

Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group

The Safeguarding Animal Welfare at Slaughter Task and Finish Group report about CCTV in Slaughterhouses in Wales

Overview

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs would like the Animal Health and Welfare Framework Group (AHWFG) to consider the above report about whether there is need to install CCTV in all slaughterhouses in Wales, alongside other evidence and reports, in order to advise her and make recommendations about what (if any) action the Welsh Government, industry or others should take on this matter. The Cabinet Secretary would like to receive the AHWFG's opinion and recommendations before the summer recess, earlier if possible.

Documents

The following are enclosed:

Doc 1 – this briefing note

Doc 2 – the CCTV in Wales report produced by the meat industry Task and Finish Group

Doc 3 – the Farm Animal Welfare Committee report of 2015, quoted in Doc 2. (Note that doc 3 stimulated great debate on the issue of CCTV use in abattoirs and was instrumental in Minister's thinking in establishing the Task and Finish Group)

Doc 4. The Terms of Reference for the Task and Finish Group

Doc 5 A response to doc 2 by Animal Aid (an animal welfare organisation).

Doc 6 A response to doc 2 by David Grimsell (a member of the public who has corresponded a lot with the Welsh Government and others on this topic).

Task and Finish (T+F) Group

The T+F Group was established at the invitation of Rebecca Evans AM when she was Minister for Farming and Food in the previous government. She invited Food Business Operators (FBOs) from all red meat slaughterhouses in Wales to a meeting at the Winter Fair on 30 November 2015 to discuss safeguarding the welfare of animals at slaughter. The three trade bodies, AIMS (Association of Independent Meat Suppliers), BMPA (British Meat Processors Association) and NFMFT (National Federation of Meat and Food Traders) were also represented. The organisations that attended were asked to form a group to consider whether there was a need to install CCTV in all Welsh slaughterhouses (see Terms of Reference at Doc 4). After the meeting (a not of which was provided to all the slaughterhouses in Wales) it was decided the T+F group should comprise one representative from each the three

trade associations (AIMS, BMPA and NFMFT) and, in addition, each association would nominate one slaughterhouse as well to include a small, medium and large abattoir. The Food Standards Agency Cymru and the Welsh Government provided officials in support.

The T+F Group's report was published by the Welsh Government in December 2016. The Cabinet Secretary has taken no decisions other than to publish it and has made no comment about the report's conclusions and recommendations.

T+F Group report

[information redacted] was the lead author of the report (doc 2). The main conclusion was that CCTV is a useful management tool but it does not necessarily mean better animal welfare. The report proposed a check list for abattoir managers to guide them whether to use CCTV. The report noted that the transport of animals to slaughter is a major source of animal welfare issues, as well as there being significant operational differences between small and large abattoirs, meaning that CCTV is not necessarily an additional help in small sites.

Reactions to the T+F Report

The report was awaited by a small number of organisations – Animal Aid, the British Veterinary Association and the RSPCA, and a long standing correspondent with the Welsh Government on animal welfare matters (Mr David Grimsell). All have raised concerns about the report with Animal Aid and Mr Grimsell offering detailed comments (docs 5 and 6). A common point has been to challenge the make up of the T+F Group criticising that it only represented the meat industry. This point misunderstands the then Minister's motivation which was to ask the industry to consider and propose a solution to an issue in their own industry. The T+F Group was never intended to include a broad range of interests. Other criticisms in the responses to the Welsh Government are briefly that the T+F Group report:

- does not analyse data correctly;
- overlooks evidence from other sources that suggests that animal welfare abuses are much more widespread in slaughterhouses;
- quotes evidence from the FAWC report (Doc 3) in a partial way;
- does not consider cost and practical issues of installing CCTV adequately.

The Welsh Government has not responded to these criticisms other than to correct the misunderstanding that the report was a 'Welsh Government report', to explain the reasons for the membership of the T+F Group, and to advise that the Cabinet Secretary has asked the AHWFG to consider the matter.

Legal issues

The AHWFG should be aware that action to insist that slaughterhouses must install and use CCTV could be challenged in law and any law proposed to do this would have to comply with European legislation applying to the rights of individuals employed in slaughterhouses.