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trading standards law explained

Pigs: identification and movement

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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.

Although the United Kingdom left the European Union (EU) in 2021, certain pieces of legislation (known as 'assimilated law') continue to apply until such time as they are replaced by new UK legislation, revoked or permitted to expire. This means that our guidance still contains references to legislation that originated from the EU.

This guidance is for England

Any person keeping pigs, including as pets, must comply with current movement reporting, recording and identification requirements.

New keepers

Whether you want to keep a pet pig or a commercial herd of pigs, you will first need to obtain a county parish holding (CPH) number, which identifies the land where the pigs will be kept. Details of how to apply for a CPH number are available on the GOV.UK website.

An occupier of a holding who begins to keep pigs on that holding, and any person who takes over the occupation of a holding where pigs are kept, must notify the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) of their name and address, and the address of the holding. This must be done within one month. APHA should be contacted on 0300 020 0301 or customer.registration@apha.gov.uk. They will provide you with your herd mark at this stage, which is alphanumeric and is a quick and effective method for identifying premises from which pigs have moved.

You must also notify APHA, within one month, if you stop keeping pigs or if there are any changes to the details initially provided.

Note: registration with APHA is a legal requirement for disease-control purposes and is not related to registration with any breed / pedigree societies.

Reporting pig movements

The keeper at the departing farm must pre-notify AHDB Pork before any pigs are moved off. On the arrival of pigs at the farm of destination, the keeper must notify AHDB Pork of their arrival within three days.

If the pigs are moved to an abattoir or market, AHDB Pork will confirm the move and receipt of the pigs.

There are occasions where you may not need to pre-notify a movement (such as taking pigs to a market). However, this applies only in specific circumstances so you need to check with the market / AHDB Pork bureau service before you move any of your animals.

Pig movements can be reported either online using the free eAML2 system, or via the telephone / in writing using a bureau service provided by AHDB Pork (see the AHDB Pig Hub).

Electronic eAML2 licences

The eAML2 is the electronic version of a pig movement licence (AML2). It combines the AML2 and food chain information (FCI) paper forms that are required when moving pigs to slaughter.

The system allows you to report all moves undertaken online or via the bureau system.

You can register online free at the eAML2 website or by ringing the helpline on 0844 335 8400.

Further advice on the eAML2 system can be found on the eAML2 website.

Transport: documentation and welfare

By pre-notifying the movement online, a haulier summary can be printed and carried with you, or by the haulier transporting your pigs during the journey, as required by law. If you pre-notify the move via the bureau service, they will send you a haulier summary in the post. The movement cannot take place until this document is received so consider this when planning your moves.

Please also see 'Transporting animals by road' for further documentation requirements.

For information on the welfare of pigs when they are being transported, see 'Welfare of animals during transport'.

Movement of pigs to slaughter

The eAML2 electronic pig licence combines the AML2 and food chain information (FCI) paper forms that are required when moving pigs to slaughter.

If you pre-notify the move via the bureau service, the movement will still combine the AML2 and FCI.

Movement record

The keeper of a pig must make and maintain a record, known as a holding register, that documents the following information each time a pig is moved on to or off a holding:

- Date of movement
- Identification mark (including individual number, if applicable), slapmark or temporary mark (if applicable)
- Number of pigs moved
- The holding the pigs have been moved from
- The holding to which the pigs are moved

Details of movements must be recorded within 36 hours of them taking place and the record must be retained for three years.

A yearly count of pigs must take place. The maximum number normally on the holding must be recorded, together with the actual amount.

The keeper can choose in which format to keep a holding register, as long as it contains the required information and a copy can be provided when requested. Options include:

- A paper record
- A spreadsheet
- Using the holding register function in farm-management software
- The eAML2 system

A template movement record is attached.

More information on keeping a holding register for pigs can be found on the GOV.UK website.

Identification of pigs

No person may move a pig off a holding unless it has either:

- An ear tag, with the letters 'UK' followed by the herd mark of the holding from which it is being moved
  or
- A tattoo, showing the herd mark (with or without the letters 'UK'). A tattoo must be applied either by tattoo forceps on an ear or by a slap marker on each shoulder

Pigs less than one year old may instead have a temporary mark, which is recorded on the accompanying movement document and identifies the holding of departure. Temporary marks must last until the pigs reach their destination. Temporary marks are not permitted for movements to a market, slaughterhouse, a show or for use in export.

Management information may be added to the ear tag or tattoo, provided it is distinguishable from the official mark.

Ear tags must be:

- Easy to read during the pig's lifetime
- Made of metal or plastic or a combination of both
- Tamper resistant
- Incapable of re-use
- Heat resistant
- Designed to remain attached to the pig without harming it

Movements to exhibitions, shows and for breeding

A pig being moved to an exhibition or show, or for breeding purposes with the intention of returning the pig to the holding from which it was moved, must be identified with either:

- An ear tag consisting of the letters 'UK' followed by the herd mark allocated by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), and a unique individual identification number
  or
- A tattoo consisting of the Defra-allocated herd mark followed by a unique individual identification number

If the destination premises is known, movements both to and from the show ground must be notified to the AHDB Pig Hub before initiating the journey. If the destination premises after the show is unknown, the movement must be reported to the bureau service within three days.

Full identification for the pig moved must be recorded as part of the animal movement record.

Movements to market

A pig may be moved from a market if it is marked with the herd mark of the holding from which it arrived. If it does not have this mark, it may only be returned home.

Import and export

There are extra requirements when pigs are coming into or leaving the country. See 'Importing animals' and 'Exporting animals' for more information.

Feeding pigs

Swill or catering waste must not be fed to any pig, and the same applies to food waste from domestic kitchens.

Catering waste is defined in assimilated Regulation (EU) No 142/2011 as "all waste food, including used

cooking oil originating in restaurants, catering facilities and kitchens, including central kitchens and household kitchens". Pigs, therefore, cannot be fed any kind of kitchen or restaurant waste, including meat, vegetable peelings, old sandwiches or animal by-products.

More information on controls related to animal feed can be found on the GOV.UK website.

'Standstill' rules

Under the Disease Control (England) Order 2003, a person wishing to move a pig should be in possession of, and must comply with, the conditions of the 'general licence' for the movement of pigs. A copy of the general licence can be obtained from the GOV.UK website.

Pigs must not be moved from any premises if any:

- Pigs have been moved on to that premises in the previous 20 days
- Goats, sheep or cattle have been moved on to those premises during the previous six days

Sheep, goats or cattle must not be moved off a premises if any sheep, goats, cattle or pigs have been moved on to that premises during the previous six days.

A single premises includes those in the same sole-occupancy group or temporary land association (TLA).

Exemptions from the 'standstill' period

Movements permitted during the 'standstill' period include:

- Direct to an abattoir, or to slaughter via a dedicated slaughter market or slaughter collection centre
- For veterinary treatment
- To an artificial insemination centre
- Export (or to an approved export collection centre or assembly centre prior to departure)
- Movements within a sole-occupancy group or TLA
- To shows from an approved isolation facility. The pig must be placed in the isolation facility for 20 days prior to the movement, unless it is placed in there between shows. Following the show, the pig must be put back in the approved isolation facility
- Movements within a Defra-approved pyramid
- Movements of an animal that is on a vehicle which enters a premises to drop off other animals, provided it does not leave the means of transport whilst on that premises

Pig movements that do not trigger a standstill period include:

- Pigs moved within a Defra-approved pyramid, and pigs being moved on from a Defra-approved source
- Pigs returned from an artificial insemination centre
- Movements within a sole-occupancy group or TLA
- Return from veterinary treatment, provided that the pig is isolated from other animals for 20 days after its return
- Movement of an animal on to a premises in a vehicle to collect other animals, provided that the animal is not unloaded
- Pigs moving to a show are exempt from the standstill on the premises of origin, provided that they are individually identified and have been kept in a Defra-approved isolation facility for 20 complete days before departure. They will not trigger a standstill on return, provided that they are kept in

Defra-approved isolation facilities for 20 days
- Movements for the purpose of breeding that comply with conditions set out below

When movements are for breeding purposes, pigs (mainly specialist or pedigree breeding stock) that are not within a pyramid may move to a farm for breeding and will not trigger a standstill, either there or when they return home, provided that:

- They are individually identified
- There is no standstill period on the holding of departure, or the pig intended for breeding has been placed into a Defra-approved isolation facility for 20 days before departure
- On arrival, the pig from the departing farm is placed into a Defra-approved isolation facility at the destination premises
- Any pig placed in the isolation facility with the pig brought on to the premises for breeding purposes has been on the breeding premises for at least 20 days before being placed in that facility
- The pig intended for breeding from the breeding facility remains in a Defra-approved isolation facility for 20 days after being brought on to the premises, or for 20 days after it has been placed in isolation, whichever comes later
- The person to whom the pig is sent signs a declaration stating that the pig is for breeding and makes the declaration either online using the eAML2 system or via the telephone / in writing using a bureau service provided by AHDB Pork
- On return of the pig to the departure premises, the occupier at those premises signs a declaration stating that the pig was for breeding, making the declaration either online using eAML2 system or via the telephone / in writing using a bureau service provided by AHDB Pork. The returning pig must be isolated for 20 days in a Defra-approved isolation facility on return

Where pigs are moved to holdings that are within a ten-mile radius of the main point of business and share the same holding number, there are no movement reporting or recording requirements, and therefore no standstill requirements.

Pet pigs

All pigs are farmed animals in the eyes of the law, so even if they are being kept as pets, the requirements are the same as if they were part of a farmed herd. There are also extra requirements for pet pig owners, such as a walking licence if you want to walk the animal off your premises. For more information see 'Keeping pet pigs'.

Further information

Defra has produced a *Code of Practice for the Welfare of Pigs*.

See also the general guidance on the GOV.UK website about keeping pigs in England.

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: July 2026

Key legislation

- Disease Control (England) Order 2003
- Welfare of Animals (Transport) (England) Order 2006
- Pigs (Records, Identification and Movement) Order 2011
- Assimilated Regulation (EU) No 142/2011 *implementing Regulation (EC) No 1069/2009 and Directive 97/78/EC*
- Animal By-Products (Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2013

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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