

IMPLEMENTATION OF EU RULES ON THE MARKETING OF THE MEAT OF BOVINE ANIMALS AGED 12 MONTHS OR LESS

Question and Answer Guidance Note

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Section A: Timing

Q1. When did the EU rules come into force?

A1. The EU rules applied from 1 July 2008 and are directly applicable.

Q2. What is the position for meat from animals aged 12 months or less and slaughtered **before** 1 July 2008?

A2. This meat may continue to be marketed without meeting the requirements of these EU rules.

Section B: Summary of rules

Q3. What is the purpose of the rules?

A3. The EU legislation lays down conditions for the marketing in the Community of the meat of bovine animals aged 12 months or less. It applies to meat in this category slaughtered on or after 1 July 2008, whether produced in the Community or imported from third (i.e. non-EU) countries. This is intended to provide clearer information for consumers and trade, particularly in the marketing and labelling of veal.

Q4. What is the definition of 'meat' as covered by these rules?

A4. 'Meat' means all carcasses, meat on the bone or boned, and offal, whether or not cut, intended for human consumption, obtained from bovine animals aged 12 months or less, presented fresh, frozen or deep-frozen, whether or not wrapped or packed.

Q5. Where are these rules laid down in EU legislation?

A5. The rules were originally published as Council Regulation (EC) No.700/2007 of 11 June 2007 (OJ 161 of 22 June 2007). With effect from 1 July 2008, these rules have been incorporated into Regulation (EC) 1234/2007 establishing a common organisation of agricultural markets and on specific provisions for certain agricultural products ('Single CMO Regulation') by way of the amendment contained in Council Regulation (EC) No. 361/2008 of 14 April 2008 (OJ 121 of 7 May 2008).

The Commission implementing rules are laid down in Commission Regulation (EC) No. 566/2008 of 18 June 2008 laying down detailed rules for the application of Council Regulation (EC) No.1234/2007 as regards the marketing of the meat of bovine animals aged 12 months or less.

Section C: Classification at the slaughterhouse

Q6. What classification is required?

A6. On slaughter, all bovine animals aged 12 months or less must be classified by the operators into one of the following 2 categories:-

- **Category V:** bovine animals aged 8 months or less i.e. bovines from the day of birth until they reach the age of 8 months (Category identification letter "V");
- **Category Z:** bovine animals aged more than 8 months but not more than 12 months i.e. bovines from the day after reaching the age of 8 months until the day they reach the age of 12 months (Category identification letter: "Z")

Q7. Does Category Z include fast-growing young bulls reared under a normal beef finishing system that reach slaughter weight at less than 12 months of age as well as calves formerly reared to 8 months and over under a rosé veal system?

A7. Yes.

Q8. Where must the category identification letters be placed and by what means?

A8. Immediately after slaughter, the category identification letter must be indicated on the outside surface of the carcass by using labels or stamps.

Q9. Do the labels and stamps need to be a particular size?

A9. Yes. The labels must be of a size not less than 50cm². The category identification letter must be perfectly legible on the label. (Alterations will only be allowed where meat has to be re-labelled in conformity with the EU legislation, due to non-compliance.)

In cases where stamps are used, the letter must be not less than two centimetres in height. The letter must be stamped directly on the surface of the meat using an indelible ink.

Q10. Where must the labels or stamps be placed?

A10. The labels or stamps must be applied on the hindquarters on the striploin at the level of the fourth lumbar vertebra and on the forequarters, on the brisket between 10 and 30 centimetres from the cut edge of the sternum.

Section D: Labelling / Sales Descriptions

Q11. Are the EU sales descriptions compulsory?

A11. Yes, the meat of bovine animals aged 12 months or less can only be marketed in the Member States under the sales description(s) listed in the EU legislation for each Member State. The sales description may be supplemented by an indication of the name or designation of the pieces of meat or offal concerned.

Q12. What are the sales descriptions for meat marketed in the UK?

A12. Meat from animals slaughtered aged 8 months or less must be described as '**veal**'; meat from animals slaughtered aged more than 8 months but not more than 12 months must be described as '**beef**'.

Q13. Do sales descriptions vary between Member States?

A13. Yes, the required sales descriptions for each Member State are laid down in the relevant EU legislation, namely, Annex X1a to Regulation (EC) No.1234/2007 as amended (previously Annex II of Council Regulation (EC) No.700/2007).

Q14. What information must be included on the label?

A14. At each stage of production and marketing, the meat must be labelled with the following information:-

- the age of the animals on slaughter using the wording '**age on slaughter: up to 8 months**' in the case of animals aged 8 months or less, or '**age on slaughter: from 8-12 months**' in the case of animals aged more than 8 months but not more than 12 months.

The above wording may be replaced by the category identification letter (V or Z) except on release to the final consumer. ('Final consumer' is defined as the ultimate consumer of cut meat who does not use it as part of a food business operation or activity.)

- the relevant minimum sales description as laid down for the UK in Annex X1a of Regulation (EC) No.1234/2007 as amended (previously Annex II of Council Regulation (EC) No.700/2007).

The indications of the age of the bovine animal on slaughter and the sales description must be:-

- (a) Clearly legible at each stage of production and marketing;

- (b) presented in the same visual field and on the same label at the point of sale of the meat to the final consumer.

Q15. What are the rules for labelling meat presented for sale un-prepacked at the point of retail sale to the final consumer?

A15. Un-prepacked meat must be labelled with the information listed at 12 and 14 above. The required information must be displayed near the meat so as to allow the final consumer to identify it easily, and must be clearly legible. This is in line with the labelling requirements for other un-prepacked beef under EC Regulations 1760/2000 and 1825/2000 (the Beef Labelling Regulations).

Member States were required to lay down rules on how the information for un-prepacked meat should be indicated and notify these rules to the Commission. Defra sought views from the industry in March 2009 and the above rules reflect the outcome of this consultation.

Q16. What is the position on labelling regarding mixed batches of offal?

A16. These mixtures are allowed provided that they are appropriately labelled i.e. if the mixture includes offal from bovines of less than 8 months and of bovines between 8 and 12 months, both sales descriptions and age brackets should be shown on the label. The age brackets may be replaced by the corresponding category identification letter "V" or "Z" at each stage of production and marketing, except on release to the final consumer.

Q17. Can the wording 'calves liver' be used in relation to the meat of bovine animals aged 12 months or less, provided that the meat in question is also labelled with the appropriate descriptor?

A17. The use of the wording 'calves liver' as a supplement to the sales description is acceptable in the case of livers from bovines aged less than 8 months (i.e. Category V) . However, use of the wording 'calves liver' should not be used in the case of bovines from 8 to 12 months (i.e. Category Z) in the UK because we have designated any meat of 8 months and above as 'beef' and calling it 'calves liver' could cause confusion among consumers.

Q18. Why did the UK opt to categorise meat from bovine animals aged more than 8 months but not more than 12 months (Category Z) as 'beef' while other Member States opted to describe it as 'rosé veal' or similar?

A18. Defra consulted the industry widely on this. There is more meat sold as beef from fast-growing young bulls on cereal-based feeding systems than there currently is from rosé veal production systems so on balance it was decided to opt for 'beef' in this category. There is the option under the regulation to apply to

the Commission for the description to be changed in the future for Category Z if the UK industry as a whole decided that this was desirable.

Q19. Are producers permitted to add supplementary descriptions on the label to the compulsory descriptions 'veal' (Category V) or 'beef' (Category Z)?

A19. Yes. The Regulation allows operators to supplement the compulsory information by optional information approved in accordance with the procedure provided for in Articles 16 or 17 of Regulation (EC) No. 1760/2000 i.e. under the provisions of the voluntary Beef Labelling Scheme (BLS). They may therefore apply under the Beef Labelling Scheme to use supplementary descriptions which, for example, refer to the manner in which the calves are reared in relation to their feeding and housing conditions in order to produce welfare-friendly veal or beef.

Q20. Are producers and sellers of meat of bovine animals aged 12 months or less i.e. veal (Category V) and beef (Category Z) permitted to label their product as 'rosé veal'?

A20. Yes, though subject to certain conditions. Following lengthy correspondence with the European Commission, the Commission has provided additional advice to Defra which now enables the UK to allow producers and sellers to label their meat from animals aged 12 months or less as 'rosé veal'. This is subject to describing (briefly) on the label the rosé veal production system under which the calves were raised i.e. their diet and housing conditions. The calves would need to have been raised under a recognised rosé veal system so it is clear to consumers how the animals were reared. However, the term 'rosé veal' and any marketing description must be approved under the provisions of the voluntary Beef Labelling Scheme (see Q21 below). Approval under the Scheme is subject to independent verification of the claim(s) made on labels, so operators will need to ensure that their particular claim(s) about rosé veal are true and can be substantiated. The label would also need to display the relevant compulsory information described in Q12 and Q14 above. Any such product sold in other Member States of the EU must adhere to the category descriptions for the Member States concerned.

Q21. How do producers and sellers apply for approval under the Beef Labelling Scheme to label their meat with this supplementary information?

A21. They need to apply for approval by completing the relevant Beef Labelling Scheme Application form, BLS 2, for the UK country in which their business is located. The application form for England is available on request from the Rural Payments Agency's Meat Technical Schemes unit in Carlisle (Telephone: 01228 640369 or e-mail: MTS.carlisle@rpa.gsi.gov.uk). If an operator's business is located in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, they should contact the relevant Agriculture Department.

Q22. Is it possible for the meat to have two or more different labels on it at the same time covering the sales descriptions in, say, two Member States?

A22. The sales description applicable for the Member State in which the meat is marketed needs to be put on the label. The EU legislation does not explicitly exclude the possibility of putting on the same label the descriptions listed in other Member States provided that the relevant provisions of Directive 2000/13/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 March 2000 as amended (on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the labelling, presentation and advertising of foodstuffs) are respected.

Section E: Recording Obligations for Operators

Q23. What records must be kept?

A23. At each stage of production and marketing, operators must record the following information:-

- an indication of the identification number and the date of birth of the animals, at slaughterhouse level only,
- an indication of a reference number making it possible to establish a link between, on the one hand, the identification of the animals from which the meat originates and, on the other hand, the sales description, the age at slaughter and the category identification letter given on the meat label,
- an indication of the date of arrival and departure of the animals and meat in the establishment to ensure that a correlation between arrivals and departures is established,
- an indication of the name and address of the operator responsible for the previous stage of marketing from whom they have been supplied with the meat.

Section F: Meat imported from Third (non-EU) Countries

Q24. Are imports from third countries subject to the same marketing rules?

A24. Yes.

Q25. What are the procedures for third country operators wishing to place meat on the Community market?

A25. Such operators must have their activities checked by the competent authority designated by that third country or, failing that, an independent third-party body, as provided for in EU legislation.

Section G: Enforcement

Q26. What domestic legislation is being made to enforce these EU provisions?

A26. The Statutory Instrument (The Beef and Veal Labelling Regulations 2008) is providing appropriate enforcement powers along similar lines that are in existence for the existing EU beef labelling legislation.

Q27. Who will enforce the provisions in England?

A27. Inspections in abattoirs and cutting plants will be made by inspectors from the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) and at retail level by local authority Trading Standards Officers.

As regards imports, the EU implementing legislation puts responsibility on the third country competent authority/independent third-party body to approve and control an identification and registration system. Checks on imports will be made along similar lines to the current beef labelling system.

Section H: Powers of Entry

Q28. What are the obligations on operators?

A28. At each stage of production and marketing, operators are required at all times to grant access to their premises and to all their records to demonstrate to Commission experts, the competent authority of the Member State and the relevant independent third-party bodies that all the requirements have been met as laid down in EU legislation.

Section I: Penalties

Q29. What are the penalties for non-compliance with the legislation?

A29. These are laid down in the EU rules and the domestic implementing legislation according to the circumstances.

Section J: Contact point for advice

The rules in England are administered by the Rural Payments Agency (RPA). If you have any questions about the new rules or require further advice please contact the Agency (details below). If your business is located in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, you should contact the relevant Agriculture Department.

A copy of this guidance is available on the RPA website, along with other information on beef and veal labelling.

Beef Labelling Section
Meat Technical Schemes
Rural Payments Agency
Eden Bridge House
Lowther Street
Carlisle CA3 8DX

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NOTE

This note reflects Defra's guidance in relation to the implementation of the EU legislation. It is, however, for a Court of Law to give the final interpretation.