

ADVISORY ON MEAT EXPORTS

CFIA RECOMMENDATIONS

Following an audit of UK meat inspection systems in September-October 2024 and follow up correspondence, the Canada Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) provided Defra with a number of recommendations for resolving deficiencies identified according to Canadian regulations. For this EHC the relevant recommendations are:

- Beef establishment N60 written procedures for E. coli O157 H7 should include the current Canadian reference guidelines: Canadian Preventive controls for E. coli O157/NM in raw beef products.
- Beef establishment trimming procedures for removing dorsal root ganglia (DRG) from Over Thirty Months (OTM) bovine carcasses should clearly describe the process, including detailed instructions based on the Guide to Specified Risk Material (SRM) removal. It should include the 2.5cm standard from the Canadian guidelines, with proper validation to ensure consistent removal.
- All establishments registered to export meat and meat products to Canada should implement a written allergen control procedure that includes all the Canadian common food allergens, including pine nuts.

Exporters should implement these recommendations for export to Canada or risk consignments not being accepted on arrival.

Water retention guidance

Red meat, including pork, establishments exporting to Canada should have written water retention controls and procedures in place if their post-evisceration processing could cause excess water retention, as specified in the [Canadian Control Programs: water retention in edible raw red meat products](#). Further detail is provided below.

Additional verification is now required to meet Canadian requirements pertaining to water retention in red meat. To complete certification of this EHC for consignments of red meat, the certifying OV must have written attestation from the slaughterhouse OV confirming that there is an annual official verification of the FBO's water retention plan if applicable, or that the FBO does not carry out processes that could add additional water to the meat.

The local slaughterhouse OVs of sites registered for export to Canada have been made aware of the expectation that they verify these control plans annually or upon a change in processes and communicate this to the certifying OV upon export.

In Northern Ireland, verification is completed and attested to on the annual Form 11 trade form, and this is the attestation used in the event of export to Canada.

In UK slaughterhouses, spray chilling is currently considered the primary process that may add excess water. However, other processes could also contribute, and FBOs must assess their operations against this requirement. If relevant, they must develop and validate a water retention protocol in line with CFIA expectations here: [Control Programs: water retention in edible raw red meat products - inspection.canada.ca.](#)

ENSURING COMPLIANCE FOR UK MEAT EXPORTS TO CANADA

Shipments from the UK of chilled and frozen meat and meat products are regularly refused entry into Canada due to non-compliances. Such detentions are costly for the companies involved and also require full investigation by the UK competent authorities. CFIA carries out increased checks on product from non-compliant establishments, and will suspend any establishment involved in 3 or more violations in a 12 month period. It is therefore imperative that establishments and certifying officers ensure that any product exported to Canada is compliant with Canadian requirements.

Specifications should be agreed with importers, but this does not guarantee acceptance by CFIA.

Critical prohibitions - Do not certify if:

- Black staining on marrow bones (including scorching by hot blade) is observed.
- Meat or meat offal is off-condition (odour, mould, putrefaction, overly noticeable pigmentation) or shows contamination (faecal/hair/foreign matter).
- Frozen product shows evidence of partial thawing or packaging damage/staining.
- Label description does not exactly match the technical cut specification on the product.
- Shipping marks are missing/incorrect/not durable or do not match the certificate.
- For precursor/FRGBP: N60 sampling results are missing, unclear, or not "Not Detected".
- Any establishment in the chain (slaughter, cutting, cold store) is not registered with CFIA to export to Canada.
- Hearts being exported still have the aorta and other major blood vessels attached. When preparing hearts for export to Canada (CFIA) guidance states that all the aorta and other major blood vessels should be removed, leaving a maximum of 2 cm from their origin on the external surface of the heart. Safe Food for Canadians Regulations (SFCR) sets out dressing procedures considered best practice by CFIA to minimise contamination of meat products, is available here: [Dressing procedures](#)

Enhanced inspection requirements

To minimise the risk of non-compliant meat products being exported to Canada, exporters and certifying OVs are strongly advised to implement the following checks **at the final establishment of dispatch** (export cold store or cutting plant):

1. Documentary & Identity Checks:

For each consignment:

- Verify all documentation (commercial documents, labels, production information).
- Confirm that labels are authentic, correctly formatted, and match the documentation.
- Product specification checks

- Check packaging for any damage, staining, or signs of partial thawing.

Additionally, the certifying OV should contact the EHO responsible for the exporting cold store or cutting plant to confirm there are no relevant compliance issues at the site.

2. Physical Checks:

Physical checks should be targeted when:

- documentary or identity checks identify concerns
- suppliers or product types are **unfamiliar**
- there are concerns about the supplier's compliance with hygiene rules, including any enforcement issues raised by the Food Safety Competent Authority

Physical checks must include (minimum: 5% OR 5 boxes per product line/type per supplier):

- Opening boxes
- Visual inspection of the product
- Temperature verification
- Inspection for defects and contamination

Certification must not be issued when checks reveal non-compliances.

If **any non-compliance** is identified:

- Open additional boxes for further checks.
- If frozen meat must be thawed for inspection, it **cannot be re-frozen** and must be disposed of.

Exporter Assurance on Canadian Non-Hygiene Requirements

Exporters must ensure that product descriptions and cutting specifications match the label and comply with Canadian requirements under the **Safer Food for Canadians Regulations (SFCR)**.

Certifying OVs should verify this as part of the certification process.

1. Product Specifications

- Product descriptions must accurately reflect the cut.
- Cutting and labelling must comply with Canadian standards.
- Exporters must confirm specifications with their importer.

Please refer to CFIA Meat Cuts Manual for a description and diagram of specific cuts of meat:

[Beef - Meat Cuts Manual - Canadian Food Inspection Agency \(canada.ca\)](https://www.inspection.gc.ca/food-safety/food-safety-and-inspection-agency/canada-ca/beef-meat-cuts-manual)

2. Exporter Declaration / Letter

Defra/DAERA advise OVs to obtain a declaration from the exporter confirming:

- Understanding of relevant Canadian SFCR requirements
- Compliance with labelling, standards of identity, and grade requirements
- Accuracy and permanence of **shipping marks** applied to boxes, pallets, or containers

The declaration may be issued once and kept by the OV.

Reference:

- [Labelling, standards of identity and grades - inspection.canada.ca](http://inspection.canada.ca/labelling-standards-identity-grades)
- [Use of Shipping Marks - inspection.canada.ca](http://inspection.canada.ca/shipping-marks)

3. FBO Verification Checklist

The FBO responsible for the cutting plant must complete the **FBO Verification Checklist** confirming they meet Canadian non-hygiene requirements.

Summary

If there is any doubt about the accuracy or physical condition of the material or labelling of the product destined for export from the UK, OV's are instructed not to certify the consignment and as soon as possible seek further advice from the Animal and Plant Health Agency Centre for International Trade in Carlisle or the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland.

Exporters and OV's are duly advised that identification of serious non-compliances in future consignments of meat and meat products from the UK may result in the suspension of some or all UK processing and exporting establishments from eligibility to export to the countries in question. If the non-EU country maintains a list of UK establishments from which imports are allowed, the list would have originated from a previous Defra recommendation and it is important for the exporter to ensure that the details (name/address) and UK approval status continue to be correct/valid.
