businesscompanion
trading standards law explained

Animal gatherings

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In this guide, the words 'must' or 'must not' are used where there is a legal requirement to do (or not do) something. The word 'should' is used where there is established legal guidance or best practice that is likely to help you avoid breaking the law.

This guidance is for Scotland

Good standards of biosecurity on farms, at animal gatherings (which includes livestock markets, collection centres and livestock shows or exhibitions) and on livestock vehicles must be maintained to reduce the risk of the spread of disease.

Livestock markets, shows / exhibitions and collection centres are known collectively as 'animal gatherings'. In this context, 'animals' means cattle (excluding bison and yak), deer, sheep, goats and pigs.

Such events must be licensed by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA). There are statutory fees payable for licensing of premises by APHA. One-day shows (where no public sale or auction of animals takes place) are exempt from licence fees, as are gatherings solely for the purpose of an inspection to confirm that animals possess specific breed characteristics.

Biosecurity

Controls are in place to mitigate disease risks, and it is the responsibility of the industry to oversee and control certain biosecurity measures. However, enforcement authorities can still take action if there is a biosecurity risk at an animal gathering.

More information on general biosecurity can be found on the Scottish Government website.

Points to note

Please note the following, which will affect you when delivering / sending livestock to an animal gathering:

- arrive at the time you are allocated, if applicable, to prevent any unnecessary waiting or congregating of vehicles
- all cattle, deer, sheep, goats and pigs must be identified, and movements recorded and reported, in accordance with the relevant legislation
- leave 'disease' where it is by following good biosecurity measures every time you leave a premises with livestock
- ensure that you know the signs of notifiable diseases in animals and, if in doubt, seek veterinary advice as soon as possible
- do not come on to the premises with clothes or a livestock vehicle (including a vehicle used to pull a trailer) contaminated with mud or other farm contamination
- facilities are provided for you to cleanse and disinfect your boots, and scrub your hands. Use them if you need to
- handling animals can spread disease. You should wash your hands and clothing / footwear before you leave the premises
- cleanse and disinfect your livestock vehicle on-site before leaving, if at all possible
- be alert for any signs of disease in animals. If there is a suspect case of disease while you are on the premises, be prepared to cooperate with the authorities in implementing the disease control contingency plan
- you must either:
    - cleanse and disinfect vehicles / trailers used to transport livestock into the animal gathering or
    - before leaving the gathering, complete an undertaking to cleanse and disinfect
- destination addresses must always be that of the gathering being moved to and not the final / end destination
- all livestock must be fit for the intended journeys both into and from the gathering.
- in addition to livestock needing to be fit to travel, livestock will be considered unfit to be at an animal gathering if they are:
    - lame
    - injured
    - ill, infirm or fatigued
    - diseased
    - likely to give birth

For further information on the day of a gathering, please speak to the licensee or animal health inspector on duty.

Trading Standards

For more information on the work of Trading Standards services - and the possible consequences of not abiding by the law - please see 'Trading Standards: powers, enforcement and penalties'.

In this update

No major changes.

Last reviewed / updated: June 2025

Key legislation

- Markets, Sales and Lairs Order 1925
- Animal Health Act 1981
- Welfare at Markets Order 1990
- Disease Control (Interim Measures) (Scotland) Order 2002
- Welfare of Animals (Transport) (Scotland) Regulations 2006
- Cattle Identification (Scotland) Regulations 2007
- Sheep and Goats (Records, Identification and Movement) (Scotland) Order 2009
- Pigs (Records, Identification and Movement) (Scotland) Order 2011

Please note

This information is intended for guidance; only the courts can give an authoritative interpretation of the law.

The guide's 'Key legislation' links go to the legislation.gov.uk website. The site usually updates the legislation to include any amendments made to it. However, this is not always the case. Information on all changes made to legislation can be found by following the above links and clicking on the 'More Resources' tab.

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