



# FQAS NEWS

Summer 2022

## Celebrating 30 years of FQAS

**This year, 2022, marks 30 years since the launch of the Northern Ireland Beef and Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (NIBL FQAS).**



The Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland (LMC) manage the NIBL FQAS on behalf of the beef and sheep industry in Northern Ireland. The scheme was developed to give consumers assurances about the farm end of the production chain of their food with three key pillars: food safety, animal welfare and care for the environment.

Over the years the scheme has grown and adapted to meet the evolving needs of the agri-food industry. As part of this, every three years a root and branch review relating to all aspects of the NIBL FQAS standards is undertaken. This has just recently been completed and ensures that the NIBL FQAS continues to align closely with its counterpart quality assurance schemes in the UK.

Eighty per cent of the beef and lamb produced in Northern Ireland is exported. Ensuring that our farmers get the best possible return from these exports is critically important. As well as delivering an independent quality and traceability guarantee for the consumer, the NIBL FQAS delivers cost benefits for its members. Today the NIBL FQAS boasts 11,863 active participants (as of 30 June 2022) approximately 1,200 of which joined in the first year of the scheme's establishment.

The NIBL FQAS is one of the longest established of all the farm quality assurance schemes, not only in the UK but worldwide. It has been a key driver in ensuring local producers receive unfettered market access for beef and lamb and acts as a superb tool for the appropriate marketing of world class NI produce. Since its inception thirty years ago the scheme has delivered real quantifiable benefits to the beef and sheep sectors in Northern Ireland. LMC has been delighted to operate and manage the FQAS on behalf of the industry for the past 30 years and looks forward to continuing to do so in the years ahead.



**FQAS Helpline**

**(028) 92633024**

# New FQAS Standards and Rules for 2022



FQAS participants will be aware that the NIBL FQAS standards and rules are formally reviewed every three years.

The FQAS standards and rules are reviewed by the FQAS Standard Setting Committee consisting of representatives from Ulster Farmers Union (UFU), Northern Ireland Meat Exporters' Association (NIMEA), Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), National Sheep Association (NSA), National Beef Association (NBA) and Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers Association (NIAPA); therefore all stakeholders have the opportunity to participate in the review. It is vital that FQAS continues to develop with the needs of the industry and the market place it supplies. This revised standard and associated rules will provide further assurance to customers (abattoirs, wholesalers, retailers and consumers) that beef and lamb sourced from farm quality assured producers continues to be produced to the highest standards.

Many of the proposed changes in this review are in line with legislative requirements and it is also important that the scheme remains aligned with the other UK beef and lamb quality assurance schemes which are eligible to carry the Red Tractor logo.

As shown in Table 1 the majority of changes to the NIBL FQAS standards are to further enhance animal health and welfare. There are some elements of the standard which have also been re-worded or clarified to ensure there is no ambiguity. Participants will see more significant changes in the following sections:

## **Welfare of youngstock (calves/lambs)**

To strengthen standards in calf/lamb (youngstock) welfare. It will be a requirement that the rearing of calves and lambs must be carried out in a manner that ensures their welfare and needs are met in accordance with the DAERA Codes of Practice for the Welfare of Livestock: Beef Cattle and/ or Sheep (Welfare Codes). A number of these elements were already covered throughout various sections of

the 2018 FQAS standard, however they have now been concentrated into one standard with some additional welfare considerations.

## **Use of analgesic following routine husbandry procedures**

To ensure pain is minimised during and after common on farm veterinary procedures such as: castration, disbudding etc...

## **Feeding space allowances**

Ensuring that livestock have adequate space to eat.

## **Tethered housing systems**

Tethered housing systems are not permitted.

**All FQAS participants will be provided with a hard copy of the FQAS Record Book** which provides relevant guidance documents and record keeping templates required for FQAS inspections and ongoing compliance with scheme standards.

**The FQAS Standard and Rules 2022 will be available at [www.lmcni.com](http://www.lmcni.com).**

Conformance with the new/revised standards will be recorded at inspections completed **on or after 01 November 2022**. All changes within the standard have been clearly identified in Table 1 and within the standard are marked with "Amended" or "New" in the left hand column.

The FQAS helpline is available to participants who require assistance with the revised standards either pre/post inspection.

The new FQAS Standards and Rules April 2022 are available at [www.lmcni.com](http://www.lmcni.com)

# Table 1: Key Changes in the 2022 NIBL FQAS Standard



Standard		Format of change	Change
1.3	Husbandry – Stockmanship and Welfare	Revised Standard	To ensure competence of contractors on farm.
1.4	Husbandry – Stockmanship and Welfare	New Standard	To strengthen standards in calf/lamb (youngstock) welfare. It will be a requirement that the rearing of calves and lambs must be carried out in a manner that ensures their welfare and needs are met in accordance with the DAERA Codes of Practice for the Welfare of Livestock: Beef Cattle and/or Sheep (Welfare Codes).
1.5	Husbandry – Stockmanship and Welfare	Revised Standard	It will be a requirement to use Analgesic following specified procedures.
2.2	Animal Health	Revised Standard	If the farm uses one or more vets/veterinary practices then both must be recorded.
2.4	Animal Health	Revised Standard	The antibiotic usage review now includes a review of health and performance.
2.5	Animal Health	Revised Standard	Additional detail on isolation facilities.
2.6	Animal Health	Revised Standard	Additional detail on dealing with casualty animals.
2.8	Animal Health	Revised Standard	Veterinary medicines must only be purchased from veterinary surgeons and other approved distributors. The inspector will check the veterinary medicines record and retained prescriptions to ensure that only licensed and/or approved veterinary treatments are used and sourced legally. The inspector will check that any prescribing vets have visited the farm within 12 months of the date of the prescription.
3.6	Animal Nutrition	New Standard	Adequate feeding space must be available for all livestock.
3.12	Animal Nutrition	Revised Standard	UFAS approval for all assured feedstuffs. Minerals, blocks, vitamin supplements, liquid supplements, milk replacers may be purchased from hardware stores or agricultural pharmacists who are not certified UFAS Merchants, however the product must be manufactured by a UFAS approved compounder.
4.1	Animal Traceability – Identification, Sourcing and Records	Revised Standard	Additional detail on tagging guidance.
4.2	Animal Traceability – Identification, Sourcing and Records	Revised Standard	Updated to reflect robust traceability rules already in place.
5.1	Housing and Handling	Revised Standard	Tethered housing systems are not permitted.
5.6	Housing and Handling	Revised Standard	Where lactating dairy cows or calving cows are kept in a building, they shall have access at all times to a well-drained and bedded lying area.
5.8	Housing and Handling	Revised Standard	Reworded for clarification.
6.5	Transport	Revised Standard	Additional guidance included on flooring.
7.2	Environmental Care	Revised Standard	The storage and use of animal manure, farm effluents and conserved forage must be in line with current legislation to prevent environmental pollution and ensure human and animal safety.
7.4	Environmental Care	Revised Standard	Guidance reworded for clarification.
7.7	Environmental Care	Revised Standard	Fallen stock must be disposed of in accordance with current legislation and promptly removed. Records of deaths and disposals must be kept.

# LMC Support for 'Farm Safe Essential' Messages

LMC has renewed calls for all Northern Ireland Beef and Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (NIBL FQAS) participants to keep farm safety at the forefront of their minds at all times.

LMC is an affiliate member of the Farm Safety Partnership (FSP). Working in collaboration with key stakeholders, LMC promotes safe working practices within the agricultural sector. The Commission has shown clear support for the aims of the FSP in Northern Ireland, which exists to reduce the likelihood of fatal accidents and serious injuries on farms.

The FSP has devised 'Farm Safe Essential' messages, relating to frequently recurring causes of accidents on farms. These are:

- **Check your brakes**
- **Plan safe spaces**
- **Give slurry space**
- **Stay off roofs**
- **Quads need caution**
- **Calve with care**
- **Stack bales safely**



Since its formation in 2012 FSP has made considerable progress in raising awareness of the importance of safety. Yet, farming continues to rank as one of the most dangerous professions that any person can aspire to undertake. In 2020 four fatalities were recorded on local farms. The 2021 total rose to seven deaths. These are stark statistics and behind each is an impacted farm family.

Enhancing farm safety has always been a key focus for the LMC and recent reviews of the NIBL FQAS have served to put a number of key safety-related practises at the very heart of the management standards expected of local cattle and sheep farmers. These standards align with the key messages promoted by the FSP. In brief, the codes from the FQAS standard emphasise the importance of having access to suitable well maintained animal handling facilities, safe storage of animal manures, secure sheep dipping facilities, appropriate agrochemical storage and pre-planned emergency procedures.

Further information on farm safety and the work of the Farm Safety Partnership can be found by visiting <https://www.hseni.gov.uk/articles/farm-safetypartnership>

## Presenting Clean Livestock for Slaughter

LMC is reminding Northern Ireland Beef and Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (NIBL FQAS) participants that all livestock presented for slaughter must meet industry guidelines for cleanliness.

Livestock may carry pathogens, these are bacteria that live on the coats and in the digestive tracts and faeces of healthy animals. Bacteria survive well in livestock environments therefore every opportunity should be taken to make sure that all areas are kept as clean as possible.

Cattle cleanliness can be affected by a number of things, including, diet, housing, cattle health and weather conditions. Farmers can take several steps to help improve cleanliness of livestock. Attention to the animals' diet is essential as feed prior to slaughter can firm up or reduce the animals' faeces, helping to reduce the presence of faecal contamination of the hide. Aside from diet, housing conditions similarly play a part in cleanliness. Frequent checks to ensure that sheds have adequate bedding will help keep cattle clean.

Transport also affects cattle cleanliness. Pre-slaughter, consider the journey time to the abattoir, the design of the trailer or lorry and how many cattle will be transported at any one time.

The Food Standards Agency advises that dirty cattle cost money, whether through rejected animals or slower line speeds at slaughter. When cattle are presented for slaughter they should be inspected to ensure they are clean. Following inspection, only animals in categories one and two can proceed to slaughter for human consumption without further action being taken. All producers should follow the Clean Livestock Policy which aims to ensure a consistent approach to categorisation of animals presented for slaughter and to minimise the risk of food poisoning caused by bacteria on dirty coats and fleeces of cattle and sheep.

The Clean Livestock Policy can be found by visiting [www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/cleaner-cattle-and-sheep](http://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/cleaner-cattle-and-sheep)



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