EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO

The Mandatory Use of Closed-Circuit Television in Slaughterhouses Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026

S.R. 2026 No. 139

1. Introduction

1.1. This Explanatory Memorandum has been prepared by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to accompany the above-named Statutory Rule (SR) which is laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly.

1.2. The SR is made under powers conferred by Section 11 (1) and (3) of the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, under the draft affirmative resolution procedure.

2. Purpose

2.1. The Mandatory Use of Closed Circuit Television in Slaughterhouses Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026 require:

i. CCTV cameras be installed in all approved slaughterhouses in areas where live animals are unloaded, kept, handled, stunned and killed;
ii. Recorded images to be kept by the slaughterhouse operator for a 90-day minimum period; and
iii. Recorded images to be available to authorised persons to view, copy or seize.

3. Background

In 2015, the Farm Animal Welfare Committee (FAWC) published a report recommending that all approved slaughterhouses should install CCTV in all areas where live animals are present. It considered that CCTV would serve as a deterrent to animal mistreatment, enhance staff training and operational practices, and provide opportunities for studying the movement and behaviour of animals at various stages of the slaughter process.

4. Consultation

4.1. The Department held a public consultation for eight weeks from 26 March to 20 May 2025, as required by Section 11(5) of the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

4.2. The consultation attracted 22 submissions from various representative organisations, business groups and individuals. The proposals were met with strong support, with 91% of respondents agreeing that CCTV should be installed in all approved slaughterhouses in areas where live animals

are handled, stunned or killed. The same proportion supported applying the requirement regardless of slaughterhouse size and for footage to be retained for 90 days.

4.3. In addition, 77% felt the costs of installation and maintenance were reasonable, while 73% supported giving authorised officers, such as DAERA staff and Official Veterinarians, access to both real-time and stored footage.

4.4. A small number of respondents raised concerns about potential costs for smaller operators, data protection and the overlap of existing on-site veterinary supervision. Despite these concerns, the majority recognised the benefits of CCTV in improving transparency, deterring poor practice and aligning Northern Ireland with the rest of the United Kingdom.

4.5. The full summary of responses is available on the DAERA website: Consultation on the Introduction Mandatory CCTV into Slaughterhouses in NI | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

5. Equality Impact

An equality screening exercise was carried out prior to public consultation, in accordance with section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. It is the Department's assessment that there are no equality, human rights or good relations issues associated with the SR including among Section 75 groups.

6. Regulatory Impact

6.1. A Regulatory Impact Assessment was completed by the Department that considered costs to slaughterhouses and the Department (including consideration of indirect costs of implementation). The RIA also highlighted benefits to animal welfare, public perception and training needs of staff by introducing CCTV into slaughterhouses.

6.2. At present, there are 20 licensed slaughterhouses operating in Northern Ireland. Of these, 15 facilities have achieved comprehensive coverage in areas where live animals are present, primarily due to contractual obligations with Great Britain retailers and compliance with assurance schemes such as Red Tractor. The remaining five sites currently maintain either partial coverage or have yet to install any coverage.

7. Rural Needs Impact

A screening exercise was carried out and no rural needs implications associated with the SR were identified. Having considered feedback provided to public consultation on these matters, the Department is satisfied no amendments are required to the screening document.

8. Financial Implications

8.1. There are no direct costs to the Department as a result of introducing this legislation. There may be notional costs in terms of increased staff time, as increased access to CCTV coverage across slaughterhouses and higher quality footage may mean that there is clearer and indisputable evidence for enforcement action.

8.2. Any slaughterhouses without full CCTV coverage in all areas that live animals are present, will incur costs to fulfil the legislative requirements.

9. Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

This Statutory Rule complies with the requirements of section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

10. EU Implications

10.1. Welfare standards at the time of killing in Northern Ireland are regulated by European legislation. While Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009, Protection of Animals at the Time of Killing, does not mandate the use of CCTV in slaughterhouses, the Welfare at the Time of Killing (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2014, which enacts the European requirements domestically, does provide limited authority for the seizure of CCTV footage. This power may be exercised only when there is reasonable suspicion of inadequate welfare practices.

10.2. Article 26 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 allows for Member States to introduce national rules that are aimed at ensuring more extensive protection of animals at the time of killing.

10.3. The Republic of Ireland has maintained the existing standards outlined in Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 regarding the protection of animals at the time of killing, and there are currently no indications of plans to mandate the use of CCTV in slaughterhouses.

11. Parity or Replicatory Measure

Northern Ireland is the only jurisdiction in the UK that has not implemented the recommendations of the 2015 FAWC report to mandate the use of CCTV in all licenced slaughterhouses. The Statutory Rule will broadly mirror what has been introduced by the English, Scottish and Welsh Governments, bringing Northern Ireland into parity.

12. Additional Information

For further information contact:

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