

## **The Slaughter of Sheep for Private Consumption by the Owner**

This leaflet outlines the requirements to be met when slaughtering sheep for private consumption, other than in a licensed slaughterhouse (e.g. on a farm).

### **Slaughter outside a licensed slaughterhouse (e.g. on a farm)**

**If an animal is to be slaughtered outside a licensed slaughterhouse (e.g. on a farm), the owner MUST observe the following five requirements:**

1. The animals must be killed humanely, in accordance with the Welfare of Animals (Slaughter and Killing) Regulations 1995.

To kill an animal humanely, it is essential to avoid, as far as possible, any actions which may increase its anxiety. A quiet, unhurried approach, gentleness and patience are essential.

Sheep should not be killed within sight or sound of other animals.

The following methods are all acceptable for the humane slaughter of sheep on farms.

#### **A. CAPTIVE BOLT PISTOL**

There are a number of different captive bolt pistols on the market, but 'trigger fired' penetrative pistols are the most common. A metal bolt is propelled from the cylinder of the gun for a distance of about eight cms, by the explosion of a blank cartridge. The bolt remains captive within the barrel, because a flange at the rear is too large to pass through the aperture at the end of the cylinder. The impact of the flange hitting the end of the cylinder is absorbed, and the bolt recoils into the gun.

There are different sizes of blank cartridge available for each make of captive bolt pistol. For on farm use, the heaviest cartridge available for the particular model of pistol should be used.

**It is important to remember that the captive bolt pistol is a stunning device and is not a humane killer.**

Stunning damages the brain and results in immediate loss of consciousness, but the animal will still be alive. The heart will continue to beat for some time, and nervous (spinal) reflexes may result in violent contractions of the limbs until death occurs.

**Following stunning with a captive bolt, the major vessels in the neck must be cut with a sharp knife to ensure that death occurs rapidly.**

The captive bolt must be fired with the muzzle placed firmly against the animal's head, pointing in the required direction (see diagrams). It is essential that the shot should penetrate the brain, which is of comparatively small size and situated in the upper part of the skull. Adequate restraint is therefore necessary.

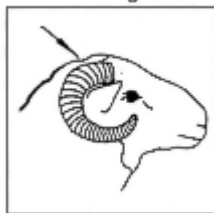
**Hornless sheep:** Steady the sheep's head by holding the nose. Place the muzzle of the pistol firmly against the highest point of the head and in the mid-line. Aim straight down as indicated by the arrow in **diagram 1**.

**Horned sheep:** Place the muzzle just behind the middle of the ridge which runs between the horns, and aim towards the mouth as in **diagram 2**.



Diagram 1 ▲

Diagram 2 ▼



N.B. Captive Bolt guns are no longer subject to the firearms legislation. When using a Captive Bolt gun for the routine stunning of livestock, in the course or furtherance of a business, you must hold a current Slaughterman's licence.

## **B. HUMANE KILLER - 0.32 CALIBRE FREE BULLET**

This fires a single high velocity soft nosed bullet, which will kill all ages of sheep outright. Following shooting, the major vessels in the neck must be cut with a sharp knife to ensure that the sheep bleeds out rapidly. The carcasses should be hung vertically.

It is very important that if the bullet should pass out of the sheep's body, it will not ricochet off concrete floors or walls. For this reason, it should never be used in or around buildings. Under normal circumstances, it should be used only by a veterinary surgeon or a knackerman. Others present must always stay well behind the operator when the sheep is shot.

### **EXTREME CARE MUST BE EXERCISED IN THE USE OF THIS FIREARM.**

**Both horned and hornless sheep:** Shoot just above the eyes, pointing the barrel down the length of the neck as shown in **diagram 3**.



Diagram 3 ▲

### C. SHOTGUN

For adult sheep, a 12, 16 or 20 bore shotgun may be used, with shot not smaller than no. 6. Hold the gun approximately 6-12 inches from the head. (Do not hold the gun against the head.) Shoot just above the eyes, pointing the barrel down the length of the neck as shown in **diagram 3**. When used in this way, the shot makes only a small hole in the skull, but completely destroys the brain.

This is a much safer method than using free bullets, as the danger of ricochet from pellets is much less. Following shooting, the major vessels in the neck must be cut with a sharp knife to ensure that the sheep bleeds out rapidly. The carcasses should be hung vertically.

### D. 0.22 RIFLE OR REVOLVER

A rifle should only be used as a last resort when no other method of humane destruction is available. Hold the muzzle of the gun 1-2 inches from the animal's head and shoot through the forehead (**diagram 3**). The same precautions for operator safety apply as for the free bullet humane killer.

**Following shooting, the major blood vessels in the neck must be cut with a sharp knife to ensure that the sheep bleeds out rapidly. The carcass should be hung vertically.**

2. The owner must stain, store, dispose of, etc. the **Specified Risk Material (SRM)** in accordance with the TSE Regulations. Definitions of SRM will depend on the age of the animal being slaughtered.

Sheep/lamb less than 12 months of age or no permanent incisor erupted.  
SRM - the spleen

Sheep - over 12 months of age or having a permanent incisor erupted.  
SRM - the skull, including the brain and eyes, the tonsils, spleen and the spinal cord

3. Animal products must be disposed of in accordance with the Animal By Products Regulations 2005. This is all slaughter waste not destined for human consumption or classed as SRM, including the horns, skins, hooves and blood.

4. The carcass, or any product of animal origin, must **not** be offered for sale to a third party or the public. This includes giving away to friends, relatives, etc.

5. The sheep must be free of veterinary medicine residues.

**No person shall slaughter any sheep by a religious method, or cause or permit any sheep to be so slaughtered, other than in a licensed slaughterhouse.**

#### **Sheep Slaughtered by Mobile Slaughterhouse Operator**

Operators of mobile slaughterhouses will dispose of SRM and Animal By Products in accordance with DEFRA requirements for you.

It is up to the owner as to whether they wish the carcass to be jointed for them by the mobile slaughterhouse operator or jointed by a butcher on the farm.

**NO** part of the animal or animal by product can be sold, or given away, to a third party or the public.

**Please note**

This is not an authoritative interpretation of the law and is intended only for guidance.

For further information, please contact **Environmental Protection, Animal Health Section, Swindon Borough Council, Premier House, Station Road, SN1 1TZ**

Telephone – (01793) 466068

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