

Guidance document

Charges for official controls in approved meat establishments for 2026-27

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Version control

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At Food Standards Scotland we have a unique role, working independently of Ministers and industry to provide advice which is impartial, and based on robust science and data.

Our remit covers all aspects of the food chain which can impact on public health – aiming to protect consumers from food safety risks and promote healthy eating.

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Abbreviations

BA	Business Agreement
CoC	Certificate of Competence
DAERA	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
FBO	Food Business Operator
FDQ	Food & Drink Qualifications
FSA	Food Standards Agency
FSS	Food Standards Scotland
LSU	Livestock Units

1. Introduction

Food Standards Scotland (FSS) is a non-ministerial office of the Scottish Administration. It is responsible for the delivery of official controls in approved meat establishments to protect public health, animal health and welfare. This is exercised through proportionate enforcement of relevant legislation.

FSS provides a range of services in approved meat establishments in Scotland and works closely with the Food Standards Agency (FSA), which provides a similar service in England and in Wales, and with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) for Northern Ireland. Some of these services are currently paid for by Scottish Government in Scotland and other Government Departments elsewhere, such as Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), and others are charged to the Food Business Operator (FBO).

This guidance does not place any legal requirements on FBOs. It explains the legal requirements that FSS must comply with in charging for official controls in meat establishments, and how the charging is calculated and carried out. Section 7 of this guide explains how an FBO can keep charges to a minimum.

2. Charging for official controls

The basis for charging comes from:

- requirements under the official feed and food controls regulation for charging FBOs for official controls (regulated work)
- a requirement from HM Treasury for [managing public money](#) for FSS to charge the appropriate customer for the services provided
- the relevant sections contained within the Scottish Government's [Scottish Public Finance Manual](#)

The finance provisions set out in Article 78 to Article 85 of Retained Regulation (EU) No. 2017/625 require FSS meat hygiene and animal welfare at slaughter charges (official controls charges) be applied to FBOs. This means that FSS must charge FBOs for the meat hygiene official controls that FSS carries out and must calculate them in line with the requirements of those regulations.

These provisions came into force in Scotland under [The Official Feed and Food Controls \(Miscellaneous Amendments\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2019](#) (SSI 2019 No. 407) (on 14 December 2019) and [the Food and Feed \(EU Exit\) \(Scotland\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2020](#) (SSI 2020 No. 372) (on 1 January 2021). These both amend [The Meat \(Official Controls Charges\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2009](#) (“the Charges Regulations”).

[Visit gov.uk for full copies of relevant regulations.](#)

[Access a copy of Retained Regulation \(EU\) No. 2017/625 about charges for official controls.](#)

3. Who does FSS charge and what does it charge for?

3.1 Regulated work

The meat hygiene official controls FSS deliver at approved meat establishments in Scotland are referred to in this guide as “regulated work” in that the work undertaken is required by legislation. The Charges Regulations require that these controls be charged directly to the FBO based on time worked by Meat Hygiene Inspectors (MHIs), Official Veterinarians (OVs) or audit and approvals officers providing the service. The charging arrangements also include provision for discounts, and details of these can be found in this guide. Any discount arrangement in place is included in the estimated and reconciled charges made to FBOs.

3.2 Non-regulated work

FSS makes separate charges to the meat industry for work that is not regulated by official controls law, for example assessments of slaughterers and animal handlers on Temporary Certificates of Competence. For this ‘non-regulated work,’ FSS charges are based on the time-cost of providing the service and no discount applies to non-regulated work unless this work is carried out within the business agreement hours. Travel time may be charged for non-regulatory work.

3.3 Government and other customers

FSS also charge other UK Government Departments and other customers for work carried out on their behalf, such as checks on animal by product controls. These charges are based on the actual cost of carrying out the work.

3.4 How are the charges calculated?

The table at Annex A sets out the hourly charging rates for regulated and non-regulated work. Hourly charge rates are devised to cover costs from two components:

- direct costs of frontline staff, for example, salary costs - including National Insurance and pension contributions
- indirect support costs driven by official controls for meat, for example, operational and administrative support to frontline staff.

Indirect support costs are worked out on an activity-based costing model.

3.5 Business Agreement (BA)

From 1 April 2015, the charging arrangements for each FBO in approved meat establishments in Scotland are set out in the FBOs Business Agreement (BA). This is a key document on which charges and discounts will be based.

The BA is agreed and signed by both parties at the beginning of each quarter. It will include the key information required for charges – based on estimated figures of time and throughput etc. The BA will include details of the weekly estimated charges.

Any time worked in excess of a BA will be charged monthly.

To estimate the costs for the BA, two main elements are used:

- time-based charges
- a discount to reduce the time-based charge, if applicable.

3.6 Charges and allowances

Charges are based on information provided by both the FBO and FSS staff. As laid out in regulation 5 of the 2009 Regulations, FBOs are required to supply FSS with any information it may reasonably require for the purpose of calculating charges.

This information includes:

- operating hours
- throughput data (to calculate FBO discount)
- information relating to the trading and legal status of the business.

FSS time-based charges are calculated by multiplying the time spent carrying out official controls (to the nearest quarter hour) that has been estimated in the BA or actual time spent by the appropriate hourly charge out rate. FSS will charge FBOs for all the hours specified in their BA except where staff are not required, and they can be redeployed elsewhere on other chargeable activity; or where there are other significant reasons to be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Where there are changes in FSS charging, for example changes to the hourly rates, these will be applied from the date of the change and not retrospectively. Time based charges may include transactions and adjustments from earlier periods where they have not already been processed.

The discount will be calculated and divided equally over the 12 months for invoicing purposes, based on the previous year's throughput. This sum will be a fixed amount and will not change during the year.

Time based charges for non-regulated work, e.g. exports certification, are calculated by multiplying the hours worked by the charge-out rates for each grade of staff. No discount is applied for work that is conducted outside the BA, and the charges are shown on the same invoice as for official controls.

The time required for both initial and on-going assessment of Poultry Inspection Assistants (PIAs) competency will be coded under Official Controls and the costs thereof will be chargeable to the FBO.

Any time worked outside of the BA will also be included in the time costs and invoiced accordingly e.g. if the daily finishing time of the plant extends beyond that specified in the BA. Time worked outside the BA is not subject to discount.

In addition to the normal hours worked by FSS staff, other elements may be included to arrive at the time cost charge:

- chargeable allowances - see section 3.8
- overtime and other local staffing arrangements - see section 3.9

3.7 Hourly charge-out rates

FSS charge-out rates are calculated each year and are made up of OV/MHI staff costs (both employed and contracted) and overheads as applicable within the resourcing model for Field Operations. Changes to hourly charge-out rates for official controls are made after advance notification to industry stakeholders. FSS commit to giving FBOs a minimum of fourteen days' notice prior to any new charge-out rates coming into effect. The charge-out rates are included in this guide at Annex A.

3.8 Chargeable allowances

Certain contractual allowances paid to FSS staff as a result of an FBO's business operating hours are chargeable and are added to the time cost calculation. The amounts charged to the FBO include the amount paid to FSS employee plus costs such as National Insurance and pension contributions.

Information about the various categories of chargeable allowance will be included in the BA, and any allowances paid will be invoiced monthly. The following is an example of an allowance that might be covered: daily unsocial/night hours - where an FSS staff member has worked outside FSS core working hours in order to service the BA.

Allowances will not be included in time costs when the employee is not available to carry out work.

3.9 Overtime and other local staffing arrangements

Overtime and other local staffing arrangements will also be included in the agreed BA:

- contractual overtime - where there is a routine working pattern for Inspection services within the BA which routinely generates overtime for FSS employees above their base FSS contractual hours this may become part of the FSS employees' terms and conditions.

3.10 Public and privilege holidays

Area 1 & 2 (Aligns with Aberdeen Regional Holidays)

Public Holidays (premium rate charges apply):

- Monday 6th April (Easter Monday)
- Monday 4th May (May Day Holiday)
- Monday 15th of June (World Cup Holiday)
- Monday 13th July (Aberdeen Trades Holiday (floating Bank Holiday))
- Monday 28th September (Autumn Holiday (floating Bank Holiday))

- Friday 25th December (Christmas Day)
- Monday 28th December (Boxing Day)
- Friday 1st January (New Year's Day)
- Monday 4th January (New Year's Day Holiday)

Privilege Days (standard charges apply):

- Friday 3rd April (Good Friday)
- Friday 10th July (Aberdeen Trades Holiday)
- Friday 25th September (Autumn Holiday, pm only)
- Monday 30th November (St Andrew's Day Holiday)

Area 3 (Aligns with Glasgow Regional Holidays)

Public Holidays (premium rate charges apply):

- Monday 6th April (Easter Monday)
- Monday 4th May (May Day Holiday)
- Monday 15th of June (World Cup Holiday)
- Monday 20th July (Glasgow Fair Monday (floating Bank Holiday))
- Monday 28th September (Autumn Holiday (floating Bank Holiday))
- Friday 25th December (Christmas Day)
- Monday 28th December (Boxing Day)
- Friday 1st January (New Year's Day)
- Monday 4th January (New Year's Day Holiday)

Privilege Days (standard charges apply):

- Friday 3rd April (Good Friday)
- Monday 25th May (Spring Holiday)
- Friday 25th September (Autumn Holiday, pm only)
- Monday 30th November (St Andrew's Day Holiday)

Please note that "floating Bank Holidays" can be exchanged for other variations to regional trade holiday days through consultation with the Operations Manager and recorded in the Business Agreement. Alternative exchange dates will be regarded as premium rate in alignment with their original Public Holiday status.

3.11 Overtime rates

When an FBO needs FSS employees to work beyond their normal contracted hours FSS will pay them at their contracted rate, which may be a premium overtime rate. This cost is chargeable to the FBO and will be included as part of their total time costs.

3.12 Facility time

Any facility time is charged at a maximum of 30 minutes per day paid to FSS employees (for example, time to dress in protective clothing and cleaning up time) and this will be included in the time costs.

3.13 Relief cover

If the normal Inspector is unavailable, FSS will supply a replacement. The costs of the replacement (including the costs of any allowances the replacement Inspector may receive) will be included as part of the time costs charged. FBOs will not be charged for the normal Inspector in addition to the replacement Inspector.

3.14 Travel time

FSS employees are paid for any time spent travelling between premises during their normal working hours but excludes time for the commute to their normal place of work. This paid travel time is not chargeable directly to the FBO operator, but the cost is included in the hourly charge-out rates.

Travel time for contract staff is included in their agreed payment rates, and you will not be directly charged for this, unless it is part of the work carried out for CoC assessments (non-regulated work), or 'additional official controls', in which case you might be charged for both travel time and mileage.

3.15 Audit

FSS charges for audits based on an hourly rate for all work related to audits: remote documentation review, site inspections and report writing (travel time and associated costs are not directly chargeable to the individual FBO but are accounted for in the hourly rate).

FBOs will also be charged for at least one unannounced inspection (UAI) based on actual time incurred and the rate of the officer undertaking it, including any time required to resolve non-compliance matters that may also result in a chargeable follow-up visit.

There are no discount arrangements for audits or UAIs or any activity related to non-compliance.

3.16 Approvals

[Visit our website to view requirements for obtaining approvals.](#)

FSS charges for approvals are based on an hourly rate. This will include time spent by the officer on preparation, visiting establishments and report writing (travel time and associated costs are not directly chargeable to the individual FBO but are accounted for in the hourly rate).

There are no discount arrangements for approval charges.

3.17 Charges for Certificate of Competence

Charges for businesses undertaking assessment from FSS are the OV hourly rate if said OV is attending outside any business agreement requirement, along with additional travel time, report writing (if required) and mileage.

The business will be invoiced the charges to FSS as charged by the Qualification authority, along with a further charge to cover the FSS administration of awarding the certificate.

Type of charge	Rate
OV – training/assessment, travel time, report writing	£63.78
Mileage - per mile	£0.45
FDQ charge - approx. 6 plus units	£87.25
FDQ charge - up to 6 units	£65.50
FDQ charge - individual units	£17.50
FDQ charge – transfer fee	£20.00
Administration charge - New CoC	£25.00
Administration charge - amendment to existing certificate	£8.00
Administration charge – replacement card	£8.00

4. Discounts

4.1 Discounts to reduce the time charge

It was agreed with Ministers and industry in 2014 that a £1.3m discount would continue, with an adjustment being made for plant closures since that time, and as a result FSS will operate the following discount arrangement for red meat, poultry, and game handling establishments to reduce time charges.

4.1.1 Discount percentages table

This table distributes discounts based on a sliding scale of livestock units (LSU).

Number of livestock units	Discount applied (%)
0 - 1,000	74.50
1,001 - 5,000	55
5,001 - 40,000	6.75
40,001 - 100,000	2.25

For example, if you have 1,500 livestock units, for the 0-1,000 74.5% discount would apply and a 55% discount would be applied to the remaining 500 livestock units.

4.1.2 Livestock units by species table

This table shows the conversion rate from animals to livestock units – dead weight.

1 Livestock Unit =	Number of animals
Cattle > 8 months	1
Calf < 8 months	2
Horse/Donkey	1
Goat < 12kg	20
Goat >= 12kg	10
Sheep < 12kg	20
Sheep >= 12kg	10
Fattening pigs	7
Sows and boars	4
Wild Boar	4
Wild Deer	20
Farmed Deer	2
Broiler/Hens/poultry <2kg	546.2
Broiler/Hens/poultry >2kg and <5kg	225
Adult Poultry 5 kg or more	113
Turkeys < 5kg	189
Turkeys >= 5kgs	113
Water Buffalo	1
Ostrich/Emu/Rhea	3
Alpaca	2

Lama	1
Wild Ducks	225
Pheasant	225
Partridge	450
Grouse	450
Rabbits / Ground Game	450
Other Wild Game / birds	450

4.2 How the discount is applied

To arrive at a discount, FSS will calculate total number of LSU in Scotland from the previous year's throughput and divide into the total subsidy available. The level of subsidy across the country will be fixed. For 2026-27 the total discount available remains as £1.08 million.

This gives an equitable distribution of discount both across and within sectors. The model uses 4 bandings of LSU throughput, and these bandings have been chosen carefully to avoid catching FBOs in or around the break points. The discount percentages available for each banding are shown in the above diagram (see paragraph 4.1.1).

The discount is applied accumulatively to LSU levels: an FBO producing 6000 LSU would receive 74.5% discount for the first 1000, 55% discount for the next 4000 and 6.75% discount for the remaining 1000.

Establishments below 1000 LSU on the previous year's calculation (i.e. throughput for the full year is below 1000 LSU's) will receive a 74.5% discount on all their charge, this excludes work undertaken for Audits or Approvals.

4.3 When FSS will not levy a charge

There could be circumstances when official controls charges to approved meat businesses could be waived. These exceptional circumstances will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and are expected to be very infrequent occurrences.

4.4 Throughput information

The Charges Regulations require relevant FBOs to supply FSS with information to allow charges to be calculated. Throughput data is essential to calculate the yearly discount for each establishment and is provided to OGDs such as VMD (Veterinary Medicines Directorate). The information that FBOs supply may be subject to audits by FSS and by other Government departments.

For slaughterhouses, on-farm slaughter facilities and game-handling establishments where dressing takes place, the numbers of each species slaughtered and/or dressed which are subject to official controls, will be entered into the FSS IT System.

Non-operational periods should be included in the BA.

Throughput information for cutting plants is required as part of the audit and approval processes. There is no requirement for standalone and co-located cutting plants to supply regular information on throughput to FSS.

4.5 Non-return of throughput information

FBOs should be aware that, under the Charges Regulations it is a criminal offence for anyone to submit information that they know to be false or misleading, or, without reasonable excuse, to fail to provide the required information within a reasonable amount of time which is punishable on summary conviction by a fine.

5. Business Agreement (BA)

[Further information about the Business Agreement \(BA\).](#)

6. Charges for other official controls (OCR – Article 80)

Under Article 80 of Retained Regulation (EU) No 2017/625 on official controls, FSS charges for the expenses arising from “additional official controls”, i.e. controls that exceed the normal control activities.

FBOs will be charged for these other controls based on time.

7. Keeping charges to a minimum – hints and tips

To make sure that charges are kept to a minimum, FBOs can do the following:

- Make sure that their operating hours and working practices are agreed with FSS and are documented in the BA.
- Find out whether they can be designated as “low capacity”. An assessment of the business can be carried out to establish whether a FBO could qualify for reduced OV attendance. Speak to the FSS Operations Manager and the Veterinary Advisor responsible for the establishment for more information or to request an assessment.
- Give FSS as much notice as possible when there are temporary changes to the operating hours and working practices documented in the BA. Where an FBO plans to make longer term changes, give FSS at least 15 days’ notice. The more notice that is provided the better the opportunity that FSS has to redeploy staff without incurring additional costs.
- Make sure that the food safety and management practices are of a good standard. This will reduce the likelihood of line stoppages and other enforcement action being taken by FSS that leads to additional cost. For cutting

establishments, this will improve the audit outcome and may reduce the number of visits required by FSS staff.

- Make sure that regular contact is made with FSS Operations Manager for your establishment. They will be able to advise on any issues that may impact charges, keep you informed of future changes and can help make the best use of FSS resource.

8. Invoices and payment

8.1 When will FBOs get their FSS invoice?

FSS works in accounting periods - each containing four or five weeks. See Section 10 for the full accounting timetable. FBOs will normally receive an invoice each month, approximately two to three weeks after the end of the accounting period within which the work was carried out. Actual charges will be provided monthly.

Low throughput establishments will normally receive a monthly invoice for the actual hours worked less the discount.

8.2 What should FBOs do if they have a query with their invoice?

If an FBO has any difficulty in understanding their charges, or they suspect that FSS may have made an error, they should contact a finance representative by email, within 30 days of the date on the invoice, who will be happy to assist them:

FSS invoice queries – email: charging@fss.scot

For all invoices not queried within the 30 days FSS will be expecting payment.

8.3 How can FBOs pay for their charges?

8.3.1 Payment terms

FSS invoices are due for payment immediately. If payment is not received promptly then recovery action may be taken (see section 8.3.3).

8.3.2 Payment methods

Bank account name: GBS NatWest Food

Sort code: 60-70-80

Account number: 10019715

Reference: "Receipts and the invoice number"

To pay by cheque, the cheque should be made payable to Food Standards Scotland. Please quote the invoice number being paid, the customer account and establishment number. Post cheques to:

FSS Finance Department

4th Floor

Pilgrim House

Old Ford Road
Aberdeen
AB11 5RL

8.3.3 Overdue invoices

Invoices unpaid over 31 days will be considered as debt, initially contact will be made by FSS asking for payment. If payment is not received within a week of the contact the overdue invoices will be forwarded to FSS debt collection agency for commencement of civil debt recovery proceedings through the courts. If court action is taken to recover outstanding debts the court will be asked to award FSS with the total debt inclusive of interest and any court costs.

Successful court action will result in a judgment or a decree against the debtor and FSS would then be able to use a range of enforcement action to obtain payment, including the withdrawal of official controls.

If an FBO lodges a complaint under FSS Complaints Procedure (see paragraph 68), they must continue to pay their FSS invoices otherwise they could still face legal proceedings. Payment will in no way prejudice the consideration of complaints and if upheld the appropriate credit will be made as soon as possible.

8.3.4 Withdrawal of official controls

If an FBO fails to pay for their official controls' charges, FSS may be entitled to withdraw its services from the establishment. In some circumstances this would prevent the FBO from producing meat for human consumption. These powers are set out in the Charges Regulations and are only used after all other means of debt recovery have been tried or are deemed to be ineffective. FSS will only withdraw official controls where a court judgment or decree has been obtained and the FBO fails to pay the debt for which judgment or decree has been obtained within a reasonable time after it is obtained.

Suggestions, comments, and complaints

If an FBO is at all dissatisfied with any aspect of the service provided by FSS, they should contact their Operation Manager in the first instance. If this does not resolve their problem and they are still not satisfied, [FSS complaints procedure](#) is available to all customers and stakeholders.

FSS welcomes comments on this guide and FSS charging process in general. If you have any comments or suggestions for improvement on any aspect of FSS charging policy or this guide, please send them to:

Charges Guide
FSS Finance Department
Pilgrim House, Old Ford Road
Aberdeen, AB11 5RL
Email: charging@fss.scot

9. Annex A: Charge rates

Charge rates to food business operators of FSS-approved meat establishments

The tables below show the hourly charge rates for FSS time spent on official controls. These apply from 30th of March 2026 until 28th of March 2027.

9.1 Official Veterinarian (OV)

Type of time	Rate per hour
Single time	£63.78
Monday to Saturday overtime	£63.78
Double time	£127.56
Public holidays	£191.34

9.2 Meat Hygiene Inspector (MHI)

Type of time	Rate per hour
Single time	£49.14
Monday to Saturday overtime	£49.14
Double time	£98.28
Public holidays	£147.42

9.3 Approvals and audit

Type of time	Rate per hour
Single time	£113.54

10. Annex B: Monthly accounting timetable

This table outlines FSS's monthly accounting timetable from 30 March 2026 to 28 March 2027.

Months Period	Week	Week Commencing (Monday)	Week Ending (Sunday)
April Period 1 (4 weeks)	1	30-Mar-26	05-Apr-26
	2	06-Apr-26	12-Apr-26
	3	13-Apr-26	19-Apr-26
	4	20-Apr-26	26-Apr-26
May Period 2 (5 weeks)	5	27-Apr-26	03-May-26
	6	04-May-26	10-May-26
	7	11-May-26	17-May-26
	8	18-May-26	24-May-26
	9	25-May-26	31-May-26
June Period 3 (4 weeks)	10	01-Jun-26	07-Jun-26
	11	08-Jun-26	14-Jun-26
	12	15-Jun-26	21-Jun-26
	13	22-Jun-26	28-Jun-26
July Period 4 (4 weeks)	14	29-Jun-26	05-Jul-26
	15	06-Jul-26	12-Jul-26
	16	13-Jul-26	19-Jul-26
	17	20-Jul-26	26-Jul-26
August Period 5	18	27-Jul-26	02-Aug-26
	19	03-Aug-26	09-Aug-26

(5 weeks)	20	10-Aug-26	16-Aug-26
	21	17-Aug-26	23-Aug-26
	22	24-Aug-26	30-Aug-26
September Period 6 (4 weeks)	23	31-Aug-26	06-Sep-26
	24	07-Sep-26	13-Sep-26
	25	14-Sep-26	20-Sep-26
	26	21-Sep-26	27-Sep-27
October Period 7 (4 weeks)	27	28-Sept-26	04-Oct-26
	28	05-Oct-26	11-Oct-26
	29	12-Oct-26	18-Oct-26
	30	19-Oct-26	25-Oct-26
November Period 8 (5 weeks)	31	26-Oct-26	01-Nov-26
	32	02-Nov-26	08-Nov-26
	33	09-Nov-26	15-Nov-26
	34	16-Nov-26	22-Nov-26
	35	23-Nov-26	29-Nov-26
December Period 9 (4 weeks)	36	30-Nov-26	06-Dec-26
	37	07-Dec-26	13-Dec-26
	38	14-Dec-26	20-Dec-26
	39	21-Dec-26	27-Dec-26
January Period 10 (5 weeks)	40	28-Dec-26	03-Jan-27
	41	04-Jan-27	10-Jan-27
	42	11-Jan-27	17-Jan-27
	43	18-Jan-27	24-Jan-27
	44	25-Jan-27	31-Jan-27

February Period 11 (4 weeks)	45	01-Feb-27	07-Feb-27
	46	08-Feb-27	14-Feb-27
	47	15-Feb-27	21-Feb-27
	48	22-Feb-27	28-Feb-27
March Period 12 (4 weeks)	49	01-Mar-27	07-Mar-27
	50	08-Mar-27	14-Mar-27
	51	15-Mar-27	21-Mar-27
	52	22-Mar-27	28-Mar-27