight, or other pre-determined features of the carcase—

- (a) expressing the value of the carcase in pence per kilo;
- (b) net of VAT;
- (c) including any premium paid; and
- (d) before deductions applied for the specific carcase.

(2) Market prices exclude flat rate prices that is, where an agreed price is paid for sheep regardless of the slaughterhouse’s classification.

(3) Market prices exclude supplementary payments.

(4) The market price must be expressed per kg of carcase and the weight used to calculate this must be the cold weight.

Communication of classification results and market prices to the supplier

21.—(1) A regulated slaughterhouse carrying out classification in accordance with regulation 8 must communicate the results of the classification and market price to the supplier of the animal.

(2) The communication referred to in paragraph (1) must be in writing and may be—

- (a) in paper form; or
- (b) by electronic means.

(3) The communication must indicate for each carcase—

- (a) the date of slaughter of the animal from which the carcase was obtained;
- (b) the kill or slaughter number under regulation 11;
- (c) the ear tag number of the sheep;
- (d) the classification results by means of the conformation class and class of fat cover under regulation 8;
- (e) the carcase weight established in accordance with regulations 9 and 10, specifying whether it relates to the warm or cold weight;
- (f) where applicable, that the classification has been carried out using an automated carcase classification method; and
- (g) the market price as defined in regulation 20 if applicable.

(4) The communication referred to in paragraph (1) must include subclasses, where such information is available.

Reporting of classification results and market prices to the Department

22.—(1) A regulated slaughterhouse carrying out classification of carcasses of sheep purchased on a deadweight basis in accordance with regulation 8 must for each such sheep carcase communicate the results of the classification and, if applicable, market price to the Department, or to a person authorised by the Department.

(2) The communication referred to in paragraph (1) must be by electronic means.

(3) The communication must indicate for each carcase—

- (a) the date of slaughter of the animal from which the carcase was obtained;
- (b) the kill or slaughter number under regulation 11;
- (c) the ear tag number of the sheep;
- (d) the classification results by means of the conformation class and class of fat cover under regulation 8;
- (e) the warm weight established in accordance with regulation 9 and the cold weight established in accordance with regulation 10(2);
- (f) the paid weight which is the maximum carcase weight the regulated slaughterhouse has indicated they will pay the supplier, if applicable;
- (g) the category;
- (h) where applicable, that the classification has been carried out using an automated carcase classification method; and
- (i) the market price as defined in regulation 20, if applicable.

(4) The communication referred to in paragraph (1) must include subclasses, where such information available.

(5) By noon on each Tuesday, the operator of a regulated slaughterhouse must, in relation to the week immediately preceding, report to the Department or to a person authorised by the Department—

- (a) the classification results under regulation 8; and
- (b) the prices recorded under regulation 19.

(6) A report under paragraph (5) shall be made by electronic means.

(7) For the purposes of paragraph (5), the start day and end day of the week immediately preceding shall be specified in writing by the Department.

(8) At the discretion of the Department, the classification results and prices recorded may be made available to an official of the Department at the slaughterhouse.

Additional provisions for reporting of market prices of carcasses

23.—(1) Where supplementary payments are made to suppliers of carcasses by a slaughterhouse required to report prices, the Department may take into account—

- (a) the amount of such payments; and
- (b) the period to which each relates.

(2) If the Department decides to take into consideration the supplementary payments made to suppliers of carcasses, the regulated slaughterhouse required to report prices must notify the Department of the amount of any supplementary payments and the reason for that payment within a timeframe specified by the Department.

Purposes for which requested information may be processed

24.—(1) This regulation relates to information notified to the Department, or person authorised by the Department, under regulations 4 and 22.

(2) The purposes for which the information requested may be processed are—

- (a) assisting persons in agri-food supply chains to—
 - (i) manage risks; or
 - (ii) manage market volatility;
- (b) promoting transparency or fairness in agri-food supply chains; and
- (c) monitoring, or analysing, markets connected with agri-food supply chains.

(3) For the purposes of these Regulations, “agri-food supply chain” has the meaning given to it in paragraph 11 of Schedule 6 to the Agriculture Act 2020(a).

Allowed types of processing of requested information

25.—(1) The types of processing to which the information requested may be subjected are—

- (a) collection, recording, organisation, structuring or storage;
- (b) adaptation or alteration;
- (c) retrieval, consultation or use;
- (d) disclosure by transmission, dissemination or otherwise making available;
- (e) alignment or combination, or
- (f) restriction, erasure or destruction.

(2) Information provided under regulation 22 may only be disclosed under paragraph (1)(d) in anonymised form.

(3) Information provided under regulation 4 may be disclosed under paragraph (1)(d) in any form.

PART 5

ENFORCEMENT AND OFFENCES

On-the-spot checks

26.—(1) An authorised officer must carry out checks under this regulation (“on-the-spot checks”) in any regulated slaughterhouse.

(2) The authorised officer must carry out the on-the-spot checks required under paragraph (1) without prior warning and must check compliance with these Regulations generally and at least in respect of—

- (a) the presentation, classification, weighing, identification and labelling of the carcasses; and
- (b) where applicable—
 - (i) the ongoing accuracy of any authorised automated carcase classification method used in the slaughterhouse and the manner of its operation; and
 - (ii) the daily control records referred to in regulation 15(1).

Minimum requirements of on-the-spot checks

27.—(1) Where the Department carries out a risk assessment to determine the minimum requirements for on-the-spot checks, paragraph (2) applies.

(2) The Department must determine—

- (a) the frequency of those checks; and
- (b) the minimum number of carcasses to be checked,

(a) 2020 c. 21

on the basis of the risk assessment referred to in paragraph (1).

(3) In making the determination referred to in paragraph (1), the Department must, in particular, take into account—

- (a) the number of sheep slaughtered in the regulated slaughterhouse concerned, and
- (b) the findings during any previous on-the-spot checks in that slaughterhouse.

(4) Where the Department does not carry out a risk assessment: on-the-spot checks should be carried out:

- (a) for slaughterhouses which slaughter 1000 sheep or more per week as a rolling annual average, at least twice every three months and shall relate to at least 50 carcasses; and
- (b) for slaughterhouses which slaughter fewer than 1000 sheep per week as a rolling annual average, at least once every three months and shall relate to at least 50 carcasses.

(5) The on-the-spot checks must, in particular, verify—

- (a) the classification, weighing, identification and labelling of the carcasses;
- (b) the accuracy of any automated carcass classification methods, by using the system of points set out in Schedule 2 and limits that determines the ongoing accuracy of the classification method;
- (c) the carcass presentation and, where an automated carcass classification method was used, the hanging presentation;
- (d) if appropriate, the daily function test as well as any other technical aspects of classification methods;
- (e) the daily control reports as referred to in paragraphs (1) and (2) of regulation 15; and
- (f) the accuracy of the information reported to the supplier under regulation 21 and the Department (or person authorised by it) under regulation 22.

Reports on on-the-spot checks

28. The Department must make and keep reports on the on-the-spot checks required by regulations 26 and 27.

Powers of entry

29.—(1) An authorised officer may at any reasonable hour or on producing, if so required, a duly authenticated authorisation, enter a regulated slaughterhouse and any associated premises in which carcasses of sheep aged less than 12 months may be handled or records relating to those carcasses may be kept, for the purpose of ascertaining whether—

- (a) any offence under these Regulations is being or has been committed on the premises, or
- (b) there is on those premises any evidence of any such offence.

(2) The authorised officer may be accompanied by such other persons as the authorised officer considers necessary.

(3) A lay magistrate may by signed warrant permit an authorised officer to enter any premises, if necessary by reasonable force, if satisfied on sworn information in writing that—

- (a) there are reasonable grounds for entering into the premises for any purpose described in paragraph (1), and
- (b) any of the following conditions are met—
 - (i) admission to the premises has been refused, or a refusal is anticipated, and (in either case) notice of intention to apply for a warrant has been given to the operator;
 - (ii) asking for admission, or the giving of such notice, would defeat the object of the entry;
 - (iii) the case is one of urgency, or
 - (iv) the premises are unoccupied, or the operator is temporarily absent.

(4) A warrant granted under this regulation continues in force for three months after the date on which it is issued.

(5) An authorised officer who enters any unoccupied premises, or premises from which the operator is temporarily absent, must leave them as effectively secured against unauthorised entry as they were at the time of entry.

Powers of authorised officers

30. An authorised officer entering premises under regulation 29 may—

- (a) have access to, inspect, photograph or otherwise take record of—
 - (i) any carcase of a sheep aged less than 12 months or part of such a carcase; or
 - (ii) any carcase or part of a carcase which the authorised officer reasonably suspects to be a carcase of a sheep aged less than 12 months or part of such a carcase.
- (b) have access to, inspect, copy or print any documents, records or materials, in whatever form they are held, relevant to these Regulations, which an operator or licensed classifier is known or suspected to have kept, or remove such documents, records or materials to enable them to be copied or retained as evidence;
- (c) have access to, inspect, photograph and check the operation of, any machine, computer or apparatus which is or has been in use in connection with these Regulations; and
- (d) require that copies of or extracts from any documents, records or materials be produced in a form in which they may be taken away.

Offences: notifications by operators

31. Any person who fails to comply with any requirement of regulation 4 (notifications by operators) is guilty of an offence.

Offences: removal of tissue from a carcase

32. Any person who fails to comply with any requirement of regulation 6 (removal of tissue from a carcase) is guilty of an offence.

Offences: presentation

33. Any person who fails to comply with the carcase presentation as set out in regulation 7 (presentation and scale for the classification of carcasses) and Schedule 1 is guilty of an offence.

Offences: classification

34. Any person who fails to classify a carcase as set out in regulation 5 (methods for classification of carcasses of sheep aged less than 12 months) and regulation 8 (classification) is guilty of an offence.

Offences: weighing

35. Any person who fails to weigh a carcase as set out in regulation 9 (weighing) is guilty of an offence.

Offences: adjustments for carcase weights

36. Any person who fails to apply the correct adjustment to the warm weight of the carcase to calculate the cold weight as set out in regulation 10 (carcase weights: adjustments) is guilty of an offence.

Offences: identification, labelling and record keeping

37.—(1) Any person who fails to comply with any requirements of regulation 11 (identification of carcasses), regulation 12 (labelling of carcasses) or regulation 13 (record keeping) is guilty of an offence.

(2) Any person who marks a sheep carcase or part of such a carcase—

- (a) as prescribed by regulation 12; or
- (b) in a way closely resembling the labelling prescribed by this regulation,

which is likely to mislead, is guilty of an offence.

Offences: daily control reports on the functioning of automated methods

38. Any person who fails to keep daily control records of an automated method of classification as set out in regulation 15 (additional provisions on classification by automated carcass classification methods) is guilty of an offence.

Offences: licences

39.—(1) If visual classification of a sheep carcass is carried out at a regulated slaughterhouse—

- (a) without a licence granted under regulation 16; or
- (b) in breach of any term or condition of such a licence.

the person who carries out the classification, and the operator of that slaughterhouse, are each guilty of an offence.

(2) If classification of a sheep carcass is carried out at an approved slaughterhouse by means of automated classification equipment—

- (a) without a licence granted under regulation 17 for the use of that equipment at that slaughterhouse; or
- (b) in breach of any terms or conditions of such a licence,

the person who carries out that classification, and the operator of that slaughterhouse, are each guilty of an offence.

(3) Any person who makes an alteration to a licence granted under regulation 16 or a licence granted under regulation 17 is guilty of an offence.

Offences: recording of market prices

40. Any person who fails to record the market price of the classified carcasses of sheep as required by regulation 19 (recording of market prices for carcasses) is guilty of an offence.

Offences: reporting

41.—(1) Any person who fails to report to the supplier and Department as set out in regulation 21 (communication of classification results and market prices to the supplier) and regulation 22 (Reporting of classification results and market prices to the Department) is guilty of an offence.

(2) Any person who provides a report to the supplier and Department as set out in regulation 21 and regulation 22 which is inaccurate is guilty of an offence.

Offences: notifying the Department of supplementary payments

42. Where regulation 23(2) applies, any person who fails to notify the Department of any supplementary payments is guilty of an offence.

Offences: obstruction etc.

43. Any person who—

- (a) without reasonable excuse, obstructs any person acting under these Regulations;
- (b) without reasonable cause, fails to give any person acting under these Regulations any assistance or information that that person may reasonably require for the purpose of carrying out functions under these Regulations;
- (c) gives any person acting under these Regulations any information knowing it to be false or misleading, or
- (d) fails to produce any document or record when required to do so by any person acting under these Regulations

is guilty of an offence.

Enforcement notices

44.—(1) If the Department has reason to believe that a person has committed an offence under these Regulations, the Department may serve that person with an enforcement notice in accordance with the following paragraph.

(2) An enforcement notice must—

- (a) state the Department's grounds for believing that an offence has been committed;
- (b) specify the matter that constitutes the offence;
- (c) specify what that person must stop doing, or the measures that, in the Department's opinion, the person must take in order to comply with these Regulations;
- (d) require the person to stop doing the action specified in the notice, or to take the measures specified in the notice or measures at least equivalent to them, within the period (not being less than 14 days) specified in the notice;
- (e) inform the person of the right of appeal conferred by regulation 46;
- (f) inform the person of the period within which such an appeal may be brought; and
- (g) the consequences of a failure to comply with the notice.

(3) Any person who contravenes, or fails to comply with, an enforcement notice is guilty of an offence.

Issue of enforcement notices

45.—(1) Any enforcement notice required or authorised under regulation 44 to be given to any person must be in writing.

(2) An enforcement notice described in paragraph (1) may be given by—

- (a) delivering it to the person;
- (b) leaving it at the person's proper address; or
- (c) sending it by post to the person at that address.

(3) Where any such enforcement notice is to be given to a body corporate, it may be given to an officer of the body.

(4) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(b) and (c), the proper address of any person to whom an enforcement notice is to be given is the person's last known address, except that in the case of a body corporate or an officer of the body, the proper address is the address of the registered or principal office of the body.

(5) In this regulation—

- (a) "director", in relation to a body corporate whose affairs are managed by its members, means a member of the body corporate; and

- (b) “officer”, in relation to a body corporate, means any director, manager, secretary or other similar officer of the body corporate.

Appeals against enforcement notices

46.—(1) A person may appeal to a magistrates’ court against an enforcement notice, if that person has reason to believe that the notice should not have been given.

(2) A person may appeal before the end of the period of 21 days beginning with the date on which the notice was given.

(3) The procedure is by way of complaint for an order; and the Magistrates’ Court (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 applies to the proceedings.

(4) On an appeal, the court may either confirm or cancel the notice.

(5) If the court confirms the notice, it may do so either in its original form or with such modifications as the court thinks fit.

Period for bringing prosecution

47.—(1) Proceedings for an offence under regulations 31 to 43 may be brought before the end of the period of 12 months beginning with the date on which the prosecutor first knows of evidence sufficient, in the prosecutor’s opinion, to justify proceedings.

(2) But no such proceedings may be brought later than 18 months from the date of the commission of the offence.

(3) For the purposes of paragraph (1)—

- (a) a certificate signed by or on behalf of the prosecutor, and stating the date on which the prosecutor first knew of evidence sufficient to justify the proceedings, is conclusive evidence of that fact; and
- (b) a certificate stating the matter and purporting to be so signed is deemed to be so signed, unless the contrary is proved.

Offences by bodies corporate

48.—(1) If an offence under these Regulations committed by a body corporate is shown to have been committed with the consent or connivance of, or to be attributable to any neglect on the part of, an officer, that officer as well as the body corporate is guilty of the offence, and is liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly.

(2) If the affairs of a body corporate are managed by its members, paragraph (1) applies in relation to the acts and defaults of a member in connection with that member’s functions of management as if that member were a director of the body.

(3) In this regulation, “officer”, in relation to a body corporate, means a director, member of the committee of management, chief executive, manager, secretary or other similar officer of the body, or a person purporting to act in any such capacity.

Defence of due diligence

49. It is a defence for a person charged with an offence under these Regulations, to prove that the person took all reasonable precautions and exercised all due diligence to avoid the commission of the offence by them or by a person under their control.

Offences: penalties

50.—(1) Subject to paragraph (2), a person guilty of an offence under these Regulations is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale.

(2) A person guilty of an offence under regulation 37(2) is liable—

- (a) on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum; or
- (b) on indictment, to a fine.

Sealed with the Official Seal of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on
xxth 2026

Name
A senior officer of the
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

SCHEDULES

SCHEDULE 1

Regulations 7 and 8

PART 1

Carcase Presentation

Carcases shall be presented without—

- (a) the head (severed at the atlantooccipital joint);
- (b) the feet (severed at the carpometacarpal or tarso-metatarsal joints);
- (c) the tail (severed between the sixth and seventh caudal vertebrae);
- (d) the udder;
- (e) the genitalia;
- (f) the liver; and
- (g) the pluck.

Kidneys and kidney fat are included in the carcass.

PART 2

Classes of conformation and degree of fat cover of carcasses of sheep aged less than twelve months old

Table 1

CONFORMATION CLASS Descriptions of the essential parts of a sheep carcass (hindquarter; back, and shoulder) which indicate the conformation class for that carcass

<i>Conformation class</i>	<i>Description</i>
S	<u>Hindquarter</u> : double muscled. Profiles extremely convex.
Superior	<u>Back</u> : extremely convex, extremely wide, extremely thick. <u>Shoulder</u> : extremely convex and extremely thick.
E	<u>Hindquarter</u> : very thick. Profiles very convex.
Excellent	<u>Back</u> : very convex, very wide and very thick to the shoulder. <u>Shoulder</u> : very convex and very thick.
U	<u>Hindquarter</u> : thick. Profiles convex.
Very good	<u>Back</u> : wide and thick to the shoulder. <u>Shoulder</u> : thick and convex.
O	<u>Hindquarter</u> : profiles tending to slightly concave.
Fair	<u>Back</u> : lacking width and thickness.

	<u>Shoulder</u> : tending to narrow. Lacking thickness.
P	<u>Hindquarter</u> : profiles concave to very concave.
Poor	<u>Back</u> : narrow and concave, with bones apparent.
	<u>Shoulder</u> : narrow, flat and bones apparent.

Table 2

DEGREE OF FAT COVER Descriptions of the degrees of fat coverage of a sheep carcass which indicate the fat cover class for that carcass

<i>Class of fat cover</i>	<i>Description</i>	
1. Low	External:	Traces of, or no, visible fat
	Internal:	<u>Abdominal</u> : Traces of, or no, fat visible on kidneys. <u>Thoracic</u> : Traces of, or no, fat visible between ribs.
2. Slight	External:	A slight layer of fat covers part of the carcass, but may be less evident on the limbs.
	Internal:	<u>Abdominal</u> : Traces of fat, or slight layer of fat envelops part of the kidneys. <u>Thoracic</u> : Muscle clearly visible between ribs.
3. Average	External:	A light layer of fat covering most, or all, of the carcass. Slightly thickened fat zones on the base of the tail.
	Internal:	<u>Abdominal</u> : Light layer of fat envelops part, or all, of the kidneys. <u>Thoracic</u> : Muscle still visible between ribs.
4. High	External	A thick layer of fat covering most, or all, of the carcass, but may be thinner on limbs, and thickening on shoulders.
	Internal	<u>Abdominal</u> : Kidney is enveloped in fat. <u>Thoracic</u> : Muscle between ribs may be infiltrated with fat. Fat deposits may be visible on the ribs
5. Very High	External	Very thick fat cover. Patches of fat sometimes visible.

Internal

Abdominal: Kidneys
enveloped in thick layer of fat,
Thoracic: Muscle between ribs
infiltrated with fat. Fat
deposits visible on ribs.

SCHEDULE 2 Regulations 14(2), (6) and (7) and 27(5)

Authorisation of automated classification methods for carcasses of sheep aged less than 12 months

1. For any authorisation test organised by the Department, the manufacturer or designer of the automated carcass classification method and its technical functions, which are to be used in that test, must provide the Department with a description of them which must, in particular, provide details of the security concept of the apparatus against any type of manipulation.

2. The Department must designate an independent body, which must include an independent data analyst-statistician. This body must—

- (a) analyse the results of the authorisation test; and
- (b) communicate the results of its analysis to the Department, including the accuracy of the automated carcass classification methods established in accordance with the provisions in paragraphs 8 to 15.

3. The analysis by the designated independent body must be a quantitative analysis, according to a methodology to be decided by the Department, of the results of the authorisation test, indicating—

- (a) the classification results of each expert qualifier; and
- (b) those obtained by using the automated carcass classification method.

4. A panel for which an authorisation test is organised must be composed of at least five government employed expert classifiers in classification of carcasses of sheep.

5. The panel must comprise an uneven number of experts.

6. The members of the panel must work in an independent and anonymous way.

7. The Department must nominate a coordinator of the authorisation test process, who must—

- (a) not be part of the panel;
- (b) maintain independence with regard to the panel; and
- (c) in the opinion of the Department, have satisfactory technical knowledge to carry out this role.

8. The coordinator nominated under paragraph 7 must—

- (a) ensure that the analysis sample includes a spread of carcass classifications representative of sheep aged less than 12 months slaughtered in regulated slaughterhouses;
- (b) monitor the independent and anonymous functioning of the members of the panel;
- (c) verify that each carcass classified is obtained from a sheep aged less than 12 months at the time of slaughter;
- (d) collect—
 - (i) the classification results of the members of the panel; and
 - (ii) the classification results obtained by using the automated carcass classification method;

- (e) ensure that, during the entire duration of the authorisation test, the classification results obtained by using the automated carcass classification methods will not be available to any member of the panel, or to any other interested party;
- (f) if they so decide, for objective reasons they must specify, to reject carcasses from the sample to be used for the analysis; and
- (g) send the results to the body designated under paragraph 2.

9. For the authorisation test—

- (a) each of the classes of conformation and of fat cover must be subdivided into three subclasses;
- (b) a sample of a minimum of 1200 validated carcasses must be required;
- (c) the percentage of failures must be no more than 5% of the carcasses that are fit for classification by using automated classification methods.

10. For each validated carcass, the median of the results of the members of the panel must be considered as the correct classification of that carcass.

11. To estimate the performance of the automated carcass classification method, the results of the automated carcass classification method must, for each carcass, be compared to the median of the results of the panel.

12. The accuracy of the classification by the automated classification method for each carcass must be established by allocating points to that result based on its degree of error from the correct classification result for both conformation and fat cover in accordance with Table 1 below.

Table 1

<i>Degree of error</i>	<i>Conformation</i>	<i>Fat cover</i>
No error	10	10
Error of 1 unit (i.e. 1 subclass up or down)	6	9
Error of 2 units (i.e. 2 subclasses up or down)	-9	0
Error of 3 units (i.e. 3 subclasses up or down)	-27	-13
Error of more than 3 units (i.e. more than 3 subclasses up or down)	-48	-30

13. With a view to authorisation, the automated carcass classification methods must achieve at least 60% of the maximum number of points for both conformation and fat cover.

14. In addition, the classification by using automated carcass classification methods must be within the limits specified in Table 2 below.

Table 2

	<i>Conformation</i>	<i>Fat Cover</i>
Bias	± 0.30	± 0.60
Slope of regression line	1 ± 0.15	1 ± 0.30

15. Where, during an authorisation test, more than one carcass presentation is used, the differences between those carcass presentations must not lead to differences in the classification results.

16.—(1) After the authorisation test, the coordinator must send to the Department—

- (a) the results of the classification test;

- (b) the dates on which the authorisation test took place;
- (c) the name and address of the slaughterhouse(s) where the authorisation test took place;
- (d) an explanation of the organisation and performance of the processing line(s), including the speed per hour; and
- (e) a report on the organisation of the authorisation test in view of the conditions and minimum requirements set out in paragraphs 4 to 15.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of these Regulations)

These Regulations are made under sections 48 and paragraphs 10 to 15 and 18 of Schedule 6 of the Agriculture Act 2020 (c.21).

These Regulations establish a mandatory scheme in Northern Ireland for the classification of carcasses of sheep aged under 12 months at slaughter, and for the reporting, to the Department (or a body appointed by the Department), of market prices for certain categories of classified carcasses. This price information will be used by the Department primarily to monitor the sheep carcass market.

These Regulations also mandate that the operators of slaughterhouses within the scope of these Regulations must notify each supplier of a sheep for slaughter of the classification results for the carcass of that animal.

These Regulations set out the criteria according to which sheep carcasses must be classified.

These Regulations allow for two methods of carcass classification: visual (where classification is done by visual inspection of the carcass by a classifier), and automated (where classification is done by apparatus and a formula). Automated carcass classification methods must be both authorised for general usage and licenced to be used in a specific slaughterhouse. Visual classifiers, and those operating automated carcass classification methods, must have relevant qualifications.

These Regulations also set out offences and penalties in relation to the framework established by them.