

Meat inspection procedures: incisions, information, and health marks

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EU to amend certain requirements for meat inspection and health marks

Draft Commission Implementing Regulation amending Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/627 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 and of the Council

Update

The European Commission has informed the World Trade Organization Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (WTO SPS) Committee that it intends to amend the rules:

- on meat inspection – to limit post-mortem inspections using incisions and palpations to those relevant to the abnormalities found, to reduce the possibility of cross-contamination
- on food chain information – to extend the obligation to make available certain information to also include cases of emergency slaughter and slaughter on farm
- on health marks – to extend the requirements currently in place for slaughterhouses to include game-handling establishments.

WTO members can provide feedback until **16 February 2025** ([G/SPS/N/EU/803](#)). All stakeholders can provide direct feedback via the EU's [Have your say](#) webpage until **5 February 2025**.

Impacted products

Meat

What is changing?

Regulation [2019/627](#) sets out the requirements for competent authorities performing official controls on animal products.

Incisions and palpations

Post-mortem inspection in slaughterhouses involves incisions and palpations if the veterinarian carrying out controls identifies a possible risk to human health, animal health, or animal welfare. Today, when abnormalities are found, *all* incisions and palpations must be carried out. As these incisions and palpations may pose a risk of cross-contamination with pathogens, the EU proposes to limit their use to those specifically relevant to the abnormalities found. These changes apply to inspection of:

- veal, Art. 18(3)
- beef, Art. 19(2)
- lamb, Art. 20(2)
- sheep and goats, Art. 21(2)
- horses, Art. 22(2)
- pork, Art. 23(2).

Food chain information

To improve the efficiency of controls, the EU has established a system of food chain information exchange between the farmer sending animals to slaughter, the slaughterhouse, and the veterinarian carrying out controls (Regulation [853/2004](#), Annex II, Section III). Animals cannot be slaughtered for human consumption if the compulsory information to be communicated is not available (Regulation [2019/627](#), Art. 40). The EU proposes to extend this food chain information to include cases of emergency slaughter and slaughter on farm.

Health marks

Regulation [2019/627](#) also sets requirements for health marks – the marks applied after official controls to indicate that meat is fit for human consumption. Currently, these requirements refer only to carcasses cut in the slaughterhouse. The Commission proposes to extend the requirements to also include game handling establishments (Art. 48(2)).

In zones that are under restrictions due to disease, the requirements regarding the form of the health mark may be replaced by those for special health marks put in place due to the disease in question (modification to clarify 2019/627, Art. 48(3)), in compliance with the [Animal Health Law](#) (Regulation [2016/429](#)).

Timeline

The Regulation is expected to be adopted in March 2025.

What are the major implications for exporting countries?

Competent authorities of exporting countries are responsible for official controls of meat exported to the EU. They need to apply the risk-based approach, food chain information, and health marks (or identification marks) that are indicated in the certificates (see Regulation [2020/2235](#), Annex III, Ch. I–IV; also see [EU official health certificates for exports to the EU – explained](#)).

Recommended Actions

Authorities in countries that are members of the WTO can provide feedback on the EU's proposal ([G/SPS/N/EU/803](#)) by emailing the [EU SPS Enquiry Point](#) until **16 February 2025**.

In addition, all stakeholders can provide feedback via the EU's [Have your say](#) webpage by **5 February 2025**.

Background

The overall rules on compliance with food safety and animal health are laid down in the Official Controls Regulation [2017/625](#). This is complemented by Regulation [2019/627](#), which lays down specific requirements for official controls on animal products, including meat. The aim is to ensure that operators respect the requirements that must put in place, such as those in Regulation [853/2004](#).

Resources

Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) [2020/2235](#) laying down rules for the application of Regulations (EU) 2016/429 and (EU) 2017/625 as regards model animal health certificates, model official certificates and model animal health/official certificates, for the entry into the Union and movements within the Union of consignments of certain categories of animals and goods, official certification regarding such certificates

Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) [2019/627](#) laying down uniform practical arrangements for the performance of official controls on products of animal origin intended for human consumption

Regulation (EU) [2017/625](#) on official controls and other official activities performed to ensure the application of food and feed law, rules on animal health and welfare, plant health and plant protection products (Official Controls Regulation)

Regulation (EU) [2016/429](#) on transmissible animal diseases and amending and repealing certain acts in the area of animal health (Animal Health Law)

Regulation (EC) No [853/2004](#) laying down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin

Sources

[Draft](#) Commission Implementing Regulation laying down uniform practical arrangements for the performance of official controls on products of animal origin intended for human consumption

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