



Quality Meat Scotland Processor Assurance Scheme

Assessment Information

Overview

This document explains the processor assessment process for Scheme applicants and for existing members of the QMS Processor Assurance Scheme. It provides an overview of assessor training, the frequency and duration of assessments, and the post-assessment process. It should be read in conjunction with Appendix 1 and 2 of the 2022 QMS Processor Assurance Scheme Standards and the Certification Body Regulations, which can be accessed on the QMS website at www.qmscotland.co.uk/processor-standards.

QMS annually reviews and sets the Processor Assurance Scheme Standards. Assessments are contracted by QMS to an independent inspection and certification company. This is currently Lloyd's Register, which is accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) to ISO/IEC 17065, the international standard for product conformity certification, and was the first UK company in the food and farming sector to achieve such accreditation in June 1997. QMS has agreed procedures for these assessments with Lloyd's Register, which is regularly (at least once each year) audited by UKAS to ensure these procedures are maintained.

Training of Assessors and Consistency of Assessment

Lloyd's Register aims to recruit assessors with a minimum of five years' experience related to the food industry, a formal Animal Welfare Training qualification and, ideally, with formal appropriate academic qualifications. Assessors complete an intensive training programme covering QMS Assurance Scheme Standards, related legislation, codes of practice, assessing skills, an overview of animal welfare assessment procedures and food safety issues. They become approved only after shadowing experienced assessors and assessing several assured processor businesses under supervision.

To help to ensure consistency of assessment across all assured processors throughout Scotland, assessor performance is monitored by reviewing their reports and by a programme of witnessed assessments at assured processor sites.

Frequency of Assessments

- New applicants wishing to join the Scheme will be contacted by an assessor, following receipt of application and payment, to make an appointment for an assessment.
- The date and time for an initial or surveillance assessment will be scheduled by prior agreement to take place within four weeks of receipt of application and payment.

- Existing Scheme members will be assessed at least once every assessment year.
- The interval between assessments may vary slightly from year to year to allow the business to be seen at different times.

Duration of Assessments

The duration of an assessment will vary depending on the size of unit and nature of the business and may take between one-and-a-half and three hours. The assessment visit will run more smoothly if the Assessment Checklist is completed in advance and documents are readily available for the assessor. The Assessment Checklist can be found on page 6 of the 2022 QMS Processor Assurance Scheme Standards.

The Assessment Visit

The assessor will begin by explaining how they will conduct the assessment. Normally they will assess the facilities first, followed by a review of documents appropriate to the Scheme Standards.

They will look in particular at:

- Facilities
- General cleaning and hygiene
- Records and documents as required
- Traceability systems.

If the assessor finds anything that does not comply with the Scheme Standards, they will explain their findings and the reason and record it as a non-compliance. Non-compliances may be raised as a:

Minor non-compliance

Where an attempt has been made to meet the requirements of the Standard(s), but the Standard(s) is not being complied with in full. There will be no serious risk to animal health and welfare or food safety.

Major non-compliance

Where there has been no attempt to meet the requirements of the Standard(s), or there is a serious risk to animal health and welfare and/or food safety.

Recommendation

A recommendation is an advisory clause which does not require any corrective action.

At the end of the assessment, the assessor will leave a conclusion of their findings. Where corrective action is necessary, the assessor will explain the nature of the evidence required and the timescale for submitting this corrective



- information. If in agreement with the findings, a signature on the visit report will be requested.

The Post-Assessment Process

The assessor submits a report describing their findings of the assessment to the Certification Body office, where it is independently reviewed by the Certification team and in the event of:

- **No non-compliance(s) identified:**
A letter will be issued by the Certification Body confirming approved status.
- **Non-compliance(s) identified:**
Satisfactory evidence must be received by the Certification Body within 30 days from the date of assessment, to show that non-compliance(s) has been rectified. The assessor will explain what format is acceptable and this corrective action evidence must be submitted to the Certification Body by post, email or fax, along with a copy of the visit report left by the assessor.

Examples of evidence:

- Copies of documents or records
- Before and after photographs
- Copies of invoices to show work has been carried out.

If more than 30 days is reasonably required, please contact the Certification Body as soon as possible after the assessment and at least within 30 days, to discuss a possible extension. A request will be made for a 'statement of intent' to be completed and returned, which explains the plan of action and proposed timescale.

Note: New applicants will become assured only after any non-compliances have been rectified and corrective actions reviewed, after which time the Certification Body will send a letter confirming assured status and issue a Certificate of Conformity.

Minor non-compliance(s) identified:

Satisfactory evidence must be received by the Certification Body **within 30 days from the date of assessment** to show that non-compliance(s) have been rectified. Holding(s) will retain **approved status** during this period. Submitted evidence will then be reviewed along with the assessment report and if the Certification Body is satisfied that the Standards are now being met, it will issue a letter confirming assured status.

Major non-compliance(s) identified:

A letter will be issued by the Certification Body confirming that the approval status of the processing business has been withdrawn and the **Certificate of Conformity** is then invalid. Any livestock processed for QMS members during this time will affect the Scotch eligibility of the animals.

Satisfactory evidence must be received by the Certification

Body **within 30 days from the date of assessment** to prove that non-compliance(s) have been rectified. If a revisit is required to verify that the Scheme Standards are now being met, this will be advised by letter and may incur an additional cost.

Submitted evidence will then be reviewed with the assessment report. If the Certification Body is satisfied that Standards are now being met, a Certificate of Conformity will be issued along with a letter confirming the date of reinstatement of approved status.

Failure to submit evidence within 30 days from the date of assessment:

If the Certification Body does not receive satisfactory evidence **within 30 days from the date of assessment**, to show that non-compliances have been rectified, a letter will be issued notifying that the approval status of the processing business has been withdrawn and the Certificate of Conformity is invalid. It will then be necessary to reapply to join the Scheme, pay a non-refundable subscription fee, undertake a reassessment and a new membership number will be issued.

Revisits

During the assessment year, the Certification Body may carry out revisits after the routine assessment, to verify corrective action for non-compliances. This may incur an additional cost to the member, which will be advised at that time. The assessor may be accompanied by a Certification Body colleague, a Scottish SPCA representative or a UKAS representative, to monitor the assessment performance. In these circumstances, the Scheme requires members to allow access to their premises for the purpose and observation of the assessment.

Spot-Checks

Processing Scheme members may be subject to spot-check visits to ensure ongoing compliance with the Standards. These may be triggered by information from farmers, other parts of the supply chain, general public, press, government agencies or previous assessment history. The assessor must be given access to the member's unit(s) to conduct these visits. In line with Certification Regulations, where a member does not reasonably accommodate a spot-check, this may result in withdrawal from the Scheme.



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