

Farm inspections: guide

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Introduction

This guide is intended to give you some information about farm inspections in England. It will tell you about who may inspect your farm, what they are looking for, and why they might visit you. Many inspections are only carried out on farms which perform specific activities or receive particular support, which means it is likely that you will only be subject to some types. Like any business, there are other checks that you might be subject to, for example on the immigration status of your workers, tax, and particular types of vehicle. There is information in the [business](#) section of GOV.UK on these more general checks. This guide covers inspections which are specific to farms.

Why we visit farms

There are three main reasons why a government official might visit your farm:

- to carry out an inspection to make sure that you are complying with legislation;
- to test animals for disease to protect the health of our livestock;
- to provide advice and guidance, which you may have requested.

Farm inspections are necessary to protect the quality of the environment and the welfare of our livestock, as well as animal, plant and human health. They also help to safeguard public money. This guide is specifically to do with inspections, rather than disease testing or advice visits.

Remember that there are organisations other than government who might want to visit your farm. For example, if you are a member of an assurance scheme or you supply goods to a supermarket, they might visit to check that you are meeting their standards. This guide only concerns visits made by the government to ensure compliance with legislation.

What we look for

This depends on the type of inspection which is taking place: in this guide we have set out the main things which you might expect to be inspected. It is unlikely that an inspection will look at all aspects of your farm: we will generally focus on a few things, which will depend on our reason for carrying out the inspection.

If an inspector discovers a problem, they will try to take a proportionate approach to dealing with it. Sometimes, however, if they find a problem, legislation requires them to take particular action. They may give you advice on how to put right the problem. They may take action against you for some breaches, including scheme payment reductions, enforcement notices, fines, and in more serious cases, closure of your operation, but they will carefully consider all of the facts before doing so. You can usually appeal against an inspector's findings: there is more information on this against each individual inspection.

Who visits farms

There are seven Defra agencies which visit farms, as well as local authorities and the Food Standards Agency. Generally, each type of inspection is carried out by just one or two of these bodies.

How we select farms for inspection

We use three main methods to decide who to inspect:

- Risk-based: these focus on farms where we think there is a higher risk associated with the business. To determine this, we might take into account things like previous inspection results, the activities that take place on your farm, the size of your farm, and how long it is since you were last inspected.
- Targeted risk: these are a result of complaints or referrals from members of the public and other agencies;
- Random: this means that anyone to whom the inspection could apply might be selected. We try to use a risk-based approach where possible, but sometimes legislation requires random inspections.

It is important to remember that being selected, even under a risk-based inspection, does not necessarily mean that you have done anything wrong. The way we select farms for each kind of inspection is set out in this guide.

Advance notice

Where possible, we will always try and give you notice of an inspection, and if we do, we will tell you what sort of things are likely to be inspected and what documents we would like to see. This is not always possible: legislation sometimes requires us to turn up unannounced, but we will try to minimise disruption to your business. Sometimes, we will be able to combine different visits where this is practical. Where this takes place, we provide details in this guide.

Number of inspections

In the financial year 2011-12, there were 31,520 planned farm inspections of the kind that this guide is dealing with. There are around 128,000 registered farms in England. In many cases, EU or UK legislation determines how many farms we have to inspect.

In addition to these planned inspections, there were also:

- 61,370 disease surveillance visits;
- 12,460 visits which farmers requested for advice;
- 5,050 visits investigating a complaint.

The Rural Payments Agency

Cross compliance inspection

Reason for inspection

EU legislation requires us to check a certain number of farmers who are claiming under the Single Payment Scheme and agri-environment schemes every year to make sure that they are following the rules of cross compliance. This is to protect public funds.

What we look at

We inspect farms which are claiming the single payment and those which are covered by some agri-environment schemes. We will look at land, landscape features, records, dairy facilities, food and feed storage facilities, pesticides storage facilities, livestock, eggs, groundwater, sewage sludge, nitrates and water abstraction licences. If you are also selected for a [single payment scheme land eligibility inspection](#) or an [agri-environment scheme eligibility inspection](#), we may carry this out on the same day to minimise the amount of time we spend on your farm.

Who carries out the inspection

The Rural Payments Agency, Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency.

Selection for inspection

EU legislation says that we have to select a minimum of 1% of farms which are claiming the single payment or are subject to an agri-environment agreement. 20-25% of these are selected at random, and the rest using a risk model. An earned recognition approach is applied by the AHVLA for animal welfare inspections under cross compliance, meaning that members of Accredited Welfare Assurance Schemes are significantly less likely to be selected for animal welfare inspections under cross compliance.

Advance notice

Inspections are usually unannounced, as required by legislation, but we may give up to 48 hours' notice in exceptional circumstances.

Duration of inspection

This depends on the scale of the inspection, and what we find when we visit you. The inspector should be able to give you more information about the likely length of a visit once they arrive on farm: this could be anything from a few hours to several days.

Assistance required

The inspector will need to speak to you before the inspection and at the end to discuss findings. You will also need to present any relevant documentation.

After the inspection

In almost all cases, feedback will be provided immediately after the inspection and passed on to you verbally. Where action is required or we identify a problem, we will also follow up the feedback in writing.

Complaints and appeals

If an issue arises while the inspector is on your farm, you can discuss it with them at that point and they may take a closer look at the matter which is concerning you. There is also a formal appeals process (details are available [on the RPA website](#)).

Number of inspections

Around 1,700 cross compliance inspections take place each year.

You can find more information on cross compliance inspections [on the RPA website](#).

Single Payment Scheme land eligibility inspection

Reason for inspection

We are required under EU legislation to check that farmers are meeting the eligibility requirements of the Single Payment Scheme. This is to protect public funds.

What we look at

Land area for which you have claimed the single payment. We might also look at tenancy agreements to determine eligibility. Most of these inspections take place via remote sensing, meaning that we may not need to visit your farm. If you are also selected for a [cross compliance inspection](#) or an [agri-environment scheme eligibility inspection](#), we may carry this out on the same day to minimise the amount of time we spend on your farm.

Who carries out the inspection

The Rural Payments Agency.

Selection for inspection

We have to inspect at least 5% of farms that are claiming the single payment. Of this, we select 20-25% at random and the remainder by risk.

Advance notice

Inspections are usually unannounced, as required by legislation, but we may give up to 48 hours' notice in exceptional circumstances.

Duration of inspection

This depends on the scale of the inspection, and what we find when we visit you. The inspector should be able to give you more information about the likely length of a visit once they arrive on farm: this could be anything from a few hours to several days.

Assistance required

The inspector will need to speak to you before the inspection and at the end to discuss findings. You will also need to present any relevant documentation.

After the inspection

In almost all cases, feedback will be provided immediately after the inspection and passed on to you verbally. Where action is required or we identify a problem, we will also follow this up in writing.

Complaints and appeals

If an issue arises while the inspector is on your farm, you can discuss it with them at that point and they may take a closer look at the matter which is concerning you. There is also a formal appeals process (details are available [on the RPA website](#)).

Number of inspections

Around 5,500 of these inspections take place each year. Approximately 4,200 are by remote sensing and 1,300 take place on farm.

You can find more information about the single payment scheme [on the RPA website](#).

Agri-environment scheme compliance monitoring inspections

Reason for inspection

EU regulations require us to check that those receiving funds as part of an agri-environment scheme agreement are following the rules of the scheme. This is to protect public funds.

What we look at

Land, landscape features and any other features which are covered by an [agri-environment](#) scheme agreement. We also check records, invoices, photographs and grazing agreements. If you are also selected for a [cross compliance inspection](#) or a [single payment scheme land eligibility inspection](#), we may carry this out on the same day to minimise the amount of time we spend on your farm.

Who carries out the inspection

The Rural Payments Agency on behalf of Natural England.

Selection for inspection

We have to inspect at least 5% of those within the first five years of their agreements, and 2.5% of those whose agreements have run on for more than five years. Of these, 20-25% are selected at random and the remainder by risk.

Advance notice

Inspections are usually unannounced, as required by legislation, but we may give up to 48 hours' notice in exceptional circumstances.

Duration of inspection

This depends on the scale of the inspection, and what we find when we visit you. The inspector should be able to give you more information about the likely length of a visit once they arrive on farm: this could be anything from a few hours to several days.

Assistance required

The inspector will need to speak to you before the inspection and at the end to discuss findings. You will also need to present any relevant documentation.

After the inspection

In almost all cases, feedback will be provided immediately after the inspection and passed on to you verbally. We will follow this up in writing.

Complaints and appeals

In the first instance you should talk to the person who made the visit about any problems. If you are not satisfied, Natural England has a [complaints procedure](#).

Number of inspections

Around 2,500 of these inspections take place each year.

You can find out more about agri-environment schemes [on the Natural England website](#).

Sheep and goats identification inspection

Reason for inspection

We are required under EU legislation to ensure that farms are recording and reporting sheep and goat births, movements, and deaths correctly, and that tagging requirements are being adhered to. This is to protect livestock against disease, and it forms part of cross compliance requirements.

What we look at

Sheep, goats, and relevant records, including AMLS licences. We read the ear tags of all your sheep and goats.

Who carries out the inspection

The Rural Payments Agency.

Selection for inspection

We have to inspect at least 3% of sheep and goat keepers and 5% of the national flock. Around 13% of those to be inspected are selected at random and the rest by risk.

Advance notice

Inspections are usually unannounced, as required by legislation, but we may give up to 48 hours' notice in exceptional circumstances.

Duration of inspection

This depends on the size of your flock. The inspector should be able to give you more information about the likely length of a visit once they arrive on farm: this could be anything from a few hours to several days.

Assistance required

You will need to present the animals for inspection and provide adequate labour to allow the inspector to read their tags safely. You will need to present all records and movement licences and be on hand to answer questions during the records check.

After the inspection

After the inspection, we may need to carry out further checks at our office to verify our findings. We will then notify you of the results of the inspection in writing. Sometimes, we may need to make a follow-up visit; you will be told if this applies to you.

Complaints and appeals

If an issue arises while the inspector is on your farm, you can discuss it with them at that point and they may take a closer look at the matter which is concerning you. There is also a formal appeals process – details are available [on the RPA website](#).

Number of inspections

Around 1,800 of these inspections take place each year.

You can find more information about the rules related to sheep and goat identification [on GOV.UK](#).

Cattle identification inspection

Reason for inspection

We are required under EU legislation to ensure that farms are recording cattle births, movements and deaths correctly, and that tagging requirements are being adhered to. This is to protect livestock against disease, and it forms part of cross compliance requirements.

What we look at

Cattle, cattle passports and farm records. We read the ear tags of all your cattle. These visits are sometimes combined with TB testing.

Who carries out the inspection

The Rural Payments Agency.

Selection for inspection

We have to inspect at least 3% of cattle holdings. Of those to be inspected, 20% are selected at random, the remainder are selected by risk.

Advance notice

Inspections are usually unannounced, as required by legislation, but we may give up to 48 hours' notice in exceptional circumstances.

Duration of inspection

This depends on the size of your herd. The inspector should be able to give you more information about the likely length of a visit once they arrive on farm: this could be anything from a few hours to several days.

Assistance required

You will need to present the animals for inspection and provide adequate labour to allow the inspector to read their tags safely. You will need to present all records and passports and be on hand to answer questions during the records check.

After the inspection

After the inspection, we may need to carry out further checks at our office to verify our findings. We will then notify you of the results of the inspection in writing. Sometimes, we may need to make a follow-up visit; you will be told if this applies to you.

Complaints and appeals

If an issue arises while the inspector is on your farm, you can discuss it with them at that point and they may take a closer look at the matter which is concerning you. There is also a formal appeals process – details are available [on the RPA website](#).

Number of inspections

Around 1,800 of these inspections take place each year.

You can find more information on the rules related to cattle movement [on GOV.UK](http://www.gov.uk).

Rural Development Programme for England compliance monitoring inspection

Reason for inspection

EU regulations require us to check that projects being carried out as part of the Rural Development Programme for England are following the rules of the programme. This is to protect public funds.

What we look at

We conduct a physical inspection of projects funded by the [Rural Development Programme for England](http://www.gov.uk), and any infrastructure or machinery purchased as part of these projects. We also check financial and other records.

Who carries out the inspection

The Rural Payments Agency.

Selection for inspection

We select 25-30% of those we inspect at random and the remainder by risk. We have to make sure that we inspect enough farms to account for 5% of funding over the whole programme.

Advance notice

Inspections are usually carried out with the minimum possible amount of notice, as required by legislation, but in certain circumstances we may warn you of an inspection up to 14 days in advance.

Duration of inspection

This depends on the scale of the inspection, and what we find when we visit you. The inspector should be able to give you more information about the likely length of a visit once they arrive on farm, but it is likely to be not more than a few hours.

Assistance required

The inspector will need to speak to you before the inspection and at the end to discuss findings. You will also need to present any relevant documentation.

After the inspection

The inspector will write up a report and your project manager will contact you to inform you of the outcome as soon as possible.

Complaints and appeals

If an issue arises while the inspector is on your farm, you can discuss it with them at that point and they may take a closer look at the matter which is concerning you. There is also a formal appeals process – details are available [on the RPA website](#).

Number of inspections

Around 200 of these inspections take place each year.

You can find more information about the Rural Development Programme for England [on the RDPE network website](#).

Weeds inspections

Reason for inspection

To control the spread of weeds which may be harmful if eaten by animals, or which can be detrimental to agricultural production.

What we look at

Land and the extent of any weed infestation. We may also look at spray records.

Who carries out the inspection

The Rural Payments Agency and Natural England.

Selection for inspection

We decide who to inspect in reaction to complaints.

Advance notice

Inspections are usually unannounced, as required by legislation, but we may give up to 48 hours' notice in exceptional circumstances.

Duration of inspection

This depends on the scale of the inspection, and what we find when we visit you. The inspector should be able to give you more information about the likely length of a visit once they arrive on farm, but it is not likely to be more than a few hours.

Assistance required

The inspector will need to speak to you before the inspection and at the end to discuss findings. You will also need to present any relevant documentation.

After the inspection

In almost all cases, feedback will be provided immediately after the inspection and passed on to you verbally. Where action is required or we identify a problem, we will also follow this up in writing.

Complaints and appeals

You can discuss any matters of concern with the inspector while they are on your farm, but there is no formal right of appeal against an inspector's findings.

Number of inspections

Around 100 of these inspections take place each year.

*This information is out of date and has been withdrawn.
See "farming inspections" on GOV.UK for current guidance.*

Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency

Veterinary medicine residue inspection

Reason for inspection

To ensure that the legislation about the use of veterinary medicines in animals is being followed to protect animal and human health.

What we look at

We inspect records and take samples from animals on farms where livestock are kept.

Who carries out the inspection

Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency.

Selection for inspection

We select farms to ensure a good geographic spread across the country. If we find a problem then we will conduct a follow-up visit.

Advance notice

Inspections are usually unannounced or minimal notice is given. This is required by legislation.

Duration of inspection

These inspections usually last around an hour.

Assistance required

You will need to present relevant records, present and restrain your animals so samples can be taken safely, and to sign tamperproof bags containing collected samples.

After the inspection

A report of the visit is compiled and sent to the Veterinary Medicines Directorate. If we find a minor non-compliance, we will discuss it with you and you may be directed to your vet, who will provide advice on how to prevent further incidents. We will follow up any positive samples with a visit to the farm of origin. If a problem is found, we may share this with the Rural Payments Agency, who will determine whether this puts you in breach of cross compliance requirements.

Complaints and appeals

If payment agencies become involved, then you can use their appeals processes. Details will be sent to you in writing if this applies to you.

Number of inspections

Around 2,000 of these inspections take place each year.

Egg marketing inspections

Reason for inspection

We inspect to make sure that egg producers and retailers are following all EU rules on egg marketing. This is to ensure that eggs are marketed accurately.

What we look at

The premises, eggs, records, hens, labelling and processes of egg producers, packers and wholesalers.

Who carries out the inspection

Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency.

Selection for inspection

We select premises for inspection using a number of risk factors, including the size and complexity of your business and the results of previous inspections. We try to reduce the number of visits you receive by combining this with other inspections, where appropriate.

Advance notice

Inspections are usually unannounced, as required by legislation.

Duration of inspection

Generally between one and three hours.

Assistance required

Normally, you will just need to provide access to buildings and records, although there may be occasions when you are asked to accompany the inspector.

After the inspection

Immediately after the inspection, the inspector will leave a form with you giving a summary of what has been inspected and what, if any, action is to be taken. This may be followed up in writing.

Complaints and appeals

If you are a breeder establishment and we refuse or withdraw your registration, you are a packing centre and we refuse or withdraw your authorisation, or you receive certain compliance notices, you can appeal to a magistrates' court within 28 days.

Number of inspections

Around 8,000 egg marketing inspections take place each year.

You can find out more about egg marketing regulations [on GOV.UK](#).

Animal by-products incinerators inspection

Reason for inspection

We are required under EU legislation to ensure that farms are working within EU rules about the incineration of animal by-products. This is to prevent the spread of disease.

What we look at

Incineration facilities and records on farms burning animal by-products. If you have been selected for another type of inspection carried out by AHVLA, we may carry this out at the same time.

Who carries out the inspection

Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency.

Selection for inspection

We decide based on a number of factors including the risk of the material being handled, the degree of control which you have over the process and whether we have found any problems before.

Advance notice

We give advance notice of around half of these inspections.

Duration of inspection

Usually around an hour.

Assistance required

You will need to provide records and be on hand to answer any questions.

After the inspection

We will get in touch with you in writing to let you know of the outcome of the inspection. If we find a problem, then we may visit you again to check that the necessary action has taken place.

Complaints and appeals

If we refuse, suspend, or amend your approval to incinerate animal by-products, you can write and ask us to review the decision. You can find more details on this process [on AHVLA's website](#).

Number of inspections

Around 800 of these inspections take place each year – not all of these are on farms.

You can find more information about composting and incinerating animal by-products [on GOV.UK](#).

National Feed Audit inspection

Reason for inspection

To make sure that farms are following all of the rules on feed. This helps us to prevent new cases of many animal diseases, including Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs).

What we look at

We inspect records, feed, and feed storage at feed business operators. If you have been selected for another type of inspection carried out by AHVLA, we may carry this out at the same time.

Who carries out the inspection

Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency.

Selection for inspection

Most feed business operators will receive one visit per year, but this depends on operation type. For example, dual stream feed mills will receive two visits per year.

Advance notice

Where practical, inspections will be unannounced, as required by legislation. Where this is not practical, then you may be given 24-48 hours' notice.

Duration of inspection

Between one and two hours.

Assistance required

You will need to provide records and be on hand to answer any questions.

After the inspection

The inspector will give verbal feedback after the visit. If there is a problem, this will be followed up in writing.

Complaints and appeals

You can write and ask us to review our decision. More details on this process can be found [on AHVLA's website](#).

Number of inspections

Around 800 of these inspections take place each year.

You can find more information about the rules on animal feed [on GOV.UK](#).

Exempt finishing units and other TB-related livestock operations inspection

Reason for inspection

To ensure that the conditions of exemption and operation are being met. This is to prevent the spread of bovine TB.

What we look at

Facilities, buildings, animal locations and relevant records of all premises acting as exempt finishing units.

Who carries out the inspection

Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency.

Selection for inspection

All premises which apply to operate as exempt finishing units will receive an inspection upon application, and then annually once the facility is operational.

Advance notice

If we are inspecting to approve facilities, then we will give notice. Once the facility is operational, inspections will be unannounced, as required by legislation.

Duration of inspection

Around two hours, but this will vary depending on the size of the unit.

Assistance required

You will need to provide access to facilities, buildings and relevant records.

After the inspection

The inspector will give verbal feedback, and where they are inspecting to approve a unit, they will leave a form with you which will set out the findings of the inspector. This will then be followed up in writing at a later date.

Complaints and appeals

You can write and ask us to review our decision. More details on this process can be found [on AHVLA's website](#).

Number of inspections

All premises which operate as exempt finishing units are inspected annually.

You can find more information about exempt finishing units [on AHVLA's website](#).

Animal gatherings inspection

Reason for inspection

To approve and inspect farms acting as collection centres and show grounds, as well as markets and sales. This is to ensure the health and welfare of the animals at these centres and to ensure compliance with legislation.

What we look at

Places where an animal gathering is proposed eg farms, markets, show grounds. If you have been selected for another type of inspection carried out by AHVLA, we may carry this out at the same time.

Who carries out the inspection

Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency inspect and licence the premises and Local Authorities enforce the licence conditions.

Selection for inspection

All farms which choose to act as a collection centre or propose to hold a show are inspected, as well as markets and sale grounds.

Advance notice

We will give you advance notice of this inspection.

Duration of inspection

Between an hour and half a day. This will depend on the size and nature of the gathering and site, and any potential problems that we find.

Assistance required

You will need to show the inspector around the premises, but you won't be required to present any stock or handle your animals.

After the inspection

We will leave a form with you that will detail what has happened and what the inspector has found.

Complaints and appeals

If AHVLA refuses, suspends or amends your licence, you can write and ask us to review the decision. More details on this process can be found [on AHVLA's website](#). If you would like to appeal against a decision made by a local authority inspector, you can do so directly to the local authority.

Number of inspections

Around 200 of these inspections take place each year.

You can find more information on the rules about animal gatherings [on AHVLA's website](#).

Welfare on farms inspection

Reason for inspection

To ensure that relevant legislation is being followed to protect the welfare of animals on farm. This forms part of cross compliance requirements.

What we look at

This varies depending on the information which we hold about the farm. Animals will be examined to ensure that there are no welfare issues.

Who carries out the inspection

Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency and Local Authorities.

Selection for inspection

We inspect in reaction to complaints, to follow up other official action or if problems have been identified on the farm in the past. We will quickly follow up if we suspect that animals are suffering unnecessarily.

Advance notice

We will usually give advance notice of this inspection, unless our visit is related to a specific welfare complaint.

Duration of inspection

Between a few hours and several days. This depends on the scale of your operation and what the inspector finds.

Assistance required

You will need to provide records and be on hand to answer any questions.

After the inspection

You will be given verbal feedback by the inspector. If we find a problem then we will follow up in writing setting out what we have found and what corrective action we require of you. For more serious problems, you may be sent an enforcement notice. We may arrange a follow-up visit to confirm that any issues have been resolved. If a problem is found, we may also share this with the Rural Payments Agency, who will determine whether you are in breach of cross compliance requirements.

Complaints and appeals

You can write and ask us to review our decision. More details on this process can be found [on AHVLA's website](#).

Number of inspections

The number of inspections varies year on year so accurate figures are not available.

You can find more information about the rules related to animal welfare on farms [on GOV.UK](#).

Imported animals inspection

Reason for inspection

To check that all relevant regulations are being followed and to test for specific diseases. This is to ensure the health and welfare of imported animals.

What we look at

Imported animals and associated documentation. The exact nature of the inspection depends on the species of animal and where it has been imported from.

Who carries out the inspection

Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency

Selection for inspection

All imported animals are checked.

Advance notice

We will give at least 24 hours' notice of an inspection.

Duration of inspection

Between half an hour and half a day. This depends on the number of animals and the tests and examinations which we need to carry out.

Assistance required

You will need to present your animals and restrain them so they can be safely examined and tested.

After the inspection

If there is a problem, we will notify you verbally immediately and then follow this up in writing.

Complaints and appeals

You can write and ask us to review our decision. More details on this process can be found [on AHVLA's website](#).

Number of inspections

This varies year on year. All imported animals are checked.

Poultry meat marketing terms inspection

Reason for inspection

We are required under EU legislation to check that certain conditions are being met where special marketing terms are being used. This is to protect consumers.

What we look for

We inspect the operating procedures and records of premises which are registered to use special marketing terms like free range.

Who carries out the inspection

Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency.

Selection for inspection

We inspect all producers who are using special marketing terms.

Advance notice

Inspections are usually unannounced, as required by legislation.

Duration of inspection

A registration inspection will usually take two to three hours, while a compliance inspection should take around an hour.

Assistance required

Normally, you will just need to provide access to buildings and records, although there may be occasions when you are asked to accompany the inspector.

After the inspection

The inspector will provide verbal feedback, but will only leave written feedback if remedial action is required. We may follow up in writing at a later date.

Complaints and appeals

If you receive a compliance notice, you can appeal to a magistrates' court within 28 days.

Number of inspections

Around 250 of these inspections take place each year.

You can find more information about poultrymeat marketing inspections [on GOV.UK](#).

Welfare of animals (slaughter or culling) inspections

Reason for inspection

To ensure that farms where slaughter or routine culling are carried out on the premises are complying with all relevant legislation to protect the welfare of animals at slaughter.

What we look at

The competence of slaughtermen and the facilities on the premises, as well as relevant records.

Who carries out the inspection

Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency.

Selection for inspection

Inspections take place on initial application. We also conduct some risk-based inspections, taking into account whether we have found problems before.

Advance notice

We will usually give advance notice of our visit, unless it is related to a specific welfare complaint.

Duration of inspection

Between a few hours and a day. This depends on the scale of your operation.

Assistance required

You will need to provide records and be on hand to answer any questions.

After the inspection

You will be given verbal feedback by the inspector. If we find a problem then we will follow up in writing setting out what we have found and what corrective action we require of you. For more serious problems, you may be sent an enforcement notice. We may arrange a follow-up visit to confirm that any issues have been resolved.

Complaints and appeals

You can write and ask us to review our decision. More details on this process can be found [on AHVLA's website](#).

Number of inspections

A very small number of these inspections take place each year – only a minority of farms kill on the premises.

You can find more information about the rules related to animal welfare at slaughter [on GOV.UK](#).

This information is out of date and has been withdrawn.
See "farming inspections" on GOV.UK for current guidance.

Local authorities

Local authority farm inspection

Reason for inspection

Local authorities are required by law to enforce regulations that protect animals, businesses and consumers and to check that legislation is being complied with.

What we look at

Any area for which local authorities have legal responsibility. This can include all aspects of animal health and welfare, food and feed hygiene, weights and measures, petroleum or business protection rules. If we need to inspect you for more than one reason then we will normally try and combine these into a single visit to minimise the inconvenience to you.

Who carries out the inspection

Local authority officers.

Selection for inspection

Based on complaints or on our risk assessment. We will consider the activities which take place on your farm, and whether we have found problems in the past. For food inspections, an earned recognition approach is applied where Red Tractor membership is taken into account. Red Tractor members have a 2% chance of being selected for inspection compared with a 25% chance for non-assured members.

Advance notice

Usually inspections will be made by appointment, although this might not be the case in some local authority areas or if there is good reason to come unannounced.

Duration of inspection

This could be anything from a few hours to several days, depending on why we are visiting and what we find. The inspector should be able to give you more information once they arrive on farm.

Assistance required

You will need to provide access to relevant facilities, records and buildings, and you may need to provide further assistance. The inspector will be able to give you more information once they arrive on farm.

After the inspection

You will be given feedback on the visit. Often you will be given some form of record, report or letter which details the findings of the inspections. Exact procedures vary between local

authorities. If we find that we need to take legal proceedings against you, then you will be notified and we will disclose all of the evidence which will be used against you.

Complaints and appeals

Each local authority will have its own complaints procedure which you can use for appeals.

Number of inspections

The number of inspections varies from year to year, and between different local authorities.

*This information is out of date and has been withdrawn.
See "farming inspections" on GOV.UK for current guidance.*

The Environment Agency

Farm inspection for environmental protection

Reason for inspection

The Environment Agency inspects farms to drive practices which protect and improve the environment. The main areas on which we focus are water quality, pollution prevention, waste management and water resource management. **What we look at**

We conduct a visual inspection of the farm as a whole and hold a discussion with the farmer about their farm infrastructure and their practices. We also inspect farm records (both electronic and paper), and give advice on how to comply.

Who carries out the inspection

Farms are inspected by the Environment Agency in catchments where there are known problems or where activities are taking place which are of a higher risk to the environment.

Selection for inspection

We decide based on risk. Sometimes farms are inspected as part of our catchment work, or in response to a specific incident.

Advance notice

Visits are usually arranged in advance, often with up to 14 days' notice. When we get in touch, we will tell you about particular paperwork we will need to see, and what the visit is likely to cover. We might, however, visit you without notice if we are investigating an ongoing pollution incident.

Duration of inspection

These inspections generally last around two hours.

Assistance required

You will need to show the inspector around your farm, often outside the farm yard. You will be asked to talk the inspector through your practices, and show them infrastructure such as storage of potentially polluting materials, drainage routes and outfalls. You will also need to show them any relevant records.

After the inspection

We will normally give verbal feedback immediately following the visit and follow this up with a letter within a month. This may take longer if we need to conduct any further checks. For example, we may ask for information from your agronomist.

Complaints and appeals

You can challenge an inspector's findings by sending us a letter once you have received written confirmation of the outcome of our visit. If you are still not satisfied, there is a [complaints procedure](#) which you can follow.

Number of inspections

Around 2,700 of these inspections take place each year.

Inspections of intensive pig and poultry farms requiring a permit

Reason for inspection

The Environment Agency inspects farms to drive practices which protect and improve the environment. The main areas on which we focus are water quality, pollution prevention, waste management and water resource management. What we look at

We conduct a visual inspection of the farm as a whole, hold a discussion with the farmer about practices and assess these against your permit conditions. We also inspect farm records (both electronic and paper), and give advice on how to comply.

Who carries out the inspection

Those who are not members of the [Pig and Poultry Assurance Scheme](#) are normally visited by the Environment Agency once per year. Members are inspected by Certification Bodies every year and the Environment Agency every three years.

Selection for inspection

We have to regularly inspect all permitted farms, but you can 'earn recognition' and be inspected less frequently if you are a member of the Pig and Poultry Assurance Scheme.

Advance notice

Visits are usually arranged in advance, often with up to 14 days' notice. When we get in touch, we will tell you about particular paperwork we will need to see, and what the visit is likely to cover. We might, however, visit you without notice if we are investigating an ongoing pollution incident.

Duration of inspection

These inspections generally last around two hours.

Assistance required

You will need to show the inspector around your farm, often outside the farm yard. You will be asked to talk the inspector through your practices, and show them infrastructure such as drainage routes and outfalls. You will also need to show them any relevant records.

After the inspection

We will normally give verbal feedback immediately following the visit and follow this up with a letter within a month. This may take longer if we need to conduct any further checks.

Complaints and appeals

You can challenge an inspector's findings by sending us a letter once you have received written confirmation of the outcome of our visit. If you are still not satisfied, there is a [complaints procedure](#) which you can follow.

Number of inspections

Around 800 of these inspections take place each year.

You can find more information on the intensive farming inspection [on the Environment Agency website](#).

This information is out of date and has been withdrawn.
See "farming inspections" on GOV.UK for current guidance.

The Food Standards Agency

Dairy hygiene inspection

Reason for inspection

We are required under EU legislation to ensure that farms are working within the rules of EU hygiene legislation. This is to protect the nation's milk supply from the risk of contamination by potentially harmful bacteria and other substances.

What we look at

Dairy farms, specifically animals, their housing, milking operations, equipment, cleaning methods, washrooms, milk storage and collection, hygiene management and relevant records.

Who carries out the inspection

The Food Standards Agency.

Selection for inspection

We decide based on a number of factors, including the type of product you are producing, the species producing the milk, and whether we have found any problems on your farm in the past. We also use an earned recognition approach based on membership of Red Tractor's Dairy Scheme when deciding who to inspect. Most scheme members are inspected once every ten years.

Advance notice

Generally we will turn up unannounced, as required by legislation, unless notice is required for a specific purpose.

Duration of inspection

This can range from around two to four hours.

Assistance required

You will need to show the inspector around your premises, and provide access to relevant documents. We may also want to talk to you and your staff.

After the inspection

Feedback will be provided immediately after the inspection and passed on to you verbally. Where action is required or we identify a problem, we will follow this up in writing.

Complaints and appeals

If you are unhappy with the outcome of an inspection then you should contact the Food Standards Agency's Approvals and Veterinary Advice helpline on 01904 455 744.

Number of inspections

There are around 1,100 of these inspections each year.

You can find more information about dairy hygiene inspections [on the Food Standards Agency website](#).

This information is out of date and has been withdrawn.
See "farming inspections" on GOV.UK for current guidance.

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate

Veterinary Medicines Regulations inspections

Reason for inspection

To minimise the risk to animal and human health, and to the environment, from feedstuffs containing veterinary medicines and certain additives. We are required to do these inspections by EU regulations.

What we look at

Feed business operators. We inspect manufacturing premises and equipment, products, records, prescriptions, procedures and plans.

Who carries out the inspection

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate.

Selection for inspection

All approved premises are inspected every one to four years. The findings of your latest inspection determine how frequently you will be inspected.

Advance notice

We will generally give a minimum of two days' notice to on-farm mixers but none for commercial mills.

Duration of inspection

Inspections last around 90 minutes.

Assistance required

You will need to be on hand to answer any questions the inspector might have, and to provide relevant paperwork.

After the inspection

You will be given verbal feedback directly following the meeting. You will also be given a Confirmation of Inspection Report, which will set out what has happened on the visit, and any corrective action required from you. Where serious problems are found, this will be followed up with a written report within 30 days.

Complaints and appeals

You can follow the VMD's [complaints process](#).

Number of inspections

There are around 200 of these inspections each year.

You can find more information about Veterinary Medicines Regulations [on the Veterinary Medicines Directorate website](#).

This information is out of date and has been withdrawn.
See "farming inspections" on GOV.UK for current guidance.

The Gangmasters Licensing Authority

Gangmaster licensing inspection

Reason for inspection

To protect workers' rights and to guard against exchequer fraud. To ensure that farmers are not using workers supplied by unlicensed labour providers.

What we look at

Employer procedures, contracts, workers' circumstances and accommodation.

Who carries out the inspection

The Gangmasters Licensing Authority.

Selection for inspection

Inspections are made on labour providers, not farmers, but visits to farms help determine workers' conditions. Inspections are carried out on initial application and are then conducted on labour providers where we suspect a breach of GLA's licensing standards.

Advance notice

Notice will sometimes be given but we may arrive unannounced if there is a good reason to do so.

Duration of inspection

Between half a day and a full day per farm, depending on the number of workers we need to interview.

Assistance required

You will need to provide access to workers so that we can interview them. You will also need to provide relevant paperwork, eg contracts with the labour provider, time sheets.

After the inspection

Unless there is an immediate and specific threat to the safety of workers, the inspector will report his or her findings to the GLA licensing team and a decision will be taken about the future of the labour provider's licence on the basis of the inspector's findings. We aim to confirm our decision to the labour provider in writing within two weeks of the inspection.

Complaints and appeals

If the labour provider disagrees with our decision, they can appeal. Details of this process will be given in the decision letter.

Number of inspections

This varies from year to year, and not all visits take place on farms.

You can find more information about gangmaster licensing inspections [on the GLA website](#).

This information is out of date and has been withdrawn.
See "farming inspections" on GOV.UK for current guidance.

The Food and Environment Research Agency

Plant health and seeds control inspection

Reason for inspection

We are required under EU legislation to check for plant pests and disease to prevent them from being introduced and spread.

What we look at

Plants and plant material.

Who carries out the inspection

The Food and Environment Research Agency.

Selection for inspection

Based on factors including the type, volume and origin of plant material being handled, and whether we have found problems before. Other inspections are undertaken at the request of the farmer.

Advance notice

We will give you advance notice of this inspection.

Duration of inspection

Generally between one and two hours.

Assistance required

You will not be required to provide any assistance other than allowing the inspector access to the plant materials.

After the inspection

In almost all cases, feedback will be provided immediately after the inspection and passed on to you verbally. Where action is required or we identify a problem, we will follow this up in writing.

Complaints and appeals

You can follow the [complaints procedure](#) if you wish to raise a concern.

Number of inspections

Around 2,500 of these inspections take place each year.

You can find more information about plant health [on Fera's website](#).

Control of notifiable pests and diseases of honey bees inspection

Reason for inspection

We are required to carry out these inspections by legislation to protect honey bees from pests and disease.

What we look at

Honey bees and honey bee colonies.

Who carries out the inspection

The Food and Environment Research Agency and the National Bee Unit.

Selection for inspection

We generally decide based on the risk of disease or pests being in a particular place. We also perform spot checks on imported bees, as well as a small number of random tests.

Advance notice

We will give you advance notice of this inspection.

Duration of inspection

Generally between one and two hours.

Assistance required

You will not be required to provide any assistance other than allowing the inspector access to your bee colonies.

After the inspection

In almost all cases, feedback will be provided immediately after the inspection and passed on to you verbally. Where action is required or we identify a problem, we will follow this up in writing.

Complaints and appeals

You can follow the [complaints procedure](#) if you wish to raise a concern.

Number of inspections

Around 6,000 of these inspections take place each year.

You can find more information about bee health and inspections [on GOV.UK](#).

Natural England

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) inspection

Reason for inspection

We inspect to protect some of the country's very best wildlife and/or geological sites. The law also requires us to protect England's SSSIs.

What we look at

We inspect the condition of sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs), and follow up where we suspect that unauthorised activity is damaging any designated features. We sometimes combine these inspections with advice visits which we undertake with Higher Level Stewardship customers.

Who carries out the inspection

Natural England.

Selection for inspection

All SSSIs are visited, but the frequency of visits depends on the sensitivity of the features on the site and the risk to their condition. We also follow up reports of damage to or unauthorised works on an SSSI.

Advance notice

We will give you advance notice of this inspection, unless we suspect that there is damage to the site, or that unauthorised works are taking place.

Duration of inspection

Depending on the size and complexity of a site, this can be anything from a day to several visits over a number of weeks.

Assistance required

You will need to ensure that the inspector can access the site.

After the inspection

We will provide feedback to you once the assessment is complete, including advice about how you might put right any problems. We will keep a record of this feedback. If we are following up a complaint or visiting because there is suspicion of damage or unauthorised works, our findings are reported to our Director of Regulation, who will decide what, if any, sanctions are appropriate.

Complaints and appeals

You have a statutory right to appeal against regulatory and enforcement action, and you will be given more information about this should such action be taken against you. Natural England also has a [complaints procedure](#).

Number of inspections

Around 800 of these inspections take place each year.

You can find out more about SSSIs [on Natural England's website](#).

Wildlife licensing inspection

Reason for inspection

We inspect to ensure that the rules around protected species and the conditions granted under wildlife licences are being adhered to. This is to protect vulnerable species.

What we look at

In some cases, we inspect to decide whether licensed action is justified. Where a wildlife licence has been issued, we may inspect to ensure that you are complying with its terms and conditions.

Who carries out the inspection

Natural England.

Selection for inspection

For some licences, we inspect all applicants. For checks once the licence has been issued, we select based on a number of factors including the technical difficulty of the task for which you are licensed, your experience in undertaking it, and its likely impact. We will also consider the conservation status of the species and the scale of the operation.

Advance notice

Normally we will make an appointment with you one or two days in advance. In exceptional circumstances, we may arrive unannounced.

Duration of inspection

Usually about an hour.

Assistance required

You may be asked to help with access if this is an issue. The inspector will discuss progress to date with a licence and will ask to see relevant records.

After the inspection

The inspector will generally give you verbal feedback straight away. If you have broken the terms of your licence, further action may be taken in accordance with our [guidelines](#).

Complaints and appeals

In the first instance you should discuss your concerns with the person who made the visit. If you are not satisfied, Natural England has a [complaints procedure](#).

Number of inspections

Around 60 of these inspections take place on farms each year.

You can find out more about wildlife licensing [on Natural England's website](#).

Animal poisoning inspection

Reason for inspection

To protect wildlife from the potential harmful effects of pesticides, and to ensure that action is taken against those who deliberately or recklessly misuse and abuse pesticides.

What we look at

We investigate reports of the death of or injury to wildlife, companion animals or beneficial invertebrates where pesticides are thought to be involved. We will examine wildlife casualties, and may conduct a more thorough follow-up visit to identify pesticides that have been stored or used.

Who carries out the inspection

Natural England.

Selection for inspection

Based on complaints from the public and others. We carefully examine the facts available to us before deciding whether to make a visit.

Advance notice

We will not give you notice of our initial visit. We may undertake a follow-up visit, of which you might be given notice.

Duration of inspection

Our initial visit should take one to two hours. We may conduct a more thorough follow-up which could take several hours.

Assistance required

You may be asked to provide access to certain areas (eg your pesticide store). You will be asked to identify any health and safety issues which might make the inspection particularly hazardous, and provide relevant records. You should be on hand to answer any questions which the inspector has.

After the inspection

Wildlife casualties are generally sent for post mortem and pesticide analysis. If there are strong links to pesticides then we may follow up with a more thorough visit, after which we will decide whether action will be taken against you. Cases are closed as quickly as possible where we find another cause of death or injury.

Complaints and appeals

There is no formal appeals procedure once an enforcement notice is issued.

Number of inspections

Around 60 of these inspections take place each year.

You can find out more about animal poisoning inspections [on the Health and Safety Executive website](#).

Environmental Impact Assessment inspection

Reason for inspection

To protect uncultivated land and semi-natural areas from damage caused by agricultural work, and guard against negative environmental effects from the restructuring of rural land holdings. This forms part of cross-compliance requirements.

What we look at

We investigate reported breaches of the Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) Regulations.

Who carries out the inspection

Natural England.

Selection for inspection

Based on reports of breaches of Environmental Impact Assessment regulations, or following the submission of an Environmental Impact Assessment screening application.

Advance notice

We will always try to give at least 48 hours' notice before a visit.

Duration of inspection

Usually between one and four hours, but this depends on the circumstances and reasons for the visit. Enforcement visits may take longer.

Assistance required

This depends on the reason for the visit, but you will usually be asked to give a description of the land and any planned works.

After the inspection

You will be informed of the results in writing. If we find a problem, we may inform the Rural Payments Agency, who will determine whether you are in breach of cross-compliance requirements.

Complaints and appeals

You can appeal to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. You must do this within 28 days in the case of a notice and 3 months in the case of a screening or consent decision.

Number of inspections

Around 50 of these inspections take place per year.

You can find out more about environmental impact assessments [on the Natural England website](#).

This information is out of date and has been withdrawn.
See "farming inspections" on GOV.UK for current guidance.

Further information

If you need any further information, contact the Defra helpline.

Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm.

Telephone: 08459 33 55 77

Calls can cost up to 5 pence per minute for BT users. Calls made using other service providers and mobiles may cost more.

Email: defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Post: Defra

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Any enquiries regarding this document/publication should be sent to us at

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