POLICY NOTE

THE SHEEP CARCASE (CLASSIFICATION AND PRICE REPORTING) (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2025

SSI 2025/401

The above instrument is made in exercise of the powers conferred by section 11(1), 14(2), and 19(1) of the Agriculture (Retained EU Law and Data) (Scotland) Act 2020. The instrument is subject to *affirmative procedure*.

Summary Box

Purpose of the instrument.

The purpose of the instrument is to introduce mandatory sheep carcase classification for all licenced sheep slaughterhouses that meet the throughput threshold of at least 500 sheep per week as a rolling annual average.

In Scotland. Abattoirs which process sheep were classifying and price reporting on a voluntary basis.

Policy Objectives

The publication of the industry led Scottish Sheep Sector review included a recommendation for the Scottish Government to comprehensively review price and grade reporting protocols that would result in better reporting of carcase size, appearance and eating quality.

Accepting that recommendation, the Scottish Government proceeded to consult stakeholders on the introduction of mandatory classification and price reporting Whilst the results were in favour, it was agreed that it would not be suitable for Scotland to introduce regulations until such time as the rest of the UK were ready to progress.

The introduction of mandatory classification across the UK will ensure we have a fair and transparent grading system, as is already the case with beef and pig classification.

Aligning the introduction of mandatory sheep carcase classification across the UK prevents any cross-border discrepancies where one country would be carrying out classification in line with regulations, while others would still be classifying on a voluntary basis. This would mean there would be no official checks carried out, effectively causing cross border discrepancies.

Whilst there are currently no slaughterhouses using automated grading systems for sheep classification in Scotland it is still important to ensure that the use and installation of any automated equipment is done to a set standard and that it is fit for purpose so as to be ready for any Scottish abattoir that may wish to introduce it in the future.

Following further consultation in 2024, there were positive results across the UK on the introduction of legislation to make the classification of sheep mandatory covering all the main aspects, as set out in the EU regulations, such as the use of the EUROP grid and a two-tier dressing specification.

Across all respondents the importance of aligning timelines across the UK was raised and the Scottish Government has worked with the other administrations to ensure an aligned coming into force date, including splitting manual and automated classification. This is to allow for the collection of data to support the testing of automated machines, ensuring accurate classification.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 Compatibility

The Scottish Ministers have made the following statement regarding children's rights.

In accordance with section 23(2) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024, the Scottish Ministers certify that, in their view, The Sheep Carcase (Classification and Price Reporting) (Scotland) Regulations 2025 is compatible with the UNCRC requirements as defined by section 1(2) of the Act.

EU Alignment Consideration

The introduction of mandatory classification will follow the EU regulations on the classification rules for sheep.

Consultation

Accepting the recommendation from the industry-led Scottish Sheep Sector review resulted in a Scottish Government consultation in 2017 however it was agreed at that time, that it would not be suitable for Scotland to introduce mandatory sheep carcase classification until such time as the rest of the UK were also ready to progress

Following ongoing discussions, it was agreed across the UK that each administration would consult again in 2024, in the main to assess whether there was still appetite for proposals for a mandatory system to be introduced across the UK.

The targeted eight-week Scottish consultation in 2024 was sent to key industry bodies and individuals who responded to the previous consultation in 2017. The consultation covered all the main aspects of mandatory sheep carcase classification, as set out in the EU regulations, such as the use of the EUROP grid and a two-tier dressing specification.

Responses were received from several membership organisations including the NFUS, and the National Sheep Association Scotland covering sheep producers, the Scottish Association of Meat Wholesalers covering processors and from Quality Meat Scotland (both producers and processors are levy payers.)

All of the responses were in favour of the introduction of mandatory sheep carcase classification.

Impact Assessments

A Business and Regulatory Impact Assessment has been completed on the draft SSI and is attached. A Children's Rights and Welfare Impact Assessment has also been prepared and will be available at www.legislation.gov.uk.

Financial Effects

There is no financial cost to the Scottish Government, local government and no charge to businesses.

Scottish Government
Directorate – Agriculture and Rural Economy

October 2025