

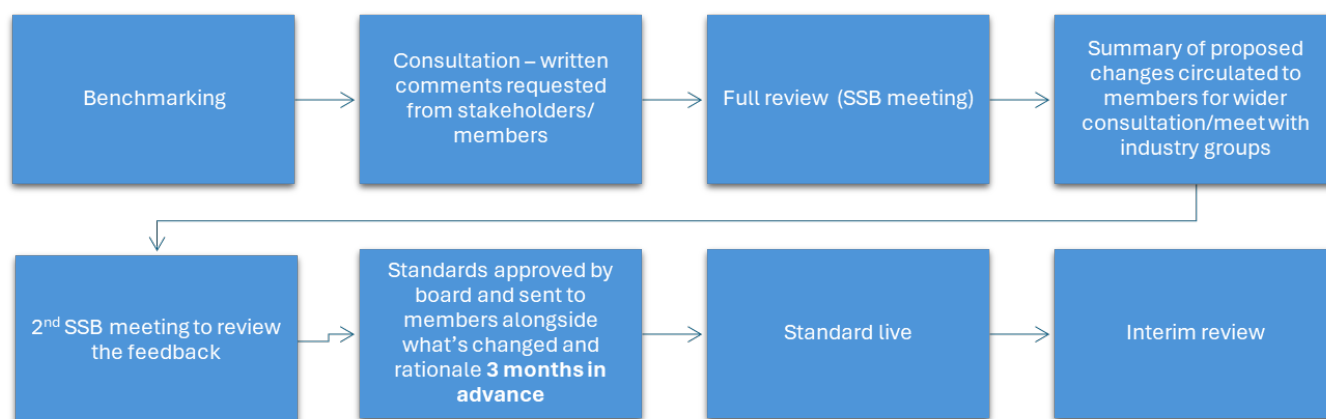
## QMS Frequently Asked Questions Revised QMS Cattle & Sheep Scheme Standards

### How often do QMS update the standards?

The QMS standards are reviewed each year whether it is an interim review or a full standard review. The Standard Setting Body, which is made up of Farmers and Stakeholders from across the whole red meat supply chain, decide whether to change or update the standards to ensure that they remain robust and relevant. The list of those who sit on the standard setting body can be found in the standard document. A full standard review takes place every alternate year with an interim review in between.

### What is the process of reviewing the standards?

#### QMS Standards Review Process



### As an Assurance Scheme Member can I have a say about what goes in/can be removed from the standards?

Absolutely, we strongly encourage members and stakeholders to feed into the Standard setting process. Right from the start we ask for member and stakeholder feedback when the standards go out for public consultation. This is communicated through various channels such as the QMS Newsletter, QMS website and social media posts. Once the Standard Setting Body have met and reviewed the consultation feedback, the QMS team will collate a document with the proposed changes and reasoning for these changes. This will then be emailed to our members requesting feedback. Once feedback has been received the Standard Setting Body will review and amend where appropriate.

### **What is a recommendation?**

A recommendation does not require any corrective action. Recommendations are used as tool to measure the impact this would have on members if was to become a full standard. They could also indicate the progression of a standard.

### **Why has standard 1.3 been split into two separate standards?**

Previously, all related requirements were grouped under standard 1.3. However, feedback from both assessors and members highlighted that this was causing confusion. As a result, Standard 1.3 has been updated to focus specifically on the holdings where livestock are kept and the requirement to notify County Parish Holding (CPH) numbers for traceability purposes.

Standard 1.4 has now been introduced as a separate standard addressing new sites (holdings) only. It only applies to land let under tenancy or contract arrangements lasting more than 365 days. Short-term grazing, herbage agreements, or wintering arrangements are excluded, as they are more variable and cannot be assessed consistently. The 365-day threshold aligns with common land agent practices and policy guidance.

The Standards Setting Body recognised that while the risk is low, there is potential for unknown land use to impact livestock health—for instance, if poultry manure (hen pen) had recently been applied and this wasn't known to the new grazier, it could increase disease susceptibility in the livestock.

### **Why have standards been amalgamated/streamlined?**

Following feedback from members and assessors and as part of the wider review process, a number of standards have been amalgamated. For example, previous stand-alone standards such as the need to have a broken needle policy will now be included in the animal health and welfare standard only. This reduces the assessment burden on farmers whilst also avoiding duplication.

### **Why has the Animal Health and Welfare Plan changed?**

Following significant feedback from members, assessors and stakeholders we have conducted a thorough review of the health planning standard. As part of the Standards Setting Body discussions, we looked at bringing previous standards 3.3 and 3.4 together. However, on balance, the Standards Setting Body felt that it was clearer that they remained as two separate standards.

### **Why do farmers need to have a health plan?**

Health planning has long been considered a useful way of proactively managing livestock health and welfare, equipping farmers to avoid disease pitfalls and optimise productivity. Veterinary input helps to ensure such plans are robust, effective, and strategic, and supports farmers with current best practice in areas such as antibiotic stewardship.

Standard 3.1 (previously standard 3.3) now refers to what needs to be included within the animal health and welfare plan. The animal health and welfare plan can be written by the member, a Suitably Qualified Person (SQP) or a vet.

Standard 3.3 (previously 3.4) now refers to what the vet is required to review. By separating these standards out, it clarifies which part the vet must be involved in.

We recognise the value that wider animal health professionals bring, such as SQPs for well-rounded livestock health planning, and the challenge in some parts of Scotland that the veterinary profession have in servicing health plan delivery. However, the new requirement as part of the veterinary attestation within export health certificates and the earned recognition the assurance schemes have with DEFRA to satisfy this, means that we must maintain vet involvement.

*It is important to note, a vet does not have to carry out the health plan, this can be done by the members themselves or suitably qualified person (SQP). Standard 3.3 outlines everything the vet is required to be involved in. Your vet has now to carry out a written livestock health and welfare review.*

#### **How much will it cost to get a vet to review my livestock health and welfare plan?**

Costs will vary depending on the veterinary practice, so it is hard to say a fixed amount. The vet does not have to visit specifically to carry out the health plan – this could be carried out during a routine visit. The health plan process is an opportunity to improve health and efficiency, and as such is likely to either save the farmer/crofter money or increase revenue.

#### **I have received a non-compliance because my vet has not yet completed the review of the health and welfare plan. What should I do?**

Where a non-compliance has been raised, you have 30 days in which to obtain and submit evidence of compliance. The certification body will, during this time, send out polite reminders about the outstanding action. Please refer to the reminders and follow the guidance in the letters and if necessary, contact the certification body.

#### **Can I use a generic Animal Health and Welfare Plan?**

The use of a template is recommended; however, the plan must be specific to your farm. The plan must refer to those responsible for the livestock and contain contact details for the members' vet practice. A template can be found at <https://www.qmscotland.co.uk/cattle-sheep-standards>

#### **Can I complete the Health Plan myself?**

Members can continue to complete their health plans themselves or with an SQP, collaborative discussion with all suitably qualified advisors is encouraged, if the review outlined in standard 3.3 is undertaken by their vet.

#### **Why have examples of handling aids been added?**

We have made changes to the wording of existing standards for consistency across the wider QMS assurance schemes. We have also included some examples of handling aids for clarity.

#### **Why has the recommendation (7.6R) regarding by-products from the food and drink industry been added?**

This was originally proposed as a standard but following feedback sent out to industry the Standard Setting Body proposed this as a recommendation to measure the impact this could have if it was made a full standard. This recommendation has been added as for the protection of feed safety. Risks can arise (e.g. copper toxicity) and the inclusion of this requirement ensures that this risk is controlled.

The majority of distilleries are already covered under FEMAS, with a checker available. It was felt that uncertified feeds pose a risk to both animal and human health, and as such this standard provides a mitigation for this. Our impact assessment has identified that there is a risk of some small distilleries not being covered under the FEMAS scheme which could lead to a reduction in draff availability. Through the consultation we are keen to understand from members whether they think they would be impacted by this, to help inform our decision-making process going forward. The majority of major distilleries ARE covered, so it is only some smaller distilleries that are at risk.

Please note this is a recommendation only and is not assessable.

### **Why have the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use (CRRU) withdrawn earned recognition and what does this mean?**

The previous QMS standards covered additional criteria which entitled the QMS Cattle & Sheep Scheme members to earned recognition with CRRU, whereby members of a recognised assurance scheme were able to purchase rodenticides without the need for additional training.

CRRU have since withdrawn earned recognition and as a result, the QMS Cattle & Sheep Standard Setting Body felt that there was no need to maintain the records required for earned recognition if earned recognition was withdrawn.

As a result of CRRU withdrawing earned recognition, members of QMS Assurance schemes or any assurance scheme under this earned recognition will no longer be able to buy rodenticide using their assurance certificate.

**From January 2026**, farmers will instead have to show a relevant Ofqual related training certificate and exam pass at the point of sale. This documentation must not be dated more than five years previously. Older certificates will remain valid if the purchaser is a registered member of a CRRU-approved continuing professional development scheme with sufficient up to date credits. Despite our best efforts this decision is unfortunately out of QMS's control.

### **Has anything changed significantly within the environmental section?**

The Standard Setting Body discussed at length the best way to simplify the standards in this section for clarity. Three standards regarding wastes, farmyard manure and slurry management have been split into two instead of three.

Feedback was considered from members, assessors and stakeholders around how these standards worked in practice. It was felt that there was room to streamline them, making it easier to understand what was required for compliance.

The impact of this has been assessed and the core requirements of the standards are not changing - this change should make them easier to assess.