

QMS Briefing

Purpose: *To provide advice on the impact on delaying SPS and other import checks following EU Exit.*

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Quality Meat Scotland is a Non-Departmental Public Body. This advice is provided under the Quality Meat Scotland Order 2008 Schedule 1 point 18 ' Advising on any matters relating to the red meat sector (other than remuneration or conditions of employment) as to which the Scottish Ministers may request Quality Meat Scotland to advise, and undertaking inquiry for the purpose of enabling Quality Meat Scotland to advise on such matters '. This advice is freely available and further information can be provided by the designated contact above.

1. It has been announced that import control checks on goods entering the UK from the EU will be delayed further from the 1st of October 2021 to the 1st of January 2022. This was a UK decision, however complicated in terms of devolved decision making as food safety is devolved to the Scottish Government.
2. We understand that Scottish Government, alongside key industries impacted in the Food and Drink sector were not informed or included in the decision to delay import checks, with the first communication coming out from Westminster. It was clarified at a Scottish Government Food Sector Resilience Group meeting that whilst Scottish Government has not signed up to the change in date, to avoid confusion, they have agreed to the delay in that import checks will not commence on the 1st of October as per rUK.
3. The Scottish Red Meat Industry is incredibly concerned about the additional delays on import checks, not just because of the unequal trading environment it has created for Scottish and UK based businesses, but because of legitimate animal health and welfare concerns, mainly stemming from the risk of importing products contaminated with African Swine Fever (ASF).
4. African Swine Fever has moved across Europe in recent months and is an extremely contagious pathogen that when it is found in pigs, means they have to be culled. The route that modelling suggests ASF is most likely to find its way into the UK is through contaminated pork products which can also carry the pathogen.
5. Import checks would provide a strong first line defence against ASF coming into the country, as is expected of our red meat products going outbound to the EU.
6. It has been suggested by some that there is a risk of WTO infraction because imports from the EU are now being treated differently from imports from the rest of the world.
7. It has also been highlighted that Scotland would be within its legislative rights introduce its own food safety checks on imports, as food safety is a devolved area.

8. The delay in import controls also delays the point at which both the UK and EU are subject to exactly the same SPS checks. It is widely regarded that only when we reach this point will the UK & EU negotiate long term solutions to ease the additional burden and costs of border controls.
9. The Scottish red meat industry would welcome the opportunity to discuss this opportunity at the earliest possible opportunity with the SOS and Scotland Office Ministers so that mitigations can be addressed to stop an economic issue turning into one that impacts animal health and welfare.