



QMS 2023 Pigs Assurance Scheme Standards: What's changed and why

What's changed?

We've reviewed our Pigs Assurance Scheme Standards and these changes will apply from May 2023.

These updates have been approved by the QMS Pigs Assurance Scheme Standards Setting Body, a committee of farmers, industry experts, and stakeholders, following a public consultation. They will help you meet evolving supply chain demands and new legal requirements. These standards also help underpin our pork marketing campaigns.

Find out about the main changes and why they were made in the summary on these pages.





Management and Stockmanship

New Standard 2.3

All stockpersons must receive mandatory training on the moving and handling of pigs within three months of them starting to work with pigs.

RATIONALE

Your business must have competent people who can do farm tasks properly. We want to help you equip your staff with the skills and knowledge they need. Anyone who cares for pigs must now complete online pig welfare training, which focuses initially on moving and handling of pigs. We want everyone to know what is and isn't acceptable as farm practices evolve with consumer expectations. Ensuring pigs are always treated compassionately is vital for pig welfare and will protect the industry's reputation.

QMS will provide information on the courses, this will initially be funded by QMS. Members will have six months from the date the standards go live to complete this training.

Animal Health and Welfare

Revised Standard 3.2

Where livestock are managed on a Bed & Breakfast basis, there must be a named person responsible for daily care. They must have a knowledge and understanding of the QMS Pig Assurance Scheme Standards and pig stockmanship.

RATIONALE

It is best for the business to ensure that all pig stockpersons have a prior knowledge of the standards and pig welfare to prevent any welfare issues.

Revised Standard 3.6

Update to standard 3.6 regarding tail docking – inclusion of the wording below within the standard requirement “If tail docking, tails must be a uniform length” with the inclusion of an action plan to justify the need for teeth reduction and tail docking.

RATIONALE

It is best practice to keep tails a uniform length to avoid encouragement of tail biting. This links in with evidence that this is better for animal welfare and pig behaviour, with uniform tail length helping to reduce tail biting. An action plan is now required to justify the need for tail docking and teeth reduction.

New Standard 3.8

“All staff must receive training on casualty pig management that focuses on the identification and management of sick pigs.”

Training can be provided by a vet or external company.

RATIONALE

In regard to pig welfare, it is important that staff are able to identify cases where pigs are sick and can therefore be managed and treated appropriately.



Revised Standard 3.10 Euthanasia (previously Standard 3.9)

Each unit must have at least two named persons trained and signed off as competent to euthanise by the vet.

A trained and competent person could include the vet or knackerman. Where a stockperson is the named person, they must be deemed competent by the vet and this must be recorded in the Vet Health and Welfare Plan (VHWP). An additional element of this standard included regarding refresher training. “Refresher training must be undertaken every two years as a minimum and record kept.”

RATIONALE

This is an important area to ensure that staff members dealing with euthanasia are aware of the current guidance.

Revised Standard 3.11 Euthanasia Policy (previously 3.10)

Within the documented procedure for euthanasia, details of methods used for all classes of pigs and names of persons signed off by a vet for each method must be clearly recorded.

RATIONALE

The only change from previous standard is that this includes those signed off by vet as competent.

Pig euthanasia is a hard subject for consumers. QMS standards are based on welfare and with this in mind ensuring, when required, this is done promptly and humanely so that pigs do not suffer.

Revised Standard 3.17 Environmental Enrichment

Standard remain the same with some additional wording included for clarity: “More than one type of enrichment material must be provided where any vice behaviour is present to ensure that all of the pigs’ needs are met.”

RATIONALE

Enrichment satisfies a pig’s desire to root, manipulate and explore its surroundings. All pigs must always have access to enrichment.

Animal Medicines

New Recommendation 4.1R

“4.1R it is recommended that there is a named person responsible for medicines on farm, who must be trained and revised every two years.”

RATIONALE

Having a solid foundation of knowledge and understanding is key to the success of any strategy to better manage medicine use and demonstrates a professional approach to the wider supply chain. We’ve added a new recommendation that someone has been trained in the responsible use of medicines. No action is required for members. QMS will look at courses and inform members in due course.

Revised Standard 4.5 Highest Priority Critically Important Antibiotics (HP-CIAs)

Reworded for clarity. “When using Highest Priority Critically Important Antibiotics (HP-CIAs) (i.e. those belonging to category B ‘Restrict Use’ as defined by the European Medicines Agency) must only be used as a last resort under veterinary direction.”



RATIONALE

Your vet already reviews the antibiotic use on your unit each year. Now we also want the vet to recommend alternative disease control measures, where possible, to minimise the use of antibiotics. Antimicrobial resistance is a key consumer concern area and we are keen to demonstrate the high stewardship the Scottish pig farming industry has over antibiotic use.

New Recommendation 4.7R Storage of Vaccines

“It is recommended that vaccines are stored to correct temperature as per label and fridge temperatures are checked weekly.”

RATIONALE

The fridge temperature must be checked and recorded every week to ensure that vaccines are stored in a way that protects their efficacy.

Revised Standard 4.9 Expiry Dates of Medicines

Inclusion of the highlighted wording. “Medicines past their expiry date must not be used” and used needles, empty medicine containers and medicines past their expiry date must be stored safely pending disposal.

RATIONALE

Medicines past their expiry can be less effective or carry increased risks of side effects due to a decrease in strength or change in their chemical composition. Certain expired medications are at risk of bacterial growth, and sub-potent antibiotics can fail to treat infections, leading to more serious illnesses and antibiotic resistance. This is also a legal requirement see: Retail of veterinary medicines – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

New Standard 4.10 Withdrawal Periods

“Manufacturers withdrawal periods must be observed.”

RATIONALE

This is to ensure that no pork products enter the food chain containing active medicines. As antimicrobial resistance grows as a consumer concern area, we want to demonstrate the high levels of stewardship that Scottish pig farmers have over medicine use.

Livestock Accommodation and Handling Facilities

New Recommendation 5.2R

“It is recommended that where pigs are kept outdoors, there is a wildlife control plan in place that includes managing contact with feral pigs, badgers, deer and foxes.”

RATIONALE

We now recommend that you document and implement a wild animal control plan of measures to minimise this contact.

New Recommendation 5.5R

“It is recommended that to reduce disease risk, bedding from farrowing accommodation is removed or destroyed.”

RATIONALE

To reduce disease risk among farrowing sows and piglets. In extreme weather this may not always be possible, particularly for outdoor units.



Revised Standard 5.18 Farrowing Crates

Requirement added for clarity. “Sows must not be kept in farrowing crates for more than eight weeks post farrowing.”

RATIONALE

It can be detrimental to a sows welfare if they spend too long in a farrowing crate, the inclusion of eight weeks as the maximum time sows can remain in crates after farrowing has been included within the current standard to ensure this is not exceeded.

Feed and Water Provision

Revised Standard 6.4

“All pigs over two weeks of age must have permanent access to sufficient fresh, clean water.”

RATIONALE

We have updated the wording here in line with legislation: www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2010/388/schedule/6/made?view=plain

New Recommendation 6.8R Feed Pipes and Biosecurity

“It is recommended that all farms purchasing feeds, have their own feed pipes to avoid any cross contamination.”

RATIONALE

Feed pipes going from farm to farm have the potential to spread disease. By units having their own feed pipes this will limit the spread of pathogens to pigs and protect food safety and pig health. We recognise that this will have a cost implication to businesses, however, should contamination bring in a new disease or health issue this could cause a larger economic cost to the business.

Farm Biosecurity and Cleanliness

New Recommendation 7.3Rb

“It is recommended that each unit displays visible do not feed the pigs sign and no unauthorised entry signs at appropriate locations.”

RATIONALE

To prevent pigs being fed any human food or non-livestock feed products, and to reduce the risk of a biosecurity breach particularly on outdoor units.

New Recommendation 7.4R

“From 1 January 2023, legislation changed. Slurry must not be applied using a raised splash plate or rain gun if applied by a contractor or on farms with more than 800 sows or fattening pigs. All slurry must be applied by precision equipment by 1 January 2027.”

RATIONALE

The Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011 act was amended in early 2022, bringing in new changes to how slurry is managed. This is it help reduce ammonia emissions, with spreading by dribble bar estimated to reduce emissions by around 30%.



Revised Standard 7.7 Fallen Stock Storage

Previously a recommendation (7.6a), fallen stock containers must be fully enclosed and locked or within a locked building dedicated to this purpose unless empty.

RATIONALE

This keeps the deadstock secure and prevents access from rodents or other non authorised personnel. It also helps reduce the risk of animal rights activists accessing the area and using it to portray the industry in a negative light.

New Recommendation 7.7R

“It is recommended that deadstock bins should be on the perimeter or external biosecurity points.”

RATIONALE

This is to avoid the need for the deadstock lorry coming within the biosecurity parameters and potentially bringing on disease from other units.

New Standard 7.8

“On every unit where pigs are kept carcasses should be dyed/spray marked before placing in the deadstock bin.”

RATIONALE

Spraying dead carcasses with spray cans or dye can prevent unauthorised people breaking into the deadstock bin and placing carcasses in areas where they should not be. It is recommended that a specific colour is used to identify all dead stock.

Transporting of Live Pigs

New Recommendation 8.12R

“It is recommended that livestock containers should be cleansed and disinfected before leaving the abattoir/collection centre to reduce disease spread.”

RATIONALE

This is a requirement of the export health certificates to enable trade with the EU. It also helps to prevent the spread of disease and increase biosecurity measures.



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