



Slaughterhouses Act 1974

1974 CHAPTER 3

PART II

SLAUGHTER OF ANIMALS

Provisions as to slaughter

36 Methods of slaughter in slaughterhouses and knackers' yards.

- (1) Subject to the provisions of this section, no animal to which this section applies shall, in a slaughterhouse or knacker's yard, be slaughtered otherwise than instantaneously by means of a mechanically-operated instrument in proper repair unless—
 - (a) by stunning, effected by means of a mechanically-operated instrument or an instrument for stunning by means of electricity, being in either case an instrument in proper repair, it is instantaneously rendered insensible to pain until death supervenes; or
 - (b) by such other means as may be prescribed by regulations under this section, it is rendered insensible to pain until death supervenes, and there are complied with such conditions (if any) as respects the use of those means as may be so prescribed.
- (2) Regulations under this section shall be made by the Minister after consultation with such organisations as may appear to him to represent the interests concerned; and the regulations—
 - (a) may, if the Minister thinks fit, make different provision as respects different classes of animals to which this section applies and as respects different classes of slaughterhouses or knackers' yards; and
 - (b) may make such incidental or consequential provision as may appear to the Minister to be necessary or expedient for the purposes of the regulations, including, in particular, in a case where a condition as respects the use of any means of rendering an animal insensible to pain consists in the giving of any approval to any matter by a local authority, provision for securing a right of appeal to a magistrates' court against a withholding or withdrawal of approval.

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Changes to legislation: Slaughterhouses Act 1974, Cross Heading: Provisions as to slaughter is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 25 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

- (3) Subsection (1) above shall not apply to the slaughter, without the infliction of unnecessary suffering, of an animal—
- (a) by the Jewish method for the food of Jews and by a Jew duly licensed for the purpose by the Rabbinical Commission referred to in Schedule 1 to this Act; or
 - (b) by the Mohammedan method for the food of Mohammedans and by a Mohammedan.
- (4) Any person who slaughters or attempts to slaughter any animal in contravention of subsection (1) above shall be guilty of an offence, unless he proves that by reason of an accident or other emergency the contravention was necessary for preventing physical injury or suffering to any person or animal.
- (5) This section applies to horses, cattle, sheep, swine and goats.

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C1** s. 36 power to transfer functions conferred (3.1.1995) by 1994 c. 40, ss. 31, 82(2), Sch. 9, para. 2(1)(a), 4

37 Methods of slaughter of certain swine otherwise than in slaughterhouses or knackers' yards.

- (1) Subject to subsection (2) below, no swine exceeding twelve weeks in age shall, elsewhere than in a slaughterhouse or knacker's yard, be slaughtered otherwise than instantaneously by means of a mechanically-operated instrument in proper repair unless by stunning, effected by means of a mechanically-operated instrument or an instrument for stunning by means of electricity, being in either case an instrument in proper repair, it is instantaneously rendered insensible to pain until death supervenes.
- (2) Subsection (1) above shall not apply to the slaughter of swine at a laboratory, research station or similar institution if the slaughtering is done for the purposes of the diagnosis of disease or for the purposes of research in connection with the arts of veterinary surgery or medicine.
- (3) Any person who slaughters or attempts to slaughter any swine in contravention of subsection (1) above shall be guilty of an offence, unless he proves that by reason of an accident or other emergency the contravention was necessary for preventing physical injury or suffering to any person or animal.

38 Regulations for securing humane conditions of slaughter in slaughterhouses and knackers' yards.

- (1) The Minister may, after consultation with such organisations as appear to him to represent the interests concerned, make such regulations as appear to him to be expedient for securing humane conditions and practices in connection with the slaughter, in slaughterhouses and knackers' yards, of animals to which section 36 above applies; and such regulations may in particular—
- (a) prescribe requirements as to the construction, lay-out and equipment of premises used as slaughterhouses or knackers' yards;
 - (b) prescribe conditions to be observed in connection with the confinement and treatment of animals to which section 36 above applies while awaiting

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slaughter in such premises, and in connection with the slaughter there of such animals.

(2) Regulations under this section may make different provision in relation to different kinds of animals and in relation to premises used for different purposes in connection with the slaughter of animals and may—

- (a) so far as they are made for the purposes mentioned in subsection (1)(a) above, be made to apply subject to exceptions or modifications in relation to premises constructed or adapted for use before the date on which the regulations come into force;
- (b) in any case be made without applying, or applying subject to exceptions or modifications, in relation to slaughterhouses forming part of an imported animals' wharf or approved landing place for the purposes of the [^{F1}Animal Health Act 1981], or applying (with or without exceptions or modifications) only in relation to any such slaughterhouse of that description as may be specified in the regulations;
- (c) provide, subject to such limitations and safeguards, if any, as may be specified in the regulations, for the appropriate authority to grant in relation to particular premises, either unconditionally or subject to conditions, exemption from the operation of specific provisions of those regulations where it appears to the authority that compliance with those provisions cannot for the time being reasonably be required with respect to the premises or any activities carried on there;
- (d) provide for the regulations to come into force on different days fixed by, or by an order to be made by statutory instrument under, the regulations in respect of different classes or descriptions of premises and different areas, and for different provisions to come into force on different days;

and in paragraph (c) above “appropriate authority”, except in relation to a slaughterhouse provided by a local authority, means a local authority, and in relation to a slaughterhouse so provided means the Minister.

(3) Regulations under this section may make provision corresponding (with or without modifications) with any of the provisions in force immediately before the commencement of the ^{M1}Slaughter of Animals (Amendment) Act 1954, under section 5(1) of the ^{M2}Protection of Animals Act 1911, section 4 of the ^{M3}Slaughter of Animals Act 1933 or section 1 of the ^{M4}Slaughter of Animals (Amendment) Act 1951.

(4) Without prejudice to subsection (3) above, regulations made under this section with respect to horses shall in particular make provision with respect to the matters specified in Schedule 2 to this Act.

(5) Regulations under this section may prescribe penalties for offences against the regulations, not exceeding a fine of [^{F2}level 3 on the standard scale] or imprisonment for a term of three months or both, and may impose on the occupiers of premises to which the regulations apply responsibility for compliance with any of the provisions of the regulations.

[^{F3}(5A) Regulations under this section may require occupiers of premises used as slaughterhouses or knackers' yards to secure that the provisions of regulations under this section are complied with on the premises.]

(6) Where a person convicted of any offence against regulations under this section (including a person so convicted by virtue of [^{F4}section 44 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980]) is the holder of a licence under section 1 above in respect of the premises

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where the offence was committed, the court may, in addition to any other punishment, cancel the licence.

Subordinate Legislation Made

P1 S. 38: power exercised by S.I. 1983/688, 689, 1984/1310, 1311, 1990/1242

Textual Amendments

- F1 Words substituted by [Animal Health Act 1981 \(c. 22, SIF 4:4\)](#), s. 96, [Sch. 5 para. 11\(c\)](#)
- F2 Words substituted by virtue of [Criminal Justice Act 1982 \(c. 48, SIF 39:1\)](#), [ss. 38, 46](#)
- F3 [S. 38\(5A\)](#) inserted (27.8.1991) by Welfare of Animals at [Slaughter Act 1991 \(c. 30, SIF 112\)](#), [ss. 1, 7\(2\)](#).
- F4 Words substituted by [Magistrates' Courts Act 1980 \(c. 43, SIF 82\)](#), s. 154, [Sch. 7 para. 125](#)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C2 [S. 38](#) power to transfer functions conferred (3.1.1995) by [1994 c. 40](#), [ss. 31, 82\(2\)](#), [Sch. 9](#), para. 2(1)(b), 4

Marginal Citations

- M1 1954 c. 59.
- M2 1911 c. 27.
- M3 1933 c. 39.
- M4 1951 c. 49.

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