

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Trader Notice MH 12/2018

To: Slaughter plant Operators

Authorisation to exercise the derogation, laid out in Commission Regulation (EU) 2017/1981, from the requirement to chill meat to a core temperature of 7°C before transport.

Background

Current hygiene rules ([Regulation \(EC\) No 853/2004](#)) require that carcasses of domestic ungulates be chilled immediately after post-mortem inspection to a core temperature of no greater than 7°C before transportation can begin.

However, a derogation to this requirement is introduced by [Commission Regulation \(EU\) 2017/1981](#), under which certain types of meat may be transported from the slaughter plant before a core temperature of 7°C has been reached, provided that the specified conditions are met and that the food business operator has received documented authorisation from the competent authority at the place of departure to make use of this derogation. The Regulation is based upon EFSA findings¹; in consequence, there are certain time, temperature and hygiene parameters laid down in the Regulation which must be demonstrated to be achieved before derogated transport will be authorised.

Content of the legislation

- Applies only to meat of cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs.
- Applies only to carcasses, half carcasses, and half carcasses cut into three wholesale cuts.
- Applies only to slaughter plants meeting defined carcass hygiene standards, including demonstrating conformity to the specified carcass aerobic colony counts, based on EFSA models.
- Temperatures must be monitored and recorded within the framework of procedures based upon the HACCP principles. The temperature of the meat must decrease continually throughout chilling and after arrival at the destination, until a core temperature of 7° C or less is reached.
- Food business operators must chill the meat to the mandatory surface temperatures within a specified maximum time after slaughter, to avoid prolonged chilling and bacterial growth, in line with EFSA models.
- The transport vehicle must be fitted with an instrument that monitors and records temperature, such that competent authorities (CA) are enabled to verify compliance.
- The slaughter plant must be authorised by their CA to avail of this derogation.
- The transport vehicle must collect derogated meat from only one slaughter plant per transport. Non-derogated meat (i.e. meat which has been chilled to a core temperature of 7°C or less) may share the same vehicle or compartment; if so, the derogated meat must be chilled before loading to a *core* temperature of 15° C or less.
- The food business operator (FBO) of destination must notify their CA before they receive derogated meat for the first time.
- Defined transport regimes are permitted with three possible maximum transport times:

¹ EFSA Journal 2014; 12(3):3601 [81 pp.]; EFSA Journal 2016; 14(6):4523 [38 pp.].

1. Up to 6 hours:

Species	Surface temperature (°)	Maximum time to chill to surface temperature (°)	Maximum transportation air temperature (°)	Maximum daily mean carcass aerobic colony count (°)
Ovine and caprine animals	7 °C	8 hours	6 °C	\log_{10} 3,5 cfu/cm ²
Bovine animals		20 hours		\log_{10} 3,5 cfu/cm ²
Porcine animals		16 hours		\log_{10} 4 cfu/cm ²

2. Up to 30 hours:

Species	Surface temperature (°)	Maximum time to chill to surface temperature (°)	Core temperature (°)	Maximum transportation air temperature (°)	Maximum daily mean carcass aerobic colony count (°)
Porcine animals	7 °C	16 hours	15 °C	6 °C	\log_{10} 4 cfu/cm ²

3. Up to 60 hours:

Species	Surface temperature (°)	Maximum time to chill to surface temperature (°)	Core temperature (°)	Maximum transportation air temperature (°)	Maximum daily mean carcass aerobic colony count (°)
Ovine and caprine animals	4 °C	12 hours	15 °C	3 °C	\log_{10} 3 cfu/cm ²
Bovine animals		24 hours			

Explanation of terms used in the tables:

“Maximum time to chill to surface temperature” is laid down in Regulation 2017/1981 as the time from the moment of killing until the required surface temperature is reached.

“Maximum transport time” refers to the time from the start of loading of the meat into the vehicle, until the completion of the final delivery.

It is possible to begin loading and transportation of the meat **before** the end of the “Maximum time to chill to surface temperature”, if the required temperatures have already been reached. However, the “maximum transport time” allowed cannot be extended due to early loading. “Transport time” still starts at the moment loading starts.

Loading of the meat into the vehicle may also be **postponed** beyond the maximum time allowed for chilling of the meat to its specified surface temperature. This may suit the FBO for operational reasons. If this happens, then the maximum transport time allowed must be shortened by the same length of time by which the loading was postponed.

“Maximum daily mean carcass aerobic colony count” of the slaughter plant is determined using a rolling window of 10 weeks, for carcasses of the relevant species, as assessed by the operator to the satisfaction of the competent authority, according to the sampling and testing procedures laid out in points 2.1.1, 2.1.2 of Chapter 2, and point 3.2 of Chapter 3, of Annex I to Commission Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005 of 15 November 2005 on microbiological criteria for foodstuffs (OJ L 338, 22.12.2005, p. 1). No extra sampling is required over and above existing commitments under Regulation 2073/2005.

Content of the legislation continued

- The CA at member state of destination may limit the number of delivery points.
- Boning and cutting are allowed on arrival, even if core temperature of 7°C has not yet been reached, as long as ambient air temperature in hall ensures a continuous fall in meat temperature until a core temperature of 7° C or less is reached.
- A declaration must accompany each consignment, stating the following:
 - duration of chilling before loading,
 - time at which loading began,
 - surface temperature at that time,
 - maximum air temperature permitted in refrigerated vehicle,
 - maximum transport time permitted,
 - date of authorisation,
 - name of CA authorising the FBO to avail of the derogation.

Scope

This Trader Notice covers the process of application for authorisation to exercise the derogation described above.

Role of the FBO

Slaughter plant operators must apply to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine for authorisation to exercise the derogation. The [*application form*](#) details the information which must be supplied with the application, including

- **standard operating procedures (SOP)** covering chilling, loading and transport, detailing how the derogation will be operated. The procedures must specify which of the transport time/temperature/species regime(s) which are being applied for;
- data (carcase chilling curves) which demonstrate the capacity of the **slaughter plant chillers** to bring the carcasses or cuts for which authorisation has been applied, to the temperatures mandated by Regulation (EU) 2017/1981 for the transport time/temperature/species regime(s) applied for, within the specified chilling times allowed;
- indication of willingness to carry out a trial transport of derogated meat under DAFM supervision.
- Results of the microbiological sampling and testing mandated by Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005² carried out on carcasses of the relevant species, over a continuous 12-month period within the past eighteen months, along with the “**Maximum daily mean carcase aerobic colony count**” calculated by the FBO as instructed in Reg. 2017/1981, must be made available to DAFM. The FBO must be compliant with other carcase hygiene DAFM policies.

The SOP(s) must include at a minimum:

1. That the FBO must verify refrigerated air temperature and carcase surface temperature on every transport. A surface temperature probe must be placed on the rump of at least one carcase at the centre of the trailer/vehicle;
2. That the time elapsed between slaughter and the reaching of carcase surface temperature is recorded, for the most recently killed carcase being transported. This must always be less than or equal to “**Maximum time to chill to surface temperature**” for that regime;
3. That records of the above time and temperature parameters must at any time be made available to DAFM without delay to facilitate their checking of the effectiveness of these controls, including the data logs for both surface temperature and refrigerated air temperature;
4. That records of the relevant “**time to chill to surface temperature**” and “**Maximum daily mean carcase aerobic colony count**” are similarly made available to enable checking that they are compliant. The FBO should calculate the latter as instructed in the Regulation, and results of microbiological testing should be made available to DAFM to allow this to be verified.
5. For FBOs that are receiving derogated meat, the plant is obliged by the Regulation to inform the CA in advance of receipt of its first consignment of derogated meat. The meat should be accompanied by a declaration as detailed above, and its surface temperature on arrival and the transport time should be within the limits indicated on the declaration. The temperature conditions to which the meat is exposed after arrival must ensure that there is a continuous drop in meat temperature until a core temperature of 7° C or less is reached.

Trial run:

If FBO slaughter hygiene, chill data and SOPs are all in order, the FBO can be allowed by DAFM to carry out a single journey for trial purposes.

² Commission Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005 of 15 November 2005 on microbiological criteria for foodstuffs (OJ L 338, 22.12.2005, p. 1).

The applicant FBO must show evidence that the FBO of destination has informed their CA of their intention to take delivery of derogated meat for the first time, as laid down in the Regulation.

The vehicle should be fully loaded for the trial under DAFM supervision, with the carcasses packed in as tightly as they would be in normal transport, in order to test the FBO's ability to meet the requirements of Regulation (EU) 2017/1981.

The surface temperature of at least **three** of the carcasses must be monitored throughout the trial run – at the front, centre and rear of the trailer. The surface temperature probes must be inserted on the rump of each carcass. The temperatures of all three probes, and the air temperature, must be recorded throughout the trial at least every 15 minutes, and the data must be presented to DAFM after the trial. All probes must remain within the limits laid down in the Regulation.

If the trial and all other indications are satisfactory, the FBO may be authorised to operate the derogation. The authorisation can be withdrawn if non-compliance issues arise or if the derogation is not exercised.

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