Sheep and goat inspections

This is an old version of the page

Date published: 7 July, 2026

Date superseded: 10 November, 2026

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page .

Table of Contents

Introduction

Why do we inspect sheep and goats?

What our inspectors do

Inspection outcomes

Refusal/obstruction procedure

Legislative references

Further information

Previous versions

Download guidance

Introduction

This page provides an overview of what you need to be prepared for an inspection, as well as the potential outcomes of a sheep and goat inspection.

Sheep and goat Identification and Traceability Requirements

All sheep and goat keepers must follow the rules set out in The Sheep and Goats (Records, Identification and Movement) (Scotland) Order 2009.

A summary of these requirements is available on the Scottish Government website.

Livestock identification and traceability guidance.

Cross Compliance

If you are a claimant, you are also subject to cross compliance Statutory Management Requirement (SMR) 8. A summary of these requirements is available from the cross compliance section of this website.

Statuatory Management Requirement SMR 8

Why do we inspect sheep and goats?

The Rural Payments and Inspections Division (RPID) conduct sheep and goat identification inspections to make sure keepers are complying with animal identification and traceability requirements. Each year RPID are required to inspect:

- 3% of sheep and goat holdings
- 5% of the national flock

We also target inspections if we have evidence that the requirements are not being met. These inspections enable us to monitor compliance with the requirements for sheep and goat keepers, including verifying the accuracy of the ScotEID movement database. These requirements are essential for animal disease control and protecting public health. Our inspections are conducted at the business level. This means that during a visit, we need to see all sheep and/or goats (along with their records) in your keepership even if they are on several holdings.

How can you help

To help the inspection go smoothly, please:

- tell the inspector about any health and safety risks
- make sure livestock handling facilities are safe and in good condition
- present your animals safely for identification checks
- keep your records up to date and easy to access
- retain records for the required period
- use the ScotEID database to check your movement records
- replace lost or unreadable eartags within 28 days
- ensure you register or de-register accordingly with APHA

What our inspectors do

Inspections are usually unannounced, but you will have time to gather your animals as we usually begin by checking your records and movement documents.

During an inspection, we use an inspection report that includes:

- the results of your most recent annual inventory
- registration details for all locations where you may be keeping sheep and/or goats
- details of all notified movements onto and off these locations (as held by ScotEID)
- details of eartags ordered

Records Check

The first part of the inspection focuses on your records. We will check for evidence that you:

- are registered as a keeper with APHA for all holdings used (including holdings with a concession)
- correctly apply any relevant concessions
- keep accurate and up-to-date farm records, including:
- recording an annual inventory figure as of the 1st of December.
- identification and replacement tags
- deaths
- full movement details (on and off holdings)
    - notify SAMU of all on movements
    - submitted your annual inventory to ScotEID

We will review your records and movement documents to calculate a projected total of animals on your holding(s).

Physical Inspection

The second part of the inspection is a physical check. We will inspect a sample of up to 60 animals per holding to verify:

- that your sheep and/or goats are correctly identified
- that unused eartags are securely stored
- that identities are recorded in your records
- that missing eartags are replaced within 28 days of discovery

If we identify significant issues, we may extend the sample size.

We will then count all remaining animals. The number of animals counted will be compared to the projected total to assess the accuracy of your records.

Additional Checks

If you receive direct payments (Basic Payment Scheme, Scottish Upland Sheep Support Scheme, Scottish Suckler Beef Support Scheme, or Less Favoured Area Support Scheme), we will also check that you meet the active farmer and minimum agricultural activity requirements.

After the Inspection

At the end of the inspection, the inspector will clearly explain the findings to you including any issues found. You will be given an opportunity to review the findings report and to provide comments before signing.

Rural Payments and Services - © Crown copyright

Once we have entered the results into our system, we will send you a results letter summarising the inspection. This letter will explain any issues identified and their consequences.

Inspection outcomes

The inspection results letter will outline any breaches of keeper requirements and cross compliance. It will explain the nature and severity of the issues identified and what actions you should take to comply in future.

Enforcement Action

If you fail to meet any of the five key requirements, enforcement action will be taken. This is based on the severity of the failure. The Scottish Government aims to support compliance by collaborating with keepers. As such, guidance is the most usual form of enforcement. However, in more serious cases, we may:

- issue a written warning
- refer the case for prosecution in the most severe circumstances

Movement Restrictions

A movement restriction prevents sheep and/or goats from being moved to or from your holding unless a licence is granted. The restriction remains in place until you receive an official notice (SG4) from RPID lifting it. Movement restrictions may be applied if:

- live discrepancies exceed 20%
- no farm documents#are presented during inspection
- the#Identification Compliance Proforma#was not returned within 28 days

Moving animals while under restriction may lead to#prosecution.

Cross Compliance

If you are a claimant, failing to meet records or tagging requirements may result in a breach of Statutory Management Requirement 8 (SMR 8).

Depending on the severity of the breach, this may lead to a financial penalty. We use verifiable standards to ensure that breaches are consistently classified in terms of extent, severity and permanence.

For further information on Cross Compliance, visit the Cross Compliance section of this site.

Refusal/obstruction procedure

Notice of Deferred Inspection - Valid Reason

If you request a deferral before or during an inspection and we believe the reason is valid, we will agree a suitable inspection date and time with you. You will receive a “Deferred Inspection – Valid Reason” notice confirming the new arrangements.

Notice of Deferred Inspection

If you refuse an inspection without a valid reason, the following steps will be taken:

- a new inspection date and time will be determined by the inspector
- a Movement Restriction will be placed on your holding(s)
- a Prevent Payment (PP) marker will be applied to your business
- you will receive a “Deferred Inspection” notice

Notice of Obstruction of Inspection

Obstruction occurs when you prevent an inspection from proceeding. This includes:

- refusing entry to the holding
- denying access to livestock or documentation
- repeatedly deferring without a valid reason

In such cases, the following actions will be taken:

- a Movement Restriction will be placed on your holding(s)
- a Prevent Payment (PP) marker will be applied to your business
- relevant authorities (e.g. Local Authority, Police) will be notified
- any direct payments you receive in the inspection year may be withheld or rejected
- you may be referred for prosecution
- you will receive an “Obstruction of Inspection” notice

Notice of Unacceptable Behaviour

Inspectors must be able to perform their duties safely and respectfully. The Scottish Government defines unacceptable behaviour as actions that hinder staff or cause distress. This is detailed at the Scottish Government Unacceptable Actions Policy .

The following procedure will be followed:

- direct payments may be withheld or rejected
- the case may be referred to Trading Standards for prosecution
- a Movement Restriction will be placed on your holding(s)
- a Prevent Payment (PP) marker will be applied to your business
- external bodies (e.g. Local Authority, Police) may be involved
- you will receive an “Unacceptable Behaviour” notice

Legislative references

Powers of Inspectors

The powers of inspectors are set out in Part 7 of the Sheep and Goats (Records, Identification and Movement) (Scotland) Order 2009 :

An inspector may:

(a) Collect, pen, and inspect any animal, and require the keeper to arrange for its collection, penning, and securing

(b) Require production of and examine any records in whatever form, and take copies of those records

(c) Remove and retain any documents and records required to be kept under this Order.

(2) A person required to do anything by an inspector acting under paragraph (1) must, unless that person has reasonable cause, do so without delay.

Offences and Enforcement

A breach of this order is an offence under Part 73 of the Animal Health Act 1981 .

A person is guilty of an offence against this Act who, without lawful authority or excuse (proof of which shall lie on them):

(a) Does anything in contravention of this Act, or of an order of the Minister, or of regulations made by the Scottish Ministers under this Act, or of a regulation of a local authority; or

(b) Fails to give, produce, observe, or do any notice, licence, rule, or thing which by this Act or such an order or regulation they are required to give, produce, observe, or do.

Receipt of Direct Payments

To be eligible for subsidy payments, claimants must allow inspections to take place. The declaration and undertakings of the Single Application Form include agreement to:

Permit the duly authorised officers of SGRPID, or its appointed agents and those persons accompanying them, to enter the farm covered by this application and to inspect land, animals, any relevant equipment, storage facilities and farm records in order to verify the accuracy of the particulars given in my application; and to render all reasonable assistance, including gathering and presenting livestock in a safe and secure manner, to duly authorised officers in making their inspection.

Failure to cooperate with inspection requirements is a breach of Article 59(7) of Commission Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 :

An aid application or payment claim shall be rejected if the beneficiary or their representative prevents an on-the-spot check from being carried out, except in cases of force majeure or in exceptional circumstances.

Scottish Government Unacceptable Actions Policy

Unacceptable actions are behaviours or demands that place unreasonable pressure on staff or hinder their ability to perform their duties.

This is detailed at the Scottish Government Unacceptable Actions Policy.

Further information

For detailed guidance on sheep and goat identification and traceability, including information on the 5-mile concession, see the following Scottish Government resources:

Sheep and goats - livestock Identification and Traceability guidance

The 5-mile concession rule Q&A (MS Word, Size: 218.6 kB)

RPID inspectors use the following documents, which also provide helpful guidance on what to expect during inspections:

Inspection report form (PDF, Size: 752.7 kB)

Inspection risk selection criteria (MS Word, Size: 65.9 kB)

These third-party resources also contain useful information that can help you prepare for an inspection:

Farm Advisory Service Scotland

Farm Strong Scotland

RSABI (Supporting People in Scottish Agriculture)

Previous versions

Previous versions of this page

Download guidance

Click 'Download this page' to create a printable version of this guidance you can save or print out.