



27 January 2025

FAO Food Business Operators (FBOs) and Official Veterinarians (OVs) involved in the export of red meat to Canada

The Canada Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) audited UK meat production systems in September 2024. As a result of this audit, the CFIA has now informed Defra that FBOs exporting red meat to Canada must have a validated written water retention protocol in accordance with [Canadian guidelines](#).

Defra's export guidance has now been updated to include verification of the Canadian requirement that FBOs producing red meat for export to Canada and that carry out processes that could add excess water have a validated written water retention control plan verified by the plant OV.

This can be seen in the guidance written for export OVs across the following Export Health Certificates (EHCs):

- [Export lamb, goat, pork, beef and bird meat and products containing these meats to Canada: certificate 7068 - GOV.UK](#)
- [Export fresh pig meat or preparations to Canada: certificate 7644 - GOV.UK](#)
- [Export fresh beef to Canada: certificate 7833 - GOV.UK](#)

Currently the only process carried out in UK slaughterhouses which could add excess water is considered to be spray chilling. Other processes can add excess water to the product and FBOs should assess those processes and, if relevant, a validated written water retention control plan needs to be drafted by the FBO and verified by the OV.

In the event of export to Canada, export OVs will require written attestation from slaughterhouse OVs confirming that there is an annual official verification of the FBO's water retention plan if applicable, or that the FBO does not carry out processes that could add additional water to the meat.

FBOs should consider this a requirement for export to Canada. OVs need to be aware of the need for them to verify the water retention protocol when necessary. Further guidance will be provided in the coming months.

If you have received this letter, please ensure other relevant operators and veterinarians are aware and forward this on if necessary.