

POULTRY

SMALL SCALE SLAUGHTER AND PROCESSING
AT THE WELSH POULTRY CENTRE

CALU DEMO FARM
FACTSHEET
October 2009



On the 22nd of October 2009 Steve Merritt hosted a CALU workshop at his farm (The Welsh Poultry Centre) in Llanpumsaint. This factsheet is based on what was discussed at that workshop.

REGULATIONS

In order to slaughter and process poultry you must be in possession of a licence. There are two types of licence. The first is known as an 'Exempt' licence. The Exempt licence was brought in after the Second World War to allow small scale seasonal slaughtering of poultry. The Exempt licence is governed by the Environmental Health Office, so the first point of contact would be your Local Authority. Under this licence you are only allowed to kill up to 10,000 birds per year and you must sell them within your local or neighbouring authority. Your Local Authority will send an Environmental Health Officer out to the facilities for random checks every two to three years. Under this licence you are only allowed to slaughter birds that are owned by you and you can only sell direct to the customer.

If you are thinking of processing over 10,000 birds a year and/or want to slaughter birds for other producers then you will need a Meat Hygiene Service licence (MHS). Under this licence you must have an MHS registered vet present when killing or eviscerating any bird. You must pay the vet (roughly £60 per hour), and you must book the vet a month in advance. With the MHS licence there are a lot more regulations that you must comply with than with the Exempt licence. The number of birds being processed must be well into the thousands for this licence to be economically viable. For both licences an Animal Health Vet will have to inspect and approve the premises.

Before setting up a slaughtering facility, you need to contact your local planning office to find out if you require **planning permission**. This depends on whether you are creating a new building or changing the use of an old one.

EQUIPMENT

It is best to catch the birds at night, they are easier to catch and they can be kept in the slaughter house in crates where they are starved of food and water for, legally, no more than 12 hours. This is of no detriment to the birds as they usually do not feed or drink at night anyway, and it makes the evisceration process less messy. The birds can then be slaughtered first thing in the morning. When the birds are alive they must be handled with care as they can bruise easily, especially chickens. The law requires birds to be killed humanely; the most humane way to kill the birds is by stun gun and then slitting of the throat. In order to use a stun gun you need a slaughter-man's licence. Note that licences for slaughter-men are very specific to both the species and the equipment that the assessment took place on. At the moment these licences are for life, however in 2013 the laws will change.

At the Welsh Poultry Centre the birds are stunned with the 110volt stun gun (stun guns cost around £200 – £250) which renders them unconscious instantly. Their necks are then slit and the birds are placed into cones to let the blood run out; they bleed out for roughly a minute. The blood is stored for collection and disposal. Once the bird has been killed and bled, it needs plucking. Depending on if it is waterfowl or not, it is either dry or wet plucked. Chickens and turkeys are wet plucked; first they are placed into the scald tank, six at a time. The tank is kept at a constant temperature of roughly 52-54°C. The birds are tumbled in the water for ninety



Cronfa Amaethyddol Ewrop ar gyfer Datblygu
Gwledig; Ewrop yn Buddsoddi
mewn Ardaloedd Gwledig
The European Agricultural Fund for
Rural Development: Europe Investing in
Rural Areas



Centre for Alternative Land Use
Canolfan Ddefnydd Tir Amgen



Llywodraeth Cymuned Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

seconds to ensure the water gets to all parts of the bird. From the scald tank the birds go into the bowl plucker, for roughly 30 seconds. A second-hand, reconditioned bowl plucker costs roughly £2,000. This piece of equipment removes nearly all the feathers. There will be some remaining feathers on the wings which can be removed manually or by using a finishing machine.

Waterfowl must be dry plucked. Dry plucking is a skilled task and needs practice, once accomplished 40 birds an hour can be plucked. The bird is held, metal plates pluck out the feathers and a fan sucks away the feathers and drops them into a hessian sack. The dry plucker will not remove all of the feathers, some feathers and down will remain, these are removed in the wax tank. The birds are dipped in the wax which is kept at 85°C, and then, depending on the type of wax, it is either peeled or flaked from the bird. The wax from the tank can be re-claimed by filtration through a hessian sack. A second hand re-conditioned wax tank is roughly £500.

Once plucked, the birds are then hung on an 'A' frame and moved into the eviscerating area. Under both the Exempt licence and the MHS licence you cannot slaughter and eviscerate birds in the same area. The birds are hung in shackles and eviscerated over a stainless steel trough. The viscera fall away into a bucket and are stored for collection and disposal.

If birds are left to hang, this is done in a fridge separate from the finished product. If birds are to be cut, they need to be cold first to make it easier. The fridge where the birds are hung needs to be capable of not only keeping the birds cool, but also of bringing the temperature of many warm bodies down quickly. It is good practice to let the bodies cool before putting them in the fridge to avoid condensation.

HYGIENE

A high standard of cleanliness and hygiene is essential at slaughtering facilities. The slaughter house needs to be sloped, so that all waste falls to one end – the dirty end. The live birds come in at the dirty end and then move up along the production line to the raised clean end, where the dead birds are kept in the fridges. Floors and walls must be easily washable, this means either plastic cladding or resin paint. Everything must be pressure washed and steam cleaned at the end of every day. A steam cleaner cleans and disinfects at the same time. If you are an organic producer steam cleaning means you can avoid the chemical cleaners that conventional producers use to disinfect their facilities.

WASTE

Poultry waste is classed as category three – a low risk by-product. All waste needs to be disposed of under Local Authority regulations, including the blood and the feathers. In order to dispose of your waste on site, you will need an incinerator. These machines are expensive to run and expensive to buy, therefore it is cheaper and easier to arrange for your waste to be collected by a waste disposal company. If you are unaware of such a company, talk to your local butcher and find out who collects their waste. All waste water must be collected to be disposed of also.

If you are thinking of setting up a small scale slaughtering and processing facility for poultry contact your local authority and the Welsh Assembly Government to see what help and advice is available.

FURTHER READING / SOURCES OF INFORMATION

www.poultrysite.com

www.poultry.uk.com

www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/welfare/farmed/slaughter/guidance.htm

www.hsa.org.uk