

Clean Livestock Policy – SHEEP

A guide for Sheep Producers

Introduction:

Sheep Producers must recognise that the animals that they supply for slaughter are used for human consumption. Sheep farmers ARE food producers and have a role to play in presenting clean and dry sheep for slaughter.

Key Husbandry Practices:

- Tail dock lambs – this needs to be carried out in the first 7 days of life.
- Implement an effective parasite control programme to reduce scouring from internal parasites such as stomach worms, coccidia and liver fluke.
- **At grass**
 - ▶ Move finishing lambs to clean pasture when conditions become muddy
 - ▶ Avoid the use of excess nitrogen fertiliser or very lush grass during the finishing period to reduce scouring
 - ▶ Move feeders regularly to avoid poaching and muddy areas around feeders
 - ▶ Raise drinking troughs and provide a hardcore area around drinkers to keep these areas mud free.
 - ▶ Avoid routine free access mineral supplements and treat animals for specific mineral and vitamin deficiencies.
- **Indoors**
 - ▶ Use only well ventilated sheep housing for finishing sheep
 - ▶ In straw bedded sheds use adequate straw and replenish regularly
 - ▶ In slatted sheds ensure that slats do not get blocked and that there is no build-up of faeces.
 - ▶ Do not overstock pens
 - ▶ Allow adequate space at feeding troughs
- **Outdoors on roots / forage crops**
 - ▶ Crutch / Dag lambs before turning them onto crops
 - ▶ Allow sheep to adjust to the new diet by restricting access and providing a grass runback or free access hay
 - ▶ If supplementing with concentrates or hay, move feeding points regularly so as to avoid poaching /muddy areas
 - ▶ Ensure that sheep always have a dry lying area. On free draining soils the crop itself may provide this. However on heavier soils or during wet weather a grass runback or straw bedded area should be provided.
- **Finishing Diets**
 - ▶ Avoid sudden changes to prevent dietary upsets and scouring.
 - ▶ Carefully manage the build-up to high levels of concentrates.
 - ▶ Avoid feeding low dry matter diets (low DM silage, beet etc.)
 - ▶ Feed rations that are properly balanced for fibre, energy and protein
 - ▶ Avoid feeding excess salt in finishing diets as this increases water intake and urine production. The use of Ammonium Chloride at ½% of the finishing diet will protect against urinary calculi.
 - ▶ If feeding high starch diets avoid finely ground ingredients – feed a percentage of the cereal as whole or cracked.

● Pre-Sale Management

- ▶ Avoid unnecessary mixing of groups of sheep pre-sale
- ▶ Crutch/dag dirty lambs prior to transport
- ▶ House on straw bedding or clean slats and withdraw feed from sheep for minimum 8 hours pre slaughter. Do not restrict water where housing period is longer than 8 hours.
- ▶ Ensure sheep are dry

● Transport

- ▶ Use only well ventilated and roofed (Waterproof) transport vehicles
- ▶ Ensure transport vehicle is clean, dry and has absorbent materials on the floor.
- ▶ Use partitions/ dividers to confine animals
- ▶ Where decks are being used ensure that faeces / urine from the higher decks does not soil sheep on the lower decks.

Sheep CLP categories:

The Department will apply a 3-category system, requiring food business operators at slaughtering establishments to categorise sheep as follows:

Category (A) Satisfactory – Sheep with a clean dry fleece that can be slaughtered, without an unacceptable risk of contaminating the meat during the slaughter process, by using the standard hygienic dressing procedures routinely employed by the plant.

Category (B) Acceptable – Sheep with moderate soiling of fleece that can only be slaughtered, without an unacceptable risk of contamination of the meat during the slaughter process, by putting in place additional interventions including extra defined dressing controls.

Category (C) Unacceptable – Sheep with heavily contaminated fleece unfit for slaughter. These sheep must not be presented for ante-mortem in this condition and it is the responsibility of the FBO to take the required remedial action.

