



QMS Management plan for Assurance Scheme Assessments during COVID-19 restrictions

QMS has been closely following the current Government guidelines on what steps should be taken to protect ourselves and others from the Coronavirus (COVID-19). Our priority is the health and safety of staff, contractors and quality assurance members. Therefore, it is essential that we all work together to protect ourselves and our colleagues.

QMS have created a 5-point plan for assessments to date;

1. Stop physical assessments due to COVID 19:

- On 18th March 2020 following the advice from both the Scottish & UK Governments we made the decision to develop a planned approach to assessments of our schemes which resulted in suspension of all face to face assessments to Processors, Auction markets, Hauliers, Pig and Cattle & Sheep farms for a minimum period of one month.

2. Develop a remote assessment methodology:

- During the cessation of physical assessments, a remote/desktop assessment programme was implemented. **This will ensure that members certification continues seamlessly in these exceptional circumstances.** The remote assessment process is noted below and Lloyd's Register assessors will make direct contact with members to arrange their assessment and outline how the member engages with this new format.

3. Implement Remote Assessments

The remote assessment is a 2-stage process

- Submission of documents by member to a portal or direct to assessor for review followed by a livestream assessment of the physical standards using LR Remote or similar platform
- We appreciate not every member will have the ability to complete both elements of the assessment, therefore when face to face assessment resume these members can be assessed as a priority to ensure continued compliance.



4. Return to physical assessments

QMS wish to provide reassurance to consumers that all products that carry the Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI and Specially selected pork logos are produced to some of the highest standards.

Although the remote assessments have been proven to be successful there are times when the remote methodology is not a viable option. To ensure the integrity of the QMS Brands is protected robustly, QMS are now considering the resumption of some physical assessments where appropriate and in line with Government guidance.

To provide the opportunity to re-introduce physical assessments whilst recognising the risks presented due to COVID-19 the following risk mitigations have been considered:

- Continue with the full remote assessment process where feasible whilst introducing a gradual return to physical assessments
- Where a remote assessment is not possible, physical assessments will be prioritised based on the following criteria:
 - High Risk member
 - An overdue assessment
 - New applicants
 - Response to complaint or concern
- Where a physical assessment is required, and deemed possible, members will be requested to submit their documents to a portal or direct to the assessors for review prior to any physical visit to a member, thus limiting the time on farm and reducing risk to both member and assessor
- To ensure the safety of both assessors and members, a COVID-19 risk assessment will be conducted prior to every assessment to determine if there are any vulnerabilities that would either prevent or increase risk to member or assessor if a physical assessment took place
- Where a member is categorised as vulnerable and identified as requiring a physical assessment the member may choose to have a representative present during the assessment to act on their behalf. Where this is not possible the assessors will refer the member to LR for discussion with QMS



- The following strict protocol will be followed during any physical assessment by all assessors:
 - Park car in a suitably distanced area or as directed by the member
 - Wear suitable PPE which will be removed and replaced for each assessment- face mask, gloves, coverall or waterproofs
 - Maintain social distancing, for example stop handshaking, good hygiene
 - Only conduct the assessment with one representative of the business they are assessing
 - The assessor will request that the member/representative manages all “touchpoints” during the assessment e.g. gates, doors
 - On farm times will be kept as short as possible with pre submission of documents (where possible) and a good audit plan with members informing assessors of the most efficient route around the unit to prevent any need to re trace the direction of travel
 - Will not travel in vehicles with the representative during the assessment or travelling to an additional unit (If applicable)
 - Will respectfully decline any refreshments
 - Restricted access to a rest room facility (Adhering to site/member guidance)
 - Will not enter house or office – if records need to be reviewed, they will do so outside in a suitable location and always wearing disposable gloves
 - Management of the completion of the assessment and associated documents, e.g. visit record, will be at the discretion of the member with the assessor maintaining social distancing and wearing PPE
 - Remove all PPE after the assessment – double bagged and disposed in accordance with government guidelines
 - Cleanse hands using hand sanitiser after the visit
 - Assessor or member/representative will have the right to terminate the assessment at any time should they be made aware of a risk to their safety as a result of COVID-19

5. Guidance on Assessing within the Tiers in Scotland (November 2020)

- Following on from government guidance, assessments will continue as default physical with remote as back up for QMS, where there are restrictions in place in each area, assessors **must** adhere to government guidance whereby they do not travel to and from different tiers.
 - If an assessor is in an area that they are unable to travel they should default to remote.

Continue to monitor and review the situation

- QMS will continue to monitor the government guidance and the progress with resuming physical assessments.
- We will review this 5-point plan on a regular basis and can maintain, return to a previous stage or develop further stages in due course.