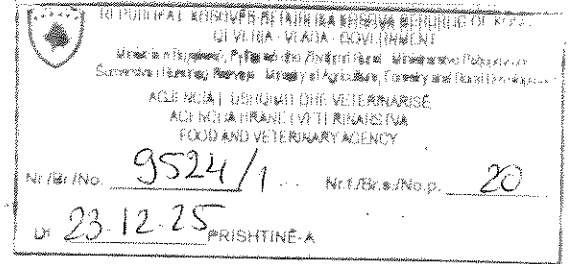
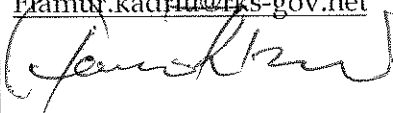
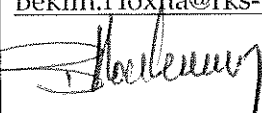


Agjencia e Ushqimit dhe Veterinarisë Food and Veterinary Agency Agencija za Hranu i Veterinu SOP	ANTE MORTEM AND POST MORTEM INSPECTION OF CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS	Nr/No/Br: 02-2025 Verzioni/version/verzija :1 23.12.2025 Faqe/pages/stranica:20 English;
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standard operating procedure SOP

ANTE MORTEM AND POST MORTEM INSPECTION OF CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS

Përgatiti; Drafted by; Odradjeno: Flamur Kadriu-Head of Public Health Directorate; Flamur.kadriu@rks-gov.net 	Verifikoi dhe aprovoi; Verified and approved by; Verifikovano i odobreno od: Bekim Hoxha-CEO Bekim.Hoxha@rks-gov.net 	Data e aprovimit; Date of Approval; Datum odobrenja: -----
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Agjencia e Ushqimit dhe Veterinarisë Food and Veterinary Agency Agencija za Hranu i Veterinu SOP	ANTE MORTEM AND POST MORTEM INSPECTION OF CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS	Nr/No/Br: 02-2025 Verzioni/version/verzija :1 23.12.2025 Faqe/pages/stranica:20 English;
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

CONTENTS:

1. Purpose
2. Scope of Application
3. Definitions
4. Responsibilities
5. Ante mortem Inspection of Cattle, Sheep/Goats
6. Post mortem Inspection of Carcasses and Organs of Cattle
7. Post mortem Inspection of Carcasses and Organs of Sheep/Goats
8. Application of Health Marks
9. Process Quality Assurance
10. Related Documents
11. Reference Documents

1. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to describe the veterinary inspection and control of cattle prior to slaughter in a slaughterhouse (ante mortem inspection) as well as the veterinary inspection of carcasses and organs of slaughtered cattle, sheep, and goats on the slaughter line (post mortem inspection).

The ante mortem inspection must determine whether the animals show any signs indicating compromised welfare or the presence of any condition that could adversely affect human or animal health.

All carcasses, organs, and by-products must undergo post mortem inspection, with particular attention given to the detection of zoonoses and animal diseases for which health requirements are prescribed under European Union legislation. If necessary, additional tests must be conducted.

Based on the inspection and the results of these tests, the official veterinarian makes the final judgement for human consumption of the meat and organs of the slaughtered animals .

2. Scope of Application

This procedure applies to the veterinary inspection and control of cattle, sheep, and goats prior to slaughter in the slaughterhouse, and veterinary inspection of carcasses and organs of cattle, sheep, and goats on the slaughter line.

The procedure applies in all slaughter facilities for cattle, sheep and goats , regardless of their capacity, and is carried out by official veterinarians.

3. References

1. Procedura standarde e Kroacisë;Croatian Standard Procedures;
- 3.Regulation 13/2011 ,harmonized from Regulation (EU) No. 853/2004;
4. Regulation (EU) No 2019/627;
5. Administrative Instruction MAFRD No. 05/2022;
6. Administrative Instruction MAFRD No.15/2023
7. Administrative Instruction MAFRD-No.34/2006 for Prevention, Control and Eradication of TSE Disease in Kosovo ;

4. Definitions

Competent authority-Food and Veterinary Agency- FVA

Agjencia e Ushqimit dhe Veterinarisë Food and Veterinary Agency Agencija za Hranu i Veterinu SOP	ANTE MORTEM AND POST MORTEM INSPECTION OF CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS	Nr/No/Br: 02-2025 Verzioni/version/verzija :1 23.12.2025 Faqe/pages/stranica:20 English;
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Official Veterinarian means a veterinarian appointed by the competent authority, either as a staff member or in another capacity, who has the appropriate qualifications to carry out official controls and other official activities in accordance with *Regulation no.13/2011 Laying Down Specific Rules for the Organization of Official Controls on Products of Animal Origin Intended for Human Consumption*

Food Business Operator (FBO) means a natural or legal person responsible for ensuring compliance with food law requirements within the food business they oversee.

Ante mortem inspection is the veterinary inspection upon the arrival of animals at the slaughterhouse, a planned and documented procedure that must be carried out on all animals before slaughter to determine their health status and whether animal welfare is compromised.

Post mortem inspection is the examination of carcasses, organs, and accompanying by-products of animal origin after slaughter to assess if the meat it is suitable or unsuitable (health suitability) for human consumption.

Inspection means the control of food and animal feed, animal health, and welfare to verify that the requirements of food and animal feed law, animal health, and welfare regulations are met.

Non-compliance means failure to meet the requirements of food and animal feed law, animal health, and welfare regulations.

Visual inspection is an examination performed by only observing.

Palpation is an examination performed by feeling various parts of the carcass or organs to detect changes in deeper tissues.

Incision of meat, organs, and lymph nodes is an examination performed by cutting various tissues to detect and identify pathological changes.

Slaughterhouse is a facility where the slaughtering and processing of animals is carried out, and whose meat is intended for human consumption.

Restraint means the application of any procedure on animals designed to restrict their movements, sparing them any pain that can be avoided, fear, or distress, in order to facilitate effective stunning or slaughter.

Stunning means any intentionally induced process that leads to loss of consciousness and sensitivity without pain, including any procedure that results in instant death.

Slaughter means any intentionally induced procedure that leads to the death of an animal.

Carcass is the body of an animal after slaughter, bleeding, and further processing.

Fresh meat means meat that has not undergone any other preservation process except for cooling, freezing, or quick freezing, including vacuum-packed meat and meat packed in a controlled atmosphere.

Internal organs are the organs of the chest, abdominal, and pelvic cavities, as well as the trachea and esophagus, and in birds, the gizzard.

By-products of slaughter means fresh meat, except for carcass meat, including internal organs and blood.

Animal by-products means entire animal carcasses or animal parts, or animal by-products not intended for human consumption, and products derived from them – as defined in Article 3 of Regulation (EC) No. 1069/2009, Category 1 by-products – as defined in Article 8 of *Administrative Instruction MAFRD 05/2022*, Category 2 by-products – as defined in Article 9 of *Administrative Instruction MAFRD 05/2022*, Category 3 by-products – as defined in Article 10 of *Administrative Instruction MAFRD 05/2022*,

BSE (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy) – Commonly known as "mad cow disease", a disease of cattle caused by a type of prion.

Agjencia e Ushqimit dhe Veterinarisë Food and Veterinary Agency Agencija za Hranu i Veterinu SOP	ANTE MORTEM AND POST MORTEM INSPECTION OF CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS	Nr/No/Br: 02-2025 Verzioni/version/ verzija :1 23.12.2025 Faqe/pages/stranica:20 English;
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

SRM-Specific Risk Material

Scrapie – A fatal, neurodegenerative disease of sheep and goats belonging to the group of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE), caused by a prion.

FCMS-(Food Control Management System)- Portal for entering ante and post mortem inspection data.

5. Responsibilities

The animal owner is responsible for the health of the animals and accompanying documentation.

The food business operator is responsible for ensuring and meeting the requirements of animal welfare regulations at the time of slaughter, food regulations, and placing food on the market

The official veterinarian conducts the ante mortem inspection before slaughter and the post mortem inspection), and is responsible for assessing the health suitability of the meat and organs.

KFVA Inspection supervises and controls the work of official veterinarians.

6. Ante mortem Inspection

Equipment

- Body temperature thermometer
- Stethoscope

Procedure Description

The FBO (Food Business Operator), through the registration in the system (FCMS), must notify the official veterinarian about the planned slaughter, the species, number, and category of animals at least 24 hours before the planned slaughter.

Ante mortem inspection is carried out within 24 hours of the animals arrival at the slaughterhouse and less than 24 hours before slaughter. The official veterinarian can request an additional inspection of the animals at any time.

The inspection of the facility before starting is conducted by official veterinarian within his scope of work: unloading ramps, livestock pens, animal corridors up to the stunning area, changing rooms, and sanitary facilities. Non-compliances should be recorded and must be resolved before starting work, and if they cannot be addressed, the competent authority must be informed.

The FBO is required to prepare all documents accompanying the animals, as well as the work order/computer application printout, for inspection by the official veterinarian and present the registered animals for slaughter. The FBO prepares a slaughter schedule report, which can be accepted or amended.

Upon arrival at the workplace, the **official veterinarian** prepares for the ante mortem inspection of animals, puts on protective clothing and footwear, conducts the documentation, identification, and physical examination of the animals, checks the accuracy and completeness of the data in the **Certificate/Health Certificate** regarding the health status and place of origin of the animals, animal passport (cattle), including the food chain information.

The **ante mortem inspection** must determine if there are any signs in the animals that:

Agjencia e Ushqimit dhe Veterinarisë Food and Veterinary Agency Agencija za Hranu i Veterinu SOP	ANTE MORTEM AND POST MORTEM INSPECTION OF CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS	Nr/No/Br: 02-2025 Verzioni/version/verzija :1 23.12.2025 Faqe/pages/stranica:20 English;
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

- Indicate that their welfare is compromised.
- Indicate any condition that could adversely affect human or animal health, with special attention given to detecting zoonoses and animal diseases for which health requirements are prescribed under European Union legislation.
- Indicate the use of prohibited or unauthorized substances, abuse of veterinary drugs, or the presence of chemical residues or contaminants.
- Includes verifying the FBO's compliance with their obligation to ensure that animals are clean to prevent unacceptable contamination risks of fresh meat during slaughter.

a) **Documentation Inspection:** The official veterinarian checks the accuracy and completeness of the data in the Certificate accompanying the animals, Animal Passport (Travel Document for cattle) and the Report/Declaration on food chain information, including details about the transport vehicle (transportation details)

The Certificate contains the following information:

- The farm of origin
- The destination of the shipment
- The type/category/age and number of animals
- Measures carried out on the farm of origin

(The Certificate accompanies the shipment to the slaughterhouse, and the animal owner guarantees that:

- The animals for slaughter have not been treated, or if treated, that the prescribed withdrawal period for authorized veterinary medicines has passed since the last treatment,
- The animals have not been treated with prohibited veterinary drugs,
- The animals have not been fed with animal feed containing unauthorized substances,
- The animals have been handled in accordance with specific animal protection regulations, and that all animals on the farm, as well as those being shipped, show no visible signs of health disorders.)

Food Chain Information (FCI) Verification

The food chain information (FCI) report is a mandatory document that, according to Regulation No.12/2011, Annex II, Section III, must be completed by the owner or holder of the animal.

The Food Chain Information (FCI) report consists of the following details:

- Holding of origin
- Intended date of arrival at the slaughterhouse
- Mortality data (daily % in the final week before slaughter and weekly mortality before that)
- Results of any on-farm veterinary inspection of the flock
- Results of any laboratory tests/diagnosis carried out on birds, litter, etc.
- Dates of administration/withdrawal of all medicinal products

Any other relevant information.

b) **Identification Inspection** – Verifying the identity of the animal, checking whether it has proper ear tags matching the ones listed in the Certificate and Animal Passport for cattle, with the species, sex, and age of the animal.

Agjencia e Ushqimit dhe Veterinarisë Food and Veterinary Agency Agencija za Hranu i Veterinu SOP	ANTE MORTEM AND POST MORTEM INSPECTION OF CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS	Nr/No/Br: 02-2025 Verzioni/version/verzija :1 23.12.2025 Faqe/pages/stranica:20 English;
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

If an animal is not properly identified, lacks ear tags, or the tag does not match the Certificate or passport, official veterinarian decides on the course of action.

c) Physical inspection – The ante mortem inspection includes verifying that food business operators have fulfilled their obligation to ensure that animals have **clean skin** or fleece to prevent unacceptable contamination risks during slaughter.

In addition to the routine inspection, the official veterinarian performs clinical examination of sick or suspect animals, or those separated by the food business operator.

Official veterinarian records all conditions and observations related to the welfare of the animals and their cleanliness.

When there are noncompliances with respect to the transport, accompanying documentation, identification, animal welfare, or cleanliness of the animals, if is needed, official veterinarian informs the competent authority and the FBO.

The official veterinarian keeps all official records on the results of the ante mortem examination as well as notes about cases of animal death during transport or in the pens into the data base , web aplication etc.

In the case of the death of more than two animals with the same or similar symptoms, when there is suspicion on infectious or parasitic disease, it is necessary to provide a pathological report.

Examination/ inspection of sick and suspected animals

Suspect or sick animals are examined in detail before slaughter, their temperature is measured, and their health status assessed (triage, (temperature, respiratory rate, and rumination, and further examination of the system showing changes) to confirm a diagnosis or suspicion.

These animals are placed in a sanitary box, or pens separately from other animals until a final decision regarding their slaughter is made. The official veterinarian writes a report on the handling of sick animals.

After a diagnosis or suspicion is made, official veterinarian decides whether slaughter is prohibited or allowed under special conditions:

a) Slaughter after regular slaughter – separate from other animals (when there is no risk of death or the animal suffers no pain or distress)

b) Immediate slaughter – when there is a risk of death or the animal suffers pain

c) Ban/prohibition on slaughter – slaughter will not be allowed for animals that are in a withdrawal period, in agony, emaciated, or suffering from infectious diseases for which slaughter is prohibited; or those in a state that could be transmitted to humans through handling or consumption of meat; in general, animals showing clinical signs of disease, exhaustion, and emaciation, unclean animals and animals with no required documentation, such as the animals which have not undergone ante mortem examination – should not be slaughtered for human consumption.

Such animals must be euthanized separately under conditions that prevent contact with other animals or carcasses and must be declared unfit for human consumption.

If approved for slaughter, these animals are slaughtered separately or at the end of the process. Afterward, all premises, equipment and tools are cleaned and disinfected immediately.

Agjencia e Ushqimit dhe Veterinarisë Food and Veterinary Agency Agencija za Hranu i Veterinu SOP	ANTE MORTEM AND POST MORTEM INSPECTION OF CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS	Nr/No/Br: 02-2025 Verzioni/version/verzija :1 23.12.2025 Faqe/pages/stranica:20 English;
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Animal Welfare

Special attention should be paid to the protection of animals (animal welfare during slaughter).

All procedures must be carried out in a manner that does not cause unnecessary pain, suffering, or fear to the animals. The individuals performing these tasks must possess the necessary professional knowledge and skills. The official veterinarian verifies compliance with the procedures related to animal handling in accordance with actual rules on the protection of animals at the time of killing.

1. Animals are unloaded from the transport vehicle using appropriate equipment. Injured animals that need to be slaughtered immediately must be stunned and slaughtered on-site. Tools used to assist the movement and lifting of animals must be used only in a manner that does not cause further pain, suffering, or fear to the animal and is acceptable for the species concerned.
2. Every movement of animals within the slaughterhouse to their designated areas must be careful and conducted using appropriate tools and procedures, animals must be spared from distress, fear, suffering, and pain, and no pressure must be applied to any sensitive parts of the animal's body.
3. Animals are placed in appropriate pens or barns where they are protected from adverse weather conditions, and provided food and water.
4. Stunning of animals must be carried out immediately before slaughter.
5. Stunning must render the animal unconscious, and the animal must be slaughtered in that state using appropriate equipment.

For any actions contrary to these guidelines, the official veterinarian is obliged to react, warn the responsible FBO person, record the noncompliance, and notify the competent authority

The official veterinarian checks whether the food business operator (FBO) has **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)** for operations that may affect animal welfare, in accordance with legislation in force. The veterinarian also checks whether the SOPs are being effectively implemented and what actions are taken by the operator when an animal is not properly stunned.

Watering of animals is ensured in the holding pens, and if animals are kept in the lairage for more than 12 hours, feeding is also provided.

Stunning

Cattle are stunned using mechanical equipment – a captive bolt pistol with a penetrating bolt – applied at the intersection point of imaginary diagonals extending from the base of the horns to the outer corners of the opposite eyes. The captive bolt pistol must be positioned so that the bolt penetrates directly into the cerebral cortex. **Shooting cattle in the back of the head is strictly prohibited.**

When using a captive bolt pistol, the operator must check after each shot that the bolt fully returns to its original position. If the bolt does not return completely, the pistol must not be reused until it has been repaired.

The **official veterinarian** supervises and verifies the effectiveness of stunning during operations.

Sheep are stunned using a captive bolt pistol with limited bolt travel, and the cartridge strength must correspond to the animal's age.

Agjencia e Ushqimit dhe Veterinarisë Food and Veterinary Agency Agencija za Hranu i Veterinu SOP	ANTE MORTEM AND POST MORTEM INSPECTION OF CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS	Nr/No/Br: 02-2025 Verzioni/version/verzija :1 23.12.2025 Faqe/pages/stranica:20 English;
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

The optimal stunning location for horned sheep is **behind the horns**, aimed toward the **angle of the jaw**.

For hornless sheep and lambs, the optimal position is on the **midline at the crown of the head**.

SHEEP/GOATS- electrical stunning possible!

Signs of effective stunning in cattle:

- Immediate collapse with no attempt to stand
- Cessation of normal rhythmic breathing
- Fixed gaze with no blinking – test of the **bulbar reflex**
- Rigid body and muscles immediately following stunning

Signs of effective stunning in sheep/goats using a captive bolt pistol:

- Immediate collapse with no attempt to rise
- Rigid body and muscles immediately after the shot
- Cessation of normal rhythmic breathing
- Fixed, unblinking gaze

The official veterinarian monitors the stunning procedure, ensures that the operator can distinguish between proper and improper stunning, and observes how the operator checks the **bulbar reflex**. The veterinarian also ensures that the equipment and instruments, including spare devices, are regularly maintained and in proper working condition.

After the ante mortem inspection, the veterinarian completes the **written ante mortem inspection report** provided by the food business operator and records the same in the **computer application**. The report is signed by both the **FBO representative** and the **official veterinarian**.

POST MORTEM INSPECTION

Inspection of Premises Before Slaughter

Before operations commence in the slaughterhouse, the official veterinarian must inspect all processing areas, premises, and equipment to determine their hygienic condition and suitability for use.

If deficiencies are identified, the veterinarian issues a “prohibited use” tag that temporarily bans the use of the relevant premises, areas, and/or equipment.

The “prohibited use” tag must state the required corrective measure. Below that, it must include the department name, subject and reason for the prohibition, and the name, surname, and signature of the official veterinarian who issued the restriction, along with the date.

The “prohibited use” tag must remain in place until the room, area, and/or equipment is made suitable for further use, and it may only be removed by the official veterinarian responsible for the logbook of issued tags.

Supervision is carried out over:

- **Exsanguination** (poorly exsanguinated meat, darker color, blood leaking from vessels, meat in the puncture wound area being vascularized)
- **Hygiene of slaughter and carcass processing** (monitoring workers' procedures, including GHP, SOP, GPP operations)
- **Placement of slaughterhouse marks** (paper tags/labels)

Agjencia e Ushqimit dhe Veterinarisë Food and Veterinary Agency Agencija za Hranu i Veterinu SOP	ANTE MORTEM AND POST MORTEM INSPECTION OF CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS	Nr/No/Br: 02-2025 Verzioni/version/verzija :1 23.12.2025 Faqe/pages/stranica:20 English;
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

- Handling of slaughter by-products
- Placing hygiene safety marks

After slaughter, the carcasses and organs of the slaughtered animals undergo a veterinary examination.

The examination is conducted on the heads, abdominal organs, thoracic organs, and the carcass.

The examination is carried out through inspection (visual observation), palpation, and incision.

Parts of the carcasses and organs of slaughtered cattle are marked with white five-part paper labels/tags with a number, which are placed on both halves of the carcass, on the internal organs, and on the head.

The fifth paper label is used to mark brain samples for testing for BSE (so-called slaughterhouse numbers or slaughter sequence number).

The marks are applied by the FBO under the supervision of the official veterinarian. If the veterinarian assesses that a particular carcass (halves) needs additional processing or examinations, such half is marked with a "held" card and sent to a sidetrack for processing or into a sanitary chamber for retention, where the final examination of the half carcasses will take place and the final decision will be made.

Carcasses and organs declared hygienically fit for human consumption are marked with an oval stamp with the veterinary number and transported to the cooling chambers.

Halves that were marked as conditionally hygienically fit after the line inspection are stamped with a rectangular stamp and handled as indicated in the corresponding record.

Carcasses and organs judged as hygienically unfit are marked with a triangular stamp and sent to the rendering plant as category 3 material.

Health safety marks are only placed on meat from animals that have undergone ante and post mortem examinations.

The health safety mark is placed on the outer side of the carcass, using edible ink and placed in such a way that when the carcasses are cut into halves or quarters, or halved into three parts, each piece contains the health safety mark (butt, loin, shoulder).

If necessary, official veterinarian performs sampling based on their own assessment or based on the State Monitoring Plan in accordance with the applicable sampling procedure

EXAMINATION OF CARCASSES AND EVISCERATED ORGANS

Official veterinarian performs an inspection—general visual examination of the carcass and each half, with particular attention to the condition of the animal, signs of hematomas, contusions or fractures, the presence of local or generalized edema, abscesses, etc. (some of these changes indicate handling practices on farms or during transport).

Furthermore, official veterinarian controls the technological and hygienic processing of the carcass, carefully examining all external and internal surfaces of the halves, with special attention given to:

- Predilection sites for contamination (legs, head, sternum)
- Cut surfaces of the abdominal and thoracic cavities (places where stomach and intestinal contents and bile can remain during improper evisceration).

7. Post Mortem Inspection of Cattle Carcasses and Organs

<p>Agjencia e Ushqimit dhe Veterinarisë Food and Veterinary Agency Agencija za Hranu i Veterinu</p> <p>SOP</p>	<p>ANTE MORTEM AND POST MORTEM INSPECTION OF CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS</p>	<p>Nr/No/Br: 02-2025 Verziori/version/verzija :1 23.12.2025 Faqe/pages/stranica:20 English;</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

No part of the slaughtered animal may be removed or processed prior to inspection. All parts of the slaughtered animals must be labeled with **paper tags** or **retention cards** so that each part is identifiable and traceable to its corresponding carcass.

- If a health decision regarding the organ and/or carcass **cannot be made during inspection**, a **"retained"** card must be used to mark the parts of the slaughtered animal accordingly.
- The **paper label/tag** and **"retained"** card may be used **only once**.
- Carcasses and/or sides are labeled with the **"retained"** card in the following standard manner:

Preparation of the Official Veterinarian for Work in the Slaughterhouse:

- Putting on work clothing and footwear (white protective coat/gown, trousers, cap, white boots, protective apron, gloves)
- Work equipment (two knives- different handle colors , hook, notebook for recording observations)
- Sampling kit

According to Commission Regulation (EU) No. 2019/627, the basic minimum examination is prescribed as follows:

A. Young Cattle

The carcasses and by-products of slaughter from the following cattle are subject to post mortem examination procedures:

- Animals younger than 8 months
- Animals younger than 20 months (intensive fattening)

I. Visual Examination Procedures

- Visual examination of the head and pharynx; palpation and examination of retropharyngeal lymph nodes (Lnn retropharyngiales);
- Visual examination of the lungs, trachea, and esophagus; palpation of the lungs and examination of bronchial and mediastinal lymph nodes (Lnn. bifurcationes, eparteriales, and mediastinales).
- Pericardium and heart
- Skin
- Liver and lymph nodes of the liver and pancreas (Lnn. Portales)
- Gastrointestinal tract, mesentery, and lymph nodes around the stomach and mesentery (Lnn. gastrici, mesenterici, craniales, and caudales);
- Spleen;
- Kidneys
- Pleura and peritoneum
- Area around the navel and joints of the young animals

II. Post mortem Examination of the Carcass and By-products

If there are indications of potential risks to human health or the health and welfare of animals, the following procedures are applied using incision and palpation:

- Incision of the retropharyngeal lymph nodes (Lnn retropharyngiales); palpation of the tongue
- Incision of the bronchial and mediastinal lymph nodes (Lnn. bifurcationes, eparteriales, and mediastinales); opening of the trachea and main bronchial

Agjencia e Ushqimit dhe Veterinarisë Food and Veterinary Agency Agencija za Hranu i Veterinu SOP	ANTE MORTEM AND POST MORTEM INSPECTION OF CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS	Nr/No/Br: 02-2025 Verzioni/version/verzija :1 23.12.2025 Faqe/pages/stranica:20 English;
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

branches lengthwise; the lower third of the lungs is incised vertically along their main axes; such incisions are not necessary if the lungs are not intended for human consumption;

- c. Longitudinal incision of the heart to open the heart ventricles and incision of the heart septum
- d. Incision of the lymph nodes around the stomach and mesentery
- e. Palpation of the spleen
- f. Incision of the kidneys and associated lymph nodes (Lnn. renales)
- g. Palpation of the area around the navel and joints. The area around the navel is incised, and the joints are opened; synovial fluid must be examined.

B. Cattle of Other Age Categories

- a. Visual examination of the head and pharynx; incision and examination of the retropharyngeal lymph nodes (Lnn. retropharyngiales), examination of the external chewing muscles, which are cut with two incisions parallel to the lower jaw, and internal chewing muscles (musculus pterygoideus), which are cut with a single incision. The tongue must be freed to allow for a detailed visual examination of the oral cavity and pharynx.
- b. Visual examination of the trachea and esophagus; visual examination and palpation of the lungs; incision and examination of the bronchial and mediastinal lymph nodes (Lnn. bifurcationes, eparteriales, and mediastinales).
- c. Visual examination of the pericardium and heart, with a longitudinal incision made to open the heart ventricles and incision of the heart septum.
- d. Visual examination of the skin
- e. Visual examination of the liver and lymph nodes of the liver and pancreas (Lnn. Portales);
- f. Visual examination of the gastrointestinal tract, mesentery, and lymph nodes of the stomach and mesentery (Lnn. gastrici, mesenterici, craniales, and caudales); palpation of the lymph nodes around the stomach and mesentery
- g. Visual examination of the spleen
- h. Visual examination of the kidneys
- i. Visual examination of the pleura and peritoneum
- j. Visual examination of the genital organs (except the penis if already removed)
- k. Visual examination of the udder and associated lymph nodes (Lnn. supramammarii).

The official veterinarian ensures that the food business operator takes all necessary measures during slaughter, including stunning, to avoid contamination of the meat with specified risk materials. This also includes the removal of specified risk materials.

Head Examination

The heads are marked with a slaughter number and prepared for examination on the work table.

The examination is conducted through inspection, palpation, and incision using hooks and knives.

The official veterinarian controls the quality of the processing, paying special attention to the

Agjencia e Ushqimit dhe Veterinarisë Food and Veterinary Agency Agencija za Hranu i Veterinu SOP	ANTE MORTEM AND POST MORTEM INSPECTION OF CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS	Nr/No/Br: 02-2025 Verzioni/version/verzija :1 23.12.2025 Faqe/pages/stranica:20 English;
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

predisposition areas such as the frontal bone, sinuses at the site of removed horns, upper and lower eyelids, eyelashes, and the nasolabial plane.

At the same time, the external surfaces are examined for pathological changes (hematomas, abscesses).

The lymph nodes of the head are then examined: mandibular, parotid, and retropharyngeal lymph nodes. The lymph nodes are fixed with a hook, and then cut with a knife to increase the surface area for inspection. The tongue is freed to perform a detailed visual examination of the oral cavity and pharynx, followed by palpation.

The external and internal chewing muscles are then examined for cysticercosis. All associated lymph nodes and tonsils are removed after the examination as category 1.

Examination of the Liver and Thoracic Organs

Organ examination is performed while suspended, using two knives.

After evisceration, the organs are marked with the slaughter number (five-part numbered white label) and are suspended on a hook for examination.

The examination starts with inspection and palpation of the liver, gall bladder, and the portal lymph nodes of the liver. The liver is then incised on the visceral surface and at the base of the caudal (Spiegel's) lobe – lob. caudatus, in order to inspect the bile ducts and liver parenchyma.

In case of pathological changes (abscesses, congestion, jaundice, cirrhosis, echinococcosis, color or consistency changes), the liver is declared unsuitable for human consumption and is marked with a blue triangular stamp and safely disposed of as category 1.

The thoracic organs are examined by visual inspection of the trachea and esophagus (e.g. foreign bodies, aspirated contents from the fore-stomach, parasites), visual inspection and palpation of the lungs for pathological changes, and the trachea and main branches of the bronchi are opened lengthwise, while the lungs are incised on the last third (always if intended for human consumption).

The examination and incision of the lymph nodes are performed from the mediastinal lymph nodes (cranial, median, and caudal) and then the bronchial lymph nodes (bifurcation, eparterial).

If the trachea, esophagus, and lungs are not used in food production for human consumption, these organs are discarded as category 1 waste.

The heart is examined by visual inspection, palpation, and incision (quality and quantity of pericardial fluid).

The left ventricle and atrium, as well as the right ventricle and atrium, are opened by incision, and the heart septum is incised with 2-3 vertical cuts to examine for trichinosis. In case of pathological changes (inflammation, trichinosis, etc.), the heart is declared hygienically unsuitable for human consumption.

Examination of Abdominal Organs

After evisceration, the abdominal organs are marked with the slaughter number and examined in a container (on the conveyor).

The examination is performed by inspection, palpation, and if necessary, incision of the lymph nodes of the stomach and mesentery (certain pathological changes on organs and lymph nodes – changes in shape and color, adhesions, tumors, etc.).

In case of suspected infectious disease, a final examination of the carcasses and organs is performed.

Agjencia e Ushqimit dhe Veterinarisë Food and Veterinary Agency Agencija za Hranu i Veterinu SOP	ANTE MORTEM AND POST MORTEM INSPECTION OF CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS	Nr/No/Br: 02-2025 Verzioni/version/verzija :1 23.12.2025 Faqe/pages/stranica:20 English;
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Examination of Beef Halves (Carcasses)

Official veterinarian (standing on a mobile platform) inspects the surfaces of the carcasses – halves, which includes the visual examination of the hide, pleura, peritoneum, kidneys, and if necessary, incision of the kidney and associated lymph nodes (Lnn. renales), and the visual examination of supramammary lymph nodes, which are also incised if necessary.

Official veterinarian monitors the removal of high-risk tissue (spinal cord), the quality of processing (predisposed areas for hair and skin retention), and assesses the quality of bleeding.

He supervises the application of health safety labels on the carcasses.

In case of localized changes on the carcasses that cannot be removed during the slaughter line, such halves are placed in cold storage for retention and later processed under the supervision of the final veterinarian.

After processing, the assessment and supervision of the application of health safety labels are conducted by the final veterinarian.

Final Examination of Beef Carcasses

In case of suspicion of hygienic unsuitability, the carcasses and organs are retained in the cold storage room for retained meat until a final examination is carried out. If pathological changes are identified through visual examination and palpation of the organs or muscles of the carcass, the affected parts are not incised to prevent contamination of the carcasses, staff, equipment, and the room.

„The final examination“, orders the following lymph nodes to be examined:

- Pre-scapular lymph nodes (Lnn. cervicales superficiales)
- Axillary lymph nodes (Lnn. axillares proprii et Lnn. primae costae)
- Sternum lymph nodes (Lnn. sternales craniales)
- Deep cervical lymph nodes (Lnn. cervicales profundi)
- Costocervical lymph nodes (Lnn. costocervicales)
- Lumbar lymph nodes (Lnn. lumbales)
- Pelvic lymph nodes (Lnn. ischiadici, Lnn. iliaci)
- Popliteal lymph nodes (Lnn. poplitei)

These additional examinations of carcass parts, animal by-products, and edible by-products, as well as additional laboratory tests, are performed whenever necessary for:

- Final diagnosis
- Detection of the presence of animal diseases, residues, or contaminants in quantities above the levels allowed by specific regulations, non-compliance with microbiological criteria
- Detection of other factors that make the meat hygienically unsuitable for human consumption.

Sampling of the medulla oblongata of risk groups of cattle for the presence of prions - the causative agent of BSE is described in a separate working instruction.

Assessment of Meat Infected with Cysticercosis

After suspecting the presence of cysticercosis on the heart or masticatory muscles (m. masseter and m. pterygoideus), the invasion of the carcasses is assessed, and official veterinarian must submit the affected muscle for examination at the official laboratory. If only one cyst is found in the masseter, pterygoid muscles, cardiac muscle, and after examination and palpation of the organs, the tongue, esophagus, heart, and muscle parts are

Agjencia e Ushqimit dhe Veterinarisë Food and Veterinary Agency Agencija za Hranu i Veterinu SOP	ANTE MORTEM AND POST MORTEM INSPECTION OF CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS	Nr/No/Br: 02-2025 Verzioni/ version/ verzija :1 23.12.2025 Faqe/pages/stranica:20 English;
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

cut into thin slices, and a cross-cut is made above the olecranon (elbow) to free the triceps. The leg should be cut to inspect the surfaces of these muscles.

The meat is assessed upon receiving laboratory results, and the competent authority is informed about the findings.

The affected part is declared unsuitable for human consumption, and the other parts are subjected to freezing.

Freezing is carried out by reaching a temperature of -10°C in the muscle depth for 10 days or -20°C for 3 days. The freezing is carried out in the FBO cold storage in a special sanitary section of the cold storage.

The meat is sent for freezing packed in boxes, arranged on pallets, accompanied by a retention card with a slaughter number (No.), the slaughter date, and the reason for freezing. A record is compiled for beef infected with cysticercosis, which includes details about the meat and the card.

SRM – special work instruction!

SRM – cattle Negligible risk of BSE occurrence	
Older than 12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - skull without the lower jaw, - including the brain and eyes, and - spinal cord of animals over 12 months of age
SRM – cattle Controlled and undetermined risk of BSE occurrence	
All ages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tonsils, - the last four meters of the small intestine, cecum, and - mesentery of animals of all age categories.
Older than 12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skull without the lower jaw, - including the brain and eyes, and - spinal cord of animals over 12 months of age;
Older than 30 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spine, except for the tail vertebrae, spinal and transverse processes of the cervical, thoracic, and lumbar vertebrae, and the medial crest of the sacral bone and wings of the sacral bone, but including the dorsal roots of ganglia of animals over 30 months of age.
In accordance with Annex V of Regulation (EC) No. 999/2001 (Consolidated version) and Commission Regulation (EU) 2015/1162.	

8. Post mortem Examination of Sheep/Goat Carcasses and Organs

According to Commission Regulation (EU) No. 2019/627, the basic minimum examination is prescribed as follows:

Young domestic sheep and goats and sheep without permanent incisors

1. Carcasses and by-products of slaughtered sheep that have not yet developed permanent incisors or are under 12 months of age, and goats under 6 months of age, are subject to the following post mortem procedures:

Agjencia e Ushqimit dhe Veterinarisë Food and Veterinary Agency Agencija za Hranu i Veterinu SOP	ANTE MORTEM AND POST MORTEM INSPECTION OF CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS	Nr/No/Br: 02-2025 Verzioni/version/verzija :1 23.12.2025 Faqe/pages/stranica:20 English;
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

- (a) Visual inspection of the head, including the pharynx, oral cavity, tongue, and parotid and retropharyngeal lymph nodes. These examinations are not required if the competent authorities can guarantee that the head, including the tongue and brain, will not be used for human consumption;
- (b) Visual inspection of the lungs, trachea, esophagus, and bronchial and mediastinal lymph nodes (Lnn. bifurcationes, eparteriales, and mediastinales);
- (c) Visual inspection of the pericardium and heart;
- (d) Visual inspection of the diaphragm;
- (e) Visual inspection of the liver and lymph nodes of the liver and pancreas (Lnn. portales);
- (f) Visual inspection of the gastrointestinal tract, mesentery, and lymph nodes around the stomach and mesentery (Lnn. gastrici, mesenterici, craniales, and caudales);
- (g) Visual inspection of the spleen;
- (h) Visual inspection of the kidneys;
- (i) Visual inspection of the pleura and peritoneum;
- (j) Visual inspection of the area around the navel and joints.

2. Official veterinarian performs the following post mortem procedures using incision and palpation of the carcass and by-products of slaughter if there are signs of possible risks to human health and the health or welfare of animals:

- (a) Palpation of the pharynx, oral cavity, tongue, and parotid lymph nodes. These examinations are not required if the head, including the tongue and brain, will not be used for human consumption;
- (b) Palpation of the lungs, incision of the lungs, trachea, esophagus, and bronchial and mediastinal lymph nodes;
- (c) Incision of the heart;
- (d) Palpation of the liver and associated lymph nodes; incision on the gastric side of the liver to examine bile ducts;
- (e) Palpation of the spleen;
- (f) Incision of the kidneys and associated lymph nodes (Lnn. renales);
- (g) Visual inspection of the area around the navel and joints; the navel area is incised, and the joints are opened to examine the synovial fluid.

Other domestic sheep and goats

1. Carcasses and by-products of slaughtered sheep with permanent incisors or sheep over 12 months of age, and goats over 6 months of age, are subject to the following post mortem procedures:

- (a) Visual inspection of the head, including the pharynx, oral cavity, tongue, and parotid lymph nodes, and palpation of the retropharyngeal lymph nodes. These examinations are not required if the head, including the tongue and brain, will not be used for human consumption;
- (b) Visual inspection of the lungs, trachea, and esophagus; palpation of the lungs and bronchial and mediastinal lymph nodes (Lnn. bifurcationes, eparteriales, and mediastinales);
- (c) Visual inspection of the pericardium and heart;
- (d) Visual inspection of the diaphragm;

Agjencia e Ushqimit dhe Veterinarisë Food and Veterinary Agency Agencija za Hranu i Veterinu SOP	ANTE MORTEM AND POST MORTEM INSPECTION OF CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS	Nr/No/Br: 02-2025 Verzioni/version/verzija :1 23.12.2025 Faqe/pages/stranica:20 English;
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

- (e) Visual inspection of the liver and lymph nodes of the liver and pancreas (Lnn. portales); palpation of the liver and associated lymph nodes; incision on the gastric side of the liver to examine bile ducts;
- (f) Visual inspection of the gastrointestinal tract, mesentery, and lymph nodes around the stomach and mesentery (Lnn. gastrici, mesenterici, craniales, and caudales);
- (g) Visual inspection of the spleen;
- (h) Visual inspection of the kidneys;
- (i) Visual inspection of the pleura and peritoneum;
- (j) Visual inspection of the genital organs (except the penis if it has already been removed);
- (k) Visual inspection of the udder and associated lymph nodes.

2. Official veterinarian performs the following post mortem procedures using incision and palpation of the carcass and by-products of slaughter if there are signs of possible risks to human health and the health or welfare of animals:

- (a) Palpation of the pharynx, oral cavity, tongue, and parotid lymph nodes. These examinations are not required if the head, including the tongue and brain, will not be used for human consumption;
- (b) Incision of the lungs, trachea, esophagus, and bronchial and mediastinal lymph nodes;
- (c) Incision of the heart;
- (d) Palpation of the spleen;
- (e) Incision of the kidneys and associated lymph nodes (Lnn. renales).

In cases of sampling of scrapie in sheep, a sample of the medulla oblongata is taken and sent for laboratory examination.

SPECIAL RISKS

A. TRANSMISSIBLE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHIES (TSE)

When carrying out official controls related to TSE, the requirements of *Administrative Instruction MA. no 34/2006 for Prevention, Control and Eradication of TSE Disease in Kosovo* and other applicable Community legislation must be taken into account. Official veterinarian checks for the removal, separation, and, if necessary, the marking of specified risk material.

B. CYSTICERCOSIS

Meat infected with cysticercosis must be declared unsuitable for human consumption. However, if the cysticercosis infection has not affected the entire animal, the parts of the animal that are not infected can be declared suitable for human consumption after undergoing cold treatment.

C. TUBERCULOSIS

Animals that have shown a positive or suspicious reaction to the tuberculin test or for which there are other reasons to suspect infection are slaughtered separately from other animals, with protective measures taken to prevent contamination of other carcasses, the slaughter line, or the staff in the slaughterhouse.

All meat from animals in which post mortem examination has revealed localized tuberculosis lesions in multiple organs is declared unsuitable for human consumption. All meat from animals in which post mortem examination has revealed localized changes

Agjencia e Ushqimit dhe Veterinarisë Food and Veterinary Agency Agencija za Hranu i Veterinu SOP	ANTE MORTEM AND POST MORTEM INSPECTION OF CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS	Nr/No/Br: 02-2025 Verzioni/version/verzija :1 23.12.2025 Faqe/pages/stranica:20 English;
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

similar to tuberculosis lesions in various organs or parts of the carcass is declared unsuitable for human consumption. However, if the tuberculosis lesion is found in the lymph nodes of only one organ or part of the carcass, only the infected organ or part of the carcass and the associated lymph nodes are declared unsuitable for human consumption.

D. BRUCELLOSIS

Animals that have shown a positive or suspicious reaction to the brucellosis test or for which there are other reasons to suspect infection are slaughtered separately from other animals, with protective measures taken to prevent contamination of other carcasses, the slaughter line, or the staff in the slaughterhouse.

All meat from animals in which post mortem examination has revealed changes indicating acute brucellosis infection is declared unsuitable for human consumption.

For animals showing a positive or suspicious reaction to the brucellosis test, the udder, genital tract, and blood are declared unsuitable for human consumption, even if no changes are detected.

MEAT DECLARED CONDITIONALLY FIT FOR CONSUMPTION

Meat and organs declared conditionally fit for consumption are marked with a square stamp. Such an assessment, e.g., for meat that has undergone treatment for cysticercosis, meat with localized organoleptic or other changes, which are removed, and similar cases, requires the meat to undergo the prescribed thermal treatment, either by cooking or freezing, before it can be deemed fit for human consumption.

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MEAT HYGIENICALLY UNSUITABLE FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2017/625

Official veterinarian declares fresh meat unsuitable for human consumption in the following cases:

(a) If it originates from animals that have not undergone ante mortem inspection in accordance with Article 18(2)(a) or (b) of Regulation (EU) 2017/625, except for wild game or stray reindeer as stated in Article 12(1)(b) of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/624; 17.5.2019. Official Journal of the European Union L 131/77.

(b) If it originates from animals whose slaughter by-products have not undergone post-mortem inspection in accordance with Article 18(2)(c) of Regulation (EU) 2017/625, except for the internal organs of large wild game that are not required to accompany the carcass to the game processing plant as stated in Section IV, Chapter II, Point 4 of Annex III of Regulation (EC) No. 853/2004.

<p>Agjencia e Ushqimit dhe Veterinarisë Food and Veterinary Agency Agencija za Hranu i Veterinu</p> <p>SOP</p>	<p>ANTE MORTEM AND POST MORTEM INSPECTION OF CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS</p>	<p>Nr/No/Br: 02-2025 Verzioni / version / verzija :1 23.12.2025 Faqe / pages / stranica:20 English;</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

- (c) If it originates from animals that died before slaughter, stillborn, unborn, or slaughtered at less than seven days of age.
- (d) If it concerns meat cut at locations of puncture wounds.
- (e) If it originates from animals suffering from diseases for which animal health rules are established in Republic of Kosovo.
- (f) If it originates from animals suffering from generalized diseases, such as generalized septicemia, pyaemia, toxemia, or viremia.
- (g) If it does not meet the food safety criteria established in Chapter I of Annex I of Regulation No. 27/2012 for Microbiological Criteria of Foodstuffs, ((KE) Nr. 2073/2005)), which determine whether food can be placed on the market.
- (h) If it shows signs of parasitic infection, unless otherwise specified by the official control requirements for detecting the presence of cysticercosis.
- (i) If it contains chemical residues or contaminants in quantities exceeding the levels established by *Administrative Instruction (MAFRD).NO.06/2016 on Pharmacologically Active Substances and Their Classification Regarding Maximum Residue Limits in Foodstuffs of Animal Origin* (Regulations (EU) No. 37/2010); *Regulation (GRK) - no. 43/2013 Laying Down Maximum Levels of Certain Contaminants in Foodstuffs and Undesirable Substances in Animal Feedingstuffs* (Regulations (EU) No. 1881/2006), , or residues of substances that are prohibited or not authorized.
- (j) If it consists of the liver and kidneys of animals older than two years from regions where heavy metals were found in the environment through approved plans for residues.
- (k) If it has been illegally treated with decontaminating substances.
- (l) If it has been illegally treated with ionizing radiation, including UV radiation.
- (m) If it contains foreign bodies, except, in the case of wild game, materials used in hunting the animal.
- (n) If it exceeds the maximum permissible levels of radioactivity established by national legislation or Union legislation in the absence of National legislation.
- (o) If it shows signs of pathological or organoleptic changes, especially an intense sexual odor or insufficient bleeding (except for wild game).
- (p) If it originates from an exhausted and malnourished animal.
- (q) If it contains specified risk material, unless its removal is allowed in another establishment in accordance with Point 4.3 of Annex V of *Administrative Instruction MA. no 34/2006 for Prevention, Control and Eradication of TSE Disease in Kosovo* and fresh meat remains under the control of the competent authorities.
- (r) If it is dirty or contaminated with feces or other contaminants.
- (s) If it consists of blood which, due to the health status of the animal it originated from or contamination during slaughter, may pose a risk to human or animal health.
- (t) If the official veterinarian, after reviewing all relevant information, believes that it may pose a risk to human or animal health or is unsuitable for human consumption for any other reason.
- (u) If there are specific hazards .

Such carcasses and organs are marked with a triangular stamp and declared hygienically unsuitable.

After the post mortem examination, official veterinarian completes the Post Mortem Report, which is submitted to the FBO) and also filled out via the application. To ensure accurate and effective data transfer, the official veterinarian keeps their own notes on the system forms

<p>Agjencia e Ushqimit dhe Veterinarisë Food and Veterinary Agency Agencija za Hranu i Veterinu</p> <p>SOP</p>	<p>ANTE MORTEM AND POST MORTEM INSPECTION OF CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS</p>	<p>Nr/No/Br: 02-2025 Verzioni/version/verzija :1 23.12.2025 Faqe/pages/stranica:20 English;</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

during both ante mortem and post mortem inspections and later enters them into the report, which is signed by both the veterinarian and the responsible person of the FBO.

After the post mortem examination:

- Parts that are unsuitable for human consumption must be removed from the clean part of the facility as soon as possible using process containers that must be properly labeled.
- Retained meat and/or meat deemed unsuitable for human consumption, as well as inedible by-products, must not come into contact with meat deemed suitable for human consumption.
- Internal organs or parts of internal organs that remain in the carcass must be completely removed as soon as possible unless the official veterinarian approves otherwise.
- Retained organs can be used for human consumption after further examination and approval.

The operator handling animal by-products must ensure that:

- Materials from Category 1, Category 2, and Category 3 are identifiable, kept separate during collection and transportation, and can be identified;
 - FBO collect animal by-products during the primary processing process and place them in designated containers;
 - Animal by-products are temporarily collected and stored in covered, airtight containers in designated areas at the appropriate temperature;
 - Animal by-products must be dispatched as quickly as possible without delay;
 - Containers for animal by-products that are reused, as well as any equipment or utensils in contact with by-products, must be cleaned, washed, and disinfected after each use in accordance with the SSOP plan for the facility, kept clean, and dried before reuse;
- Category 1 material containers are marked in black, Category 2 containers in yellow, and Category 3 containers in green with a high content of blue color to ensure clear distinction from other colors.

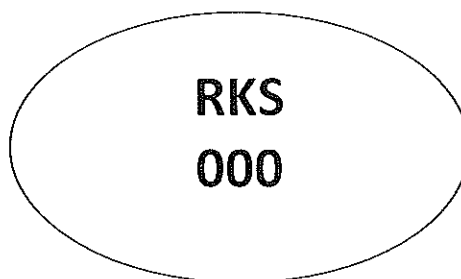
- When transporting animal by-products, official contracting company leaves a completed "commercial document" that must accompany animal by-products during transport;
- Regularly applies dye (methylene blue) to animal by-products for decharacterization and maintains a record of the dye used.

9. Health Certification Marks

Health certification marks are only applied to meat from animals that have undergone ante mortem and post mortem inspections. After the post mortem examination, when the official veterinarian has confirmed the health suitability, the prescribed stamps are applied to the halves of the carcass. The health certification mark and the identification mark for food of animal origin, which originates from establishments authorized by the competent authority, are oval in shape. The top part contains the two letters mark for country, followed by the approved establishment number, and beneath it, the "EU" mark. The meat is then transported to cooling chambers.

Based on organoleptic examination and acceptable laboratory analysis results, the meat and organs of slaughtered animals are assessed and marked as:

- Suitable for human consumption
- Unfit for human consumption
- Suitable for processing



Agjencia e Ushqimit dhe Veterinarisë Food and Veterinary Agency Agencija za Hranu i Veterinu SOP	ANTE MORTEM AND POST MORTEM INSPECTION OF CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS	Nr/No/Br: 02-2025 Verzioni/version/verzija :1 23.12.2025 Faqe/pages/stranica:20 English;
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

The health certification mark for meat suitable for human consumption is applied to the external side of the carcass, printed with ink and placed so that when the carcass is split into halves or quarters, or half into three parts, each piece contains the health certification mark.

Food business operators must provide all necessary assistance to the official veterinarian to enable effective conducting of official controls and, in particular, must ensure that:

- Access to buildings, premises, equipment, or other infrastructure is provided;
- All documentation and records required or deemed necessary by the official veterinarian for evaluating the situation are made available.

10. Process Quality Assurance

The quality of the veterinary inspection and control of cattle, sheep and goats before slaughter, as well as the inspection of carcasses and organs on the slaughter line, and the proper assessment of the hygienic suitability of the meat and organs of slaughtered animals, is ensured through continuous education, work experience, adherence to standard operating procedures, and results from additional laboratory analyses.

11. Further Documents:

- Ante Mortem Inspection Report
- Post Mortem Inspection Report
- FCMS Application Program
- "RETAINED" Cards
- Notes for Record Keeping
- Working Instructions for Animal Welfare?
- Records