Explanatory notes to the Guideline

Agriculture
Cattle Farming

As of: 12.06.2026

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In addition to the Guideline cattle farming, the subsequent document contains further explanations on the criteria required in the guideline. These serve as an aid to interpretation and are to be understood as related requirements.

Notes (on legal requirements or other framework conditions) and ***Suggestions*** (for process assurance or as management aid) are identified by *italic text*. Notes and suggestions are not QS requirements, are not checked and are not included in the evaluation.

1 Fundamentals

From which point onwards must the QS criteria be complied with?
By signing the declaration of participation and power of attorney, the company commits to comply with all QS requirements. The date of the declaration of participation and power of attorney is therefore the start date for QS.

As of the start of the QS participation, the QS requirements also apply to additional purchases: Feed must be purchased from a supplier eligible to deliver into the QS scheme. The origin of the feed purchased before the start date is not included in the evaluation. It is not necessary to clear the feed store first; these feeds can be used up and the cattle can be marketed as QS animals after a successful audit.

What is a company or location?
The entire location is always considered, which is defined by the location number and production scope. The location number is usually the registration number according to the Livestock Transport Regulation (in Germany VVVO number/Balis number/Hi-Tier number). The location number must be 15 characters long and start with the ISO code for the respective country. If the number is not 15 characters long, you can customise the number by adding zeros to the front). The production scope represents the branch of company segment or the specialisation of the company.

All sheds, areas and installations belonging to a location number are considered. A drawing of the company and layout plans shows the divisions of the company. In addition, the entire area of the company will be inspected, e. g. when the hygiene on the farm is evaluated.

What are "cows from fattening after milk production" (cf. list of production scopes)?
Cows from fattening after milk production are dairy cows that are fattened out after being used for milk production before being marketed as animals for slaughter. These cows belong to production scope 1001 cattle production.

Which persons are considered 'unauthorised third parties'?
Unauthorised third parties are always those persons who have no access rights or only access rights for certain tasks or areas. Depending on the requirements, the group of persons can vary greatly here. While, for example, In such cases, access is often prohibited for certain employees, and in any case for technicians, tradesmen or even family members who are not entrusted with the treatment of the animals. Medicines must therefore be stored in such a way that they are not accessible to these persons. When assessing whether certain areas are sufficiently protected against unauthorised access, it is therefore always necessary to consider who belongs to this group. When assessing whether certain areas are sufficiently protected against unauthorised access, it is therefore always necessary to consider who belongs to this group.

Who is a supplier?
For the purposes of verifying the eligibility of delivery, all locations, companies and persons who supply a livestock owner with certain goods (e.g. animals, certain feed or feed additives) or services (e.g. livestock transport or the use of mobile feed milling and mixing plants) count as suppliers. Suppliers therefore include, for example, the company of origin of purchased livestock, the feed producer or trader, livestock transport companies, feed transport companies or mobile feed milling and mixing plants. The respective requirements for the procurement of goods or services are regulated in criteria *3.1.3 [K.O.] Origin and marketing; 3.1.5 Livestock transport; 3.3.4 [K.O.] Feed procurement* and *3.3.8 [K.O.] Use of service providers for feed production*.

At which time must the eligibility of delivery of suppliers/carriers etc. be checked?
It is decisive that feed suppliers, livestock owners, livestock transport companies etc. are eligible to deliver at the time of delivery of livestock or feed or at the time of transporting livestock. Therefore, the query of the eligibility of delivery should be checked up-to-date at the time of delivery or on the day of the service. The eligibility of delivery into the QS scheme is checked in the software platform (www.q-s.de/softwareplattform/en/) under the scheme participant search. There, for example, the eligibility of delivery can be checked by entering the location number of the company of origin.

How should delivery authorisation be checked?
Feed and feed additives, animals or services may only be sourced from QS-authorised locations. The decisive factor here is the corresponding delivery authorisation in the QS database at the time of delivery/service provision.
In addition to the query in the scheme participant search (QS Softwareplatform), the individual customer and supplier list in the QS database can also be used. There, for example, the delivery authorisation can be queried by entering the location number of the farm of origin. A check of the delivery authorisation is relevant for the following criteria: *3.1.3 [K.O.] Origin and marketing*, *3.1.5 Livestock transport, 3.3.4 [K.O.] Feed procurement*, *3.3.8 [K.O.] Use of service providers for feed production*. A quick guide to checking the delivery authorisation of a location in the QS system can be found here.

2 General requirements

What are critical events in the context of QA incident and crisis management?
Critical events are incidents that pose a threat to humans, animals, the environment, assets, or the QS system as a whole, or that could become a threat to these. These include, among other things, the official closure of the business in the event of an epidemic, residues (e.g., contaminants) in feed, product recalls, unauthorized access by third parties to the business, or negative or sensationalist reports in the media in connection with the business itself.

2.1 General system requirements

2.1.1 General company data

What must a company sketch or plan look like?
A company sketch or plan must be structured in such a way that all buildings including their function as well as all facilities and storage areas for operating resources can be clearly identified.

The company plan can be designed as a map, aerial photograph, sketch or similar, whereby drawings do not have to be true to scale. In principle, any form of documentation is conceivable, provided that a clear assignment is possible (e.g. map with explanations and/or legend).

To be documented are e.g. (non-finalised list):

- Shed buildings or livestock areas (incl. fixed recovery compartments/pens).
- Feed storage facilities (e.g. feed silos, grain storage, storage for mineral feed or roughage)
- Feeding facilities (e.g. feed mixing centre of liquid feeders)
- Litter storage facilities
- Medicine storage facilities
- Cleaning and disinfectant storage facilities
- Carcass storage facilities
- Locations of the company's own livestock transport vehicles
- Hygiene sluices located outside the shed building
- If applicable, stationary emergency generator
- Fixed loading facilities and fixed facilities for cleaning and disinfection of livestock transport vehicles

External buildings, facilities and storage areas for operating resources that are not located on the company grounds but are assigned to the location number must also be considered. This includes, for example, silo bale storages, field storages or external recovery bays. A general list and description/address is sufficient here.

In particular, in the case of companies or facilities which include several location numbers, it must be possible to trace which buildings or parts of buildings belong to which location number.

Which animal numbers are recorded in the QS scheme?
In the QS scheme, different animal numbers are recorded for the stage agriculture:

- Declaration of participation and power of attorney: The maximum number of animal places that can be occupied is recorded in the declaration of participation and power of attorney. For 'year-round outdoor', the average number of livestock kept per year must be reported. If the maximum number of animal places or the average number of animals kept at the location changes, this declaration must also be updated.
- Querying the number of animals in audits: The maximum number of animal places that can be occupied can also be recorded in audits. If there is no maximum number of animals that can be kept or approved animal places (e.g. in the case of year-round free-range farming), the average number of animals kept per year can be collected. This information is mandatory in the case of a failed or knock-out audit and voluntary in all other audits. The data serve as pure information, e.g. for estimating the size of the farm, for plausibility

checks and for comparison with the other recorded animal numbers. An automatic transfer of the reported animal numbers to other places (e.g. monitoring programs) does not take place.

- Antibiotics monitoring:
  The average number of occupied animal places per year is recorded for cattle housing companies. The animal numbers are entered into the database by the coordinator and are valid for one quarter at a time. If the animal numbers are not actively updated, the deposited number is automatically transferred into the next quarter. The therapy index for cattle is calculated on the basis of the average number of animal places occupied.

What data do on-farm mixers have to report to the coordinator for criterion *2.1.1 General company data*?
Companies that use agricultural primary products as feed count as on-farm mixers and must participate in feed monitoring. On-farm mixing companies must always report the following up-to-date data to the coordinator for criterion *2.1.1 General company data*: Type of feed used, number of animal places and quantity of feed. The coordinator must be informed immediately of any changes in the type of feed used or the number of animal places or feed quantity. The documentation itself is regulated in criterion *3.3.6 Feed production (on-farm mixer).*

What is the use of an emergency plan and where must it be kept?
The purpose of the emergency plan is to ensure proper care of the animals in the event that the head of operations/farm manager or the person responsible for looking after the animals is unexpectedly absent or if important technical installations designed to supply fresh air, water or feed to the animals no longer function (e. g. in the event of a power failure).

Suggestion: *The emergency plan should be clearly visible (placed) at a central place and at every location.*

Suggestion: *When filling-in the emergency plan, the "Explanations Emergency Plan Livestock Farming" should be taken into account.*

Which contact details must be included in the emergency plan?
The emergency plan must include at least the contact details of a contact person who is familiar with the situation at the company/location and the attending farm veterinarian. If the care of the livestock is dependent on electricity (e.g. ventilation, alarm system, feeding, watering or heating system), the contact details of a technical emergency service (e.g. electrician) must also be included. If the supply of air/feed/water to the livestock on a company is not dependent on electrically operated systems, this information is not necessary.

Must a printed paper of incident be present in the company?
No. Every animal owner must be able to demonstrate how they will inform QS quickly and comprehensively in the event of an incident or crisis. We recommend using the QS incident report form or the online notification form on the QS website.

3 Cattle farming requirements

3.1 Traceability and labelling

3.1.1 Purchasing, incoming goods and services

Must bag tags of feed and feed additives be kept?
Yes, because the batch number, which is needed for the exact allocation of the goods to the producer, is indicated on this. Since the purchase of feed must be documented in order to be able to trace it at any time, all bag tags must be assigned to the delivery notes and kept. This also helps in the event of a complaint and recourse claims. If the batch number is not indicated on the bag tag but on another part of the bag, this part of the bag should be kept in combination with the bag tag to be able to guarantee an allocation to the delivery note.

Instead of keeping the bag tag, other possibilities for documenting the batch number are conceivable, such as digital documentation (e.g. photo of the bag tag/bag part with the batch number), handwritten transfer of the batch number to the associated delivery note, keeping a register with all the necessary information and allocations, etc.

3.1.2 [K.O.] Marking and identification of livestock

Is marking with cold burning permitted?
No, the permanent identification of cattle may only be done out using ear tags or microchips.

Is the identification of cattle via microchips allowed?

Cattle owners must identify each cattle with at least two means of identification, at least one of which must be visible. Thus, exclusive identification via microchips is not allowed. However, one of the usual two ear tags can be replaced by an electronic microchip. If a cattle owner identifies his cattle with an ear tag and a microchip, he must be able to demonstrate the use of the microchip in the audit.

3.1.3 [K.O.] Origin and marketing

Is it possible to keep only a part of the animals of a location number under QS conditions?

No, the QS certification applies for the entire location. This is defined by location number (in Germany VVVO number) in combination with the production scope. All animals from the location must be kept according to the QS requirements and are traded as QS animals. The QS requirements must therefore also be complied with, even if the QS animals are not marketed into the QS scheme (e.g. because they are delivered to a butcher who does not participate in the QS scheme).

How can the livestock owner check whether the animals come from a QS-certified company?

The eligibility of delivery for the QS scheme is checked in the QS database (QS Softwareplatform) under the Scheme Participant Search. The eligibility of delivery can be viewed there by specifying the location number of the company of origin. Especially if animals are regularly purchased from the same companies, the use of an individual recipients and supplier list is recommended as an alternative. The livestock owner can create this in the QS database and is then automatically notified by e-mail if the eligibility of delivery of a deposited recipient or supplier changes. Brief instructions to check a location's eligibility of delivery in the QS scheme can be found here.

Must all calves come from a QS-certified location?

No, the purchase of calves and rearing animals is free. Also, there are no requirements for the purchase of calves for calf fattening. However, it must be ensured that the animals have been kept on a QS company for the last six months or, from January 1, 2027, the last eight months prior to slaughter (veal calves from the time they are weaned from their mother or, in the case of milk-fed calves, from the time they are taken from the farm where they were born, and in the case of rose-fed calves from the time they are taken from the farm where they were reared, until they are slaughtered). If animals are bought during this last fattening phase, they must be from a QS company.

Can animals intermediately be kept on a non-QS location?

Yes, it is possible to keep cattle intermediately on a non-QS location and then take them back. However, this does not apply to the last six months or, from January 1, 2027, the last eight months prior to slaughter.

How long must cattle be kept on a company with the eligibility to deliver into the QS scheme?

All (also bought in) cattle must be kept in a company with the eligibility to deliver into the QS scheme without interruption for at least the last six months or, from January 1, 2027, the last eight months prior to slaughtering, and fattening calves after weaning for the entire duration of the fattening process (max. age of eight months) from weaning or, in the case of milk-fed fattening, from the time of moving to the fattening farm, and in the case of rose-fed fattening, from the time of moving to the rearing farm.

If cattle are purchased from a company with the eligibility to deliver into the QS scheme, the rearing period of the company of origin can be taken into account. Companies that are QS-certified and eligible to deliver as well as "QM-Milch"-certified companies that are registered in the QS database and are eligible to deliver, count as companies with the eligibility to deliver into the QS scheme.

What must be considered when marketing cattle from a company that is eligible to deliver for QS but is not a QS animal?

Cattle that have not been kept on companies with QS eligibility of delivery for at least the last six months or, from January 1, 2027, the last eight months prior to slaughtering, must not be marketed as QS animals. If such animals are marketed from a company with eligibility of delivery for QS, the recipient must be actively informed that the animal is a non-QS animal. For this purpose, the cattle can, for example, be clearly marked or the livestock owner adds a corresponding note to the delivery note. Other possibilities are also conceivable, provided that the livestock owner ensures that the information reaches the recipient.

Under which conditions may pregnant animals be delivered for slaughter?

Note: *Generally, it is forbidden to deliver animals for slaughter, which are in the last third of pregnancy.*

The prohibition does not apply, when the killing of the animal has been prescribed or ordered in accordance with animal health provisions or is necessary in individual cases in accordance with veterinary indications and there are no overriding reasons for animal welfare to prevent a levy for slaughter. In this case the veterinary has to hand over a confirmation to the livestock owner immediately, from which his conditions including the identified indication result. The certification needs to be kept at least three years by the livestock owner.

What proof of purchase or trade of QS animals must be available?
If cattle are sold, a copy or carbon copy of the delivery document must remain with both the buyer and the sender of the animals. It is important that at any time it is clear which animals have come to the company from which sender and which animals have left the company for which addressee. For documentation purposes, copies of the delivery documents - i.e. delivery notes and food chain information - can be used here.

3.1.6 Animal transport

How can the livestock owner check whether the livestock transport company is approved for QS?
The eligibility of delivery into the QS scheme is checked in the database (QS Softwareplatform) under the scheme participant search. There the eligibility of delivery can be looked up. Alternatively, it is possible to use an individual recipient and supplier list. The livestock owner can create this in the QS database and is then automatically notified by e-mail if the eligibility of delivery of a deposited livestock transporter changes. A quick guide to checking the eligibility of delivery of a location in the QS scheme can be found here.

Who has to check whether a livestock transport company is eligible to deliver?
In general, the person who orders a livestock transport must ensure that the carrier is QS-approved.

(If the transport to another company or abattoir is ordered by a livestock trader company, this company must ensure that the carrier is QS approved).

If the livestock transport company, on his part, instructs an external transport service provider, then the livestock transport company must ensure that the subcontractor is eligible to deliver for QS.

An exception to this is the transport of animals that do not have to be obtained from QS companies, such as calves. In this case, the transport to the acquiring QS company does not have to be carried out by a QS-approved transporter and consequently, the transporter's QS approval does not have to be checked.

When does the livestock owner have to check the eligibility of delivery of a livestock carrier/transport company?
If a livestock owner orders the transport of his QS livestock to another company or to the abattoir, he must check the carrier's eligibility to deliver.

If livestock is delivered to a livestock company, the livestock owner must also check the carrier's eligibility to deliver - regardless of whether he has ordered the transport or not.

If livestock is picked up from the livestock company and the livestock owner has not ordered the carrier himself, he does not have to check the carrier's eligibility to deliver.

If livestock is to be delivered to a non-QS company, the livestock transporter does not need to be QS certified, as the QS chain is interrupted, and the animals lose their QS status.

3.2 Husbandry, care and handling

Which animals can be considered as not transportable?
Animals that are unable to enter the means of transport under their own power due to illness, pathological conditions, physical weakness or injury are considered unfit for transport.

Injured animals and animals with physiological weaknesses or pathological conditions are considered unfit for transport. These include animals that

- are unable to walk, or can only do so with great pain after being unrolled,
- have limb or pelvic fractures,
- show heavy bleeding,
- show a severely disturbed general condition or
- are obviously suffering from prolonged severe pain.

The transport ban applies in particular in the following cases:

- The animals cannot move without pain or assistance.
- The animals have large, deep wounds or severe prolapse of internal organs.
- Pregnant animals in an advanced stage of pregnancy (90 % or more) or animals that have given birth less than seven days ago.
- They are newborn mammals and the umbilical wound is not completely healed

Animals may generally be considered fit to travel if:

- The animals are only slightly injured or ill and the transport would not cause additional suffering.

- The animals are transported under veterinary supervision for the purpose of, or following, medical treatment or diagnosis. However, such transport is only permitted if it does not cause unnecessary suffering to the animals concerned.
- The animals have undergone a veterinary intervention which is usual in farming practice and the wounds must have completely healed.

Who is responsible for ensuring that the animals are fit to travel?
Both the delivering livestock owner and the loading transporter are responsible for ensuring that only animals that are fit to travel are loaded.

What is prohibited when handling animals during loading?
It is prohibited to
- beat or kick animals.
- exert pressure on particularly sensitive parts of the body that cause unnecessary pain or suffering.
- hoist animals using mechanical devices attached to their bodies.
- tug or pull animals by the head, ears, horns, legs, tail or hair coat.
- Use pointed driving aids
- Tying animals by their horns or nose rings.

3.2.1 [K.O.] Monitoring and care of livestock

Does QS require annual further training?
No. ***Suggestion:*** *Every livestock owner and all employees should get further training regularly.*

What are suitable control criteria for assessing animal health?
Control criteria for assessing animal health include:

- Animal distribution on the usable area
- Feed and water intake
- Animal movement
- Frequency and type of breathing
- Condition and cleanliness of the hair coat
- Cleanliness of the udder
- Changes to eyes and nostrils
- Faecal consistency

What are the legal requirements for the operational self-assessment of animal protection?
Note: *In accordance with § 11 section 8* ***Animal Welfare Law****, every livestock owner must assure due to the self-assessment, that § 2 of the* ***Animal Welfare Law*** *will be fulfilled. In particular appropriate animal related properties (animal protection indicators) must be collected and evaluated.*

3.2.2 [K.O.] General farming requirements

Can a free-range company also participate in the QS system?
Yes, within the QS scheme free range and indoor housing systems are applicable.

How can livestock on pasture be given protection from adverse weather conditions?
The animals must be given sufficient protection from bad weather, such as extreme heat, storm or heavy rain. It must be ensured that all animals can use the weather protection simultaneously. The weather protections must provide shadow and wind protection and should also provide a dry lying area if possible. Shelters, but also natural protection possibilities (e.g. leaf-covered trees, hedges, forest) can be used for this purpose.

If there is no weather protection on the pasture, it must be possible to bring the animals into a shed in case of bad weather.

Are there exact requirements for the calving area?
No. ***Suggestion:*** *For calving a separate calving pen which is easy to clean should be provided.*

May the cattle be given foot cuffs?
No, a permanent fixation of animals is not in conformity with animal welfare, as the freedom of movement of the animals is restricted inadmissibly. This also applies during a period around the (expected) calving date. Foot cuffs may only be applied if

- this has been assessed as medically necessary for an individual animal after examination by a veterinarian and expressly ordered in writing in the individual case (a blanket approval/arrangement for all animals around the calving date, as a "standing aid" or for non-medical reasons is not permitted).

- in the sense of § 10 Abs. 15 of the accident prevention regulations animal husbandry the foot cuff is used as an alternative to other means (e. g. a striking bow) for the protection during milking. This does not cover the application of foot cuffs beyond the period of milking and is therefore not permitted. (This refers to the time between fitting and cleaning, milking itself and removal of the cluster and teat disinfection).
- this serves to protect the animals from injury for the period of the actual calving process. However, the period is strictly limited to the time between the beginning of labour and the dispatch of the placenta.

May noserings that prevent the cattle from suckling or normal noserings be used?
The use of noserings that prevent the cattle from suckling is permitted, provided that the preparations do not injure any tissue (nasal septum) and can be removed again at any time. The use of noserings that prevent the cattle from suckling or normal noserings that penetrate the nasal septum is prohibited. An exception to this prohibition is the individual case where a nosering is inserted according to a veterinary indication or it is a male animal intended for breeding (stock bull). In such cases, the individual veterinary indication and the insertion by the veterinarian must be documented in the audit.

Note: *According to the German accident prevention regulations, bulls > 12 months may only be led with a nose ring.*

May aids be used so that animals in group housing do not jump up on each other?
Natural behaviour such as jumping up during heat must not be permanently prevented. In order to prevent extreme unrest and mutual injuries, e. g. in bull sheds, it is acceptable to partially limit the bay upwards (e. g. by wooden poles). The limitations must be installed at a sufficient distance from the animals so that they cannot bump into them in normal stance (orientation level: approx. 25 cm above withers height). These limitations must not contain any electrical wires or similar.

May cow tail holders be used?
Yes, the fixation of the tail (e. g. by cow tail holders for better cleanliness in the tethering barn) is permitted, provided that it is ensured that neither the tissue is destroyed, nor the freedom of movement is restricted. The natural behaviour (expulsion of flies etc.) must be able to be lived out.

May electrical wires or similar be used in the livestock area in the shed?
No. The use of electric wires or similar is not permitted in the livestock area in the shed. No electricity-carrying devices may be attached to the inside of the bays in the shed. It is conceivable to conduct electricity outside the area in which the animals are kept, e.g. on the top of the walls of the bays (which themselves do not carry electricity).

Is the use of electric cow trainers permitted?
The permanent use of cow trainers does not comply with animal welfare regulations. The short-term use of cow trainers for training purposes is possible if the cow trainer can be adjusted horizontally and vertically for each individual standing position.

May cattle's tail be shortened?
The shortening of the tail belongs to the general prohibition of amputation and is therefore only permitted in individual cases due to a veterinary indication (e.g. serious injury) and may only be carried out by the veterinarian.

Differing from this, the competent authority can authorise the shortening of the connective tissue end of the tail of male calves of less than three months of age by means of elastic rings if it can be demonstrated that the intervention is essential in the individual case for the intended use for the protection of the animals. In this case, an official permit must be presented during the audit.

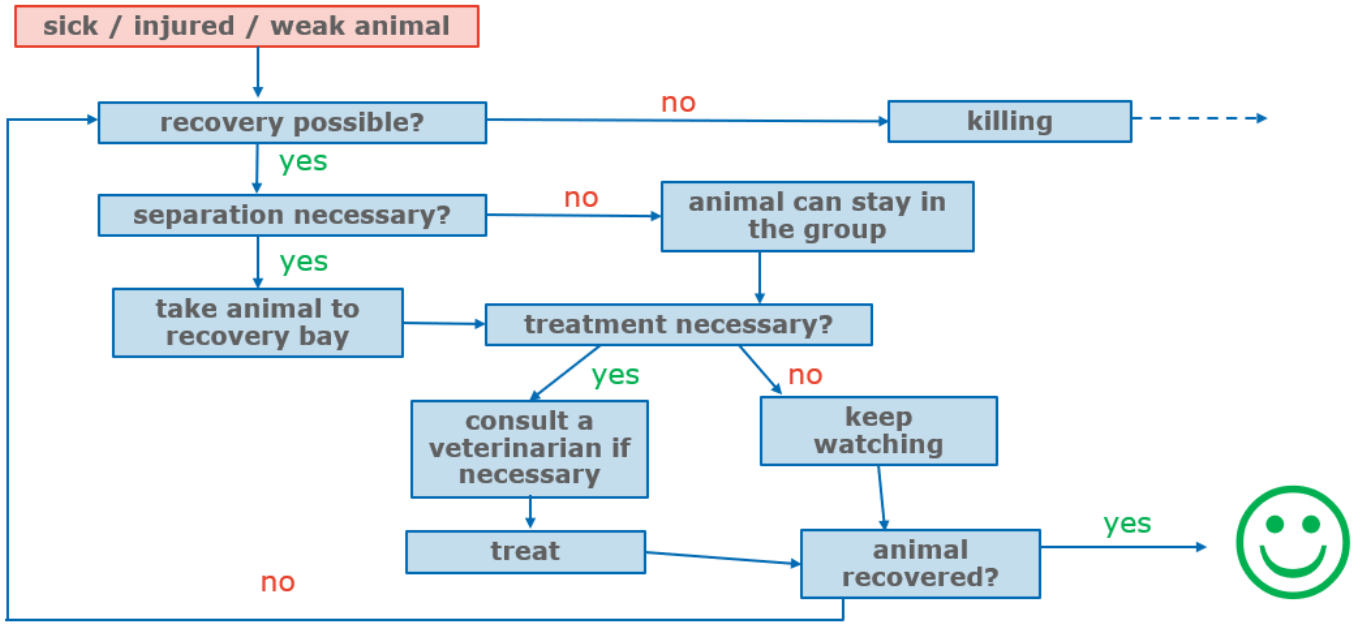
For female breeds a prophylactic shortening of the tail is not permitted.

What should be considered for tethered housing?
According to good professional practice, it must be possible for the animals to lie down, stand up and rest in a manner typical of the species. They need sufficient space for head and body movement. The manager must not obstruct the cattle. The length and width of the stand and the tethering systems should always be adapted to the size and developmental stage of the animals. The fit of the tethers must be checked daily and adjusted if necessary. Lying surfaces should be made of a soft elastic material.

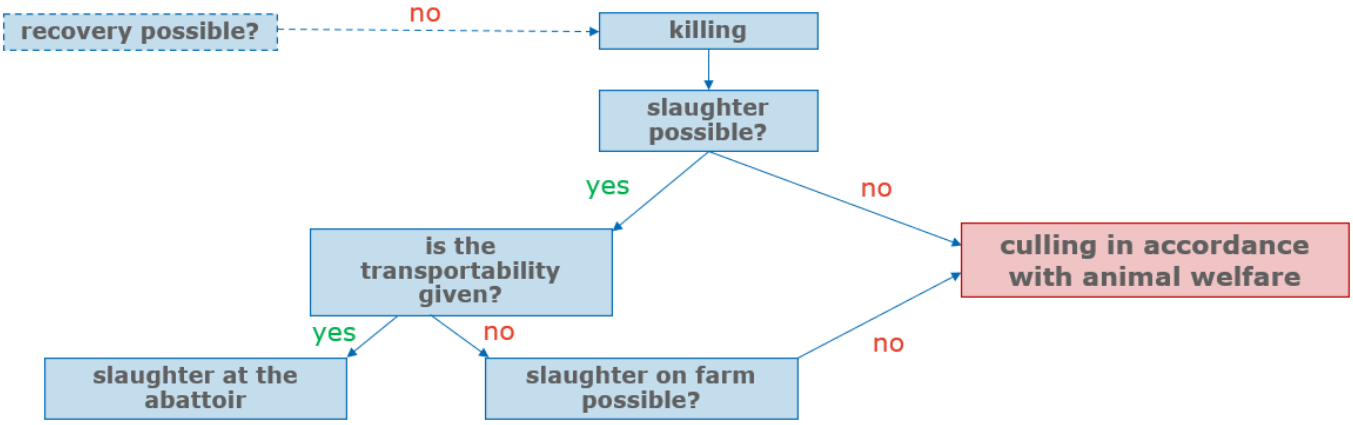
3.2.3 [K.O.] Handling sick and injured animals

Who decides whether an animal should be treated or culled?
In many cases the decision is made by the livestock owner/care personnel himself. If he cannot or does not want to decide for himself, it is in his responsibility to consult a veterinarian in order to clarify the situation together, so that a decision about the culling can be made.

The following illustration can serve as a decision-making aid:



If recovery is not possible, further decisions and options will have to be made regarding the situation:



Do sick and/or injured animals always have to be separated?
It is crucial that the affected animal can drink, eat and recover without being disturbed by other animals. Intensive animal observation - with increased monitoring frequency if necessary - is important in this case. It is also important to consider whether and, if so, when the animal can be re-housed in the group.

Separating sick or injured animals is not always necessary, it depends on the specific situation.

Are animals allowed to be tethered in the recovery bay?
No, sick and/or injured animals that need to be separated may not be tethered in the recovery bay, except on individual veterinary indication. Short-term fixation for treatment is permitted.

Do sick and injured animals in tethered housing always have to be separated to a recovery bay?
In principle, it must be decided on a case-by-case basis whether an animal must be separated into a recovery bay for treatment or recovery. The responsibility for this lies initially with the livestock owner. If it is possible and sensible to treat and/or recover tethered animals in the tethering area, the animal can remain in the tethering area. If this is not the case, the animal must be separated into a recovery bay.

How big must the soft litter or pad in recovery bays be?

The soft litter or pad in recovery bays must be large enough to allow all housed animals to lie on it at the same time. The soft pad can also be offered in the form of lying boxes with soft litter or pads. In this case, there must be a separate lying box for each animal.

What has to be considered when recovery bays are used on an inter-company basis?

Inter-company use of recovery bays is conceivable in principle - e.g. if several location numbers are located on one company site. However, if recovery bays are used across companies, some points must be considered:

The available space in the jointly used recovery bays must be sufficient for the animals of all locations. Irrespective of whether the animals are moved between companies or within a company, it must be possible to trace the gentle movement of the animals to the recovery bay, especially regarding any restrictions on their transportability. The use of "off-site" recovery bays is always inadmissible if animals that are not fit for transport would first have to be loaded for transfer to the recovery bay. In such cases, suitable alternative accommodation must always be provided.

If the animals are moved to another location for recovery, this must be documented accordingly in the stock registers.

Do livestock owners need a certificate of expertise for culling?

Anyone who carries out culling must have the necessary knowledge and skills. Generally, the livestock owner does not require an official proof of competence.

How must cattle be properly stunned and culled?

Selected methods for stunning and culling:

- Euthanasia by the veterinarian
- Bolt shot and exsanguination
- Bolt shot and spinal cord destruction

The most common method of culling cattle on the farm is euthanasia by the veterinarian.

A method which the livestock owner can use is the bolt shot with subsequent killing. Since a bolt shot only leads to anaesthesia of the animal, it must always be carried out in combination with a killing method such as exsanguination or spinal cord destruction. If breathing starts again after the bolt shot, the animal blinks or tries to stand up, it must be refired immediately. The animal must be killed as soon as possible after stunning.

Suggestion: *In order to achieve effective anaesthesia, the correct approach of the bolt firing device is important. Despite extensive injuries/damage to the brain, bolt-shot stunned animals can wake up again and experience pain!*

The cut for exsanguination should be made quickly and in one go from ear to ear through the throat. All soft tissues of the neck must be severed. Afterwards the head of the animal should be pulled into the neck so that the vascular openings do not close again, and the blood drain is secured.

The brain/spinal cord destroyer is a stick that is inserted into the bolt hole. For optimal insertion, the chin must be pulled towards the neck so that the brain/spinal cord destroyer can easily reach from the brain to the spinal cord canal. The aim is to mechanically destroy the brain stem and parts of the spinal cord canal as quickly as possible, preferably by circular movements in all directions and by pushing the rod back and forth in the brain capsule. The destruction of these areas leads to the elimination of vital functions.

Suggestion: *Competent handling of the equipment for stunning and killing as well as maintenance and storage in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions are important prerequisites for culling in accordance with animal welfare regulations. The necessary equipment (knives or spinal cord destroyers) must be available immediately after the shot.*

Is it permitted to cull an animal by shooting it with a firearm (bullet shot)?

Under certain conditions, stunning and killing by firearm is possible. This procedure may only be used if a shooting permit has been issued. A permit must be obtained from the relevant regulatory authority and presented in the audit. The hunting licence does not entitle to cull with a firearm.

What must be considered if the culling is carried out by a person external to the company?

If the culling of animals is occasionally or principally carried out by a person external to the company (e.g. veterinarian, butcher, competent neighbour, etc.), this must be plausibly comprehensible in the audit. If, for example, the veterinarian is commissioned with the culling of animals in an emergency, this can be proven with invoices or receipts.

3.2.4 Shed floor

Are there special provisions for older cattle?

*No. **Suggestion:** For older cattle, the slit width should not exceed 3.6 cm and the tread width should be roughly 10 cm.*

Which material is suitable for the floor layers in bays for calves?

Rubber floors or other soft/elastic materials such as straw bedding can be used as elastic layers.

3.2.5 Shed climate and noise

Which action should be taken if the ventilation system fails?

The emergency plan, which contains contact details for the technical emergency service, provides assistance.

If the ventilation system is not working, the air supply must be restored as quickly as possible. If the ventilation system fails due to technical defects other than a power failure (e.g., failure of ventilation motors), the animals must be supplied with fresh air as quickly as possible.

For example, the (compartment) windows/gates/doors or ventilation flaps can be opened as a short-term emergency measure. It is important to note whether the number and size of the (compartment) windows/gates/doors ensure a temporary supply of fresh air that is sufficient for the livestock.
If the (compartment) windows/gates/doors cannot be opened, other measures must be taken to provide an emergency supply of fresh air.

If a ventilation system can be switched to gravity ventilation by opening certain flaps to ensure that the animals are supplied with air, this can also be used as a substitute device. Emergency ventilation via external fans on the compartment doors is also conceivable. It is always crucial to ensure that the animals are supplied with sufficient fresh air.

What temperature should be in the lying area?

***Suggestion:** The air temperature should not exceed 25° C in the area where the cattle lie down.*

Which harmful gas values should be observed during ventilation?

***Suggestion:** The following values per m² of air should not be exceeded in the area where the animals are kept:*

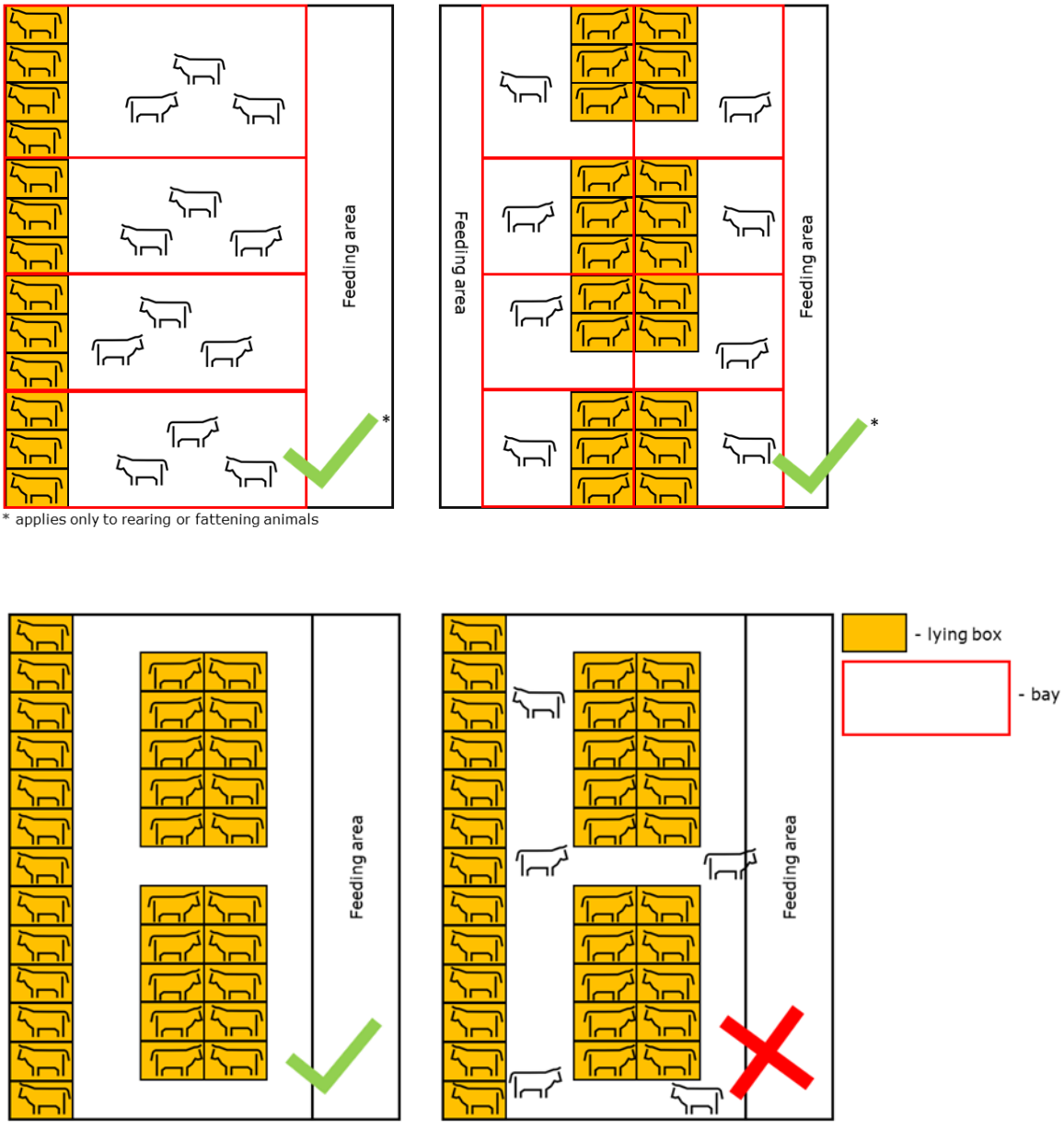
Gas	Maximum Values
Ammonia	*20 cm³*
Carbon dioxide	*3,000 cm³*
Hydrogen sulphide	*5 cm³*

3.2.7 [K.O.] Space allowances

In sheds with lying boxes, is it necessary to have a lying box for each animal?

If cattle are kept in free stall sheds with lying boxes, a lying box must be available for each animal. Typically, this type of husbandry is found in dairy farming, but this requirement must also be met for bulls and heifers if they are kept in free stall sheds.

When fattening and rearing animals are kept in bays containing individual lying boxes, it is not necessary for each animal to have a lying box available, provided that space allowances are met and all animals can lie down at the same time. In this case, the lying boxes are included in the available space. This is the case, for example, in free stall sheds with lying boxes that were previously used for dairy cattle and are now divided into smaller bays for rearing or fattening, or in pens with individual lying boxes on the back/wall side. In the following graphs some examples are sketched, showing when each animal must have a lying box and when not.



* applies only to rearing or fattening animals

Can an outdoor area be added to the unreservedly usable floor area?
The prescribed unreservedly usable floor area must be available to the animals at all times. The outdoor area can therefore only be added to the unreservedly usable floor area if it is guaranteed that it is accessible at all times. Of course, the amount of space available may be temporarily reduced for the duration of the cleaning.

Are there exceptions that calves of more than eight weeks do not have to be kept in groups?
Yes. Calves over eight weeks old do not have to be kept in groups if

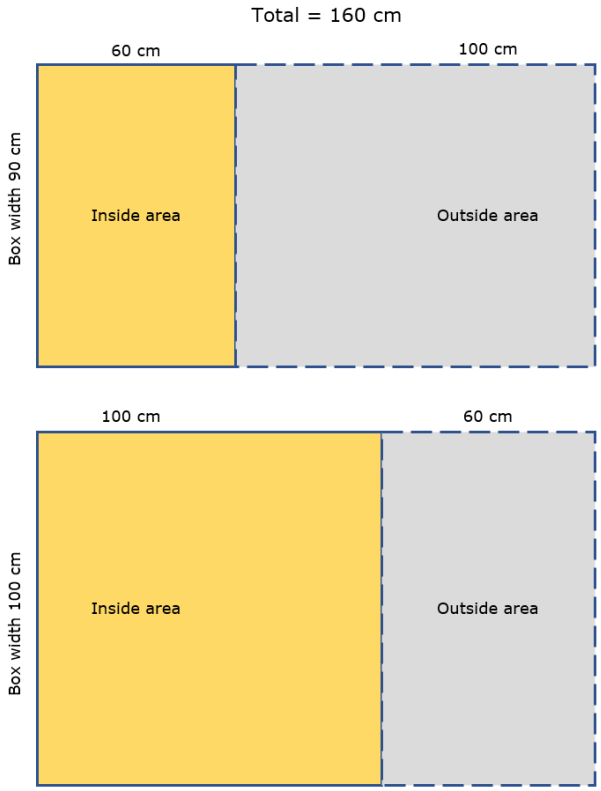
- there are not more than three calves in a company suitable for rearing in a group according to age or weight, or
- a veterinary certificate is attesting that a calf must be kept individually for health or behavioral reasons.

How wide must boxes for calves between two and eight weeks of age be?

The freely available box width for calves aged between two and eight weeks must be at least 100 cm for boxes whose lateral boundaries extend to the floor and over more than half of the box length and at least 90 cm in other boxes.

That means that the boxes must have different widths depending on which part of the box length is provided with side walls closed to the floor. If the closed side walls (e.g. of the igloo) extend over more than half of the entire box (e.g. igloo + outside area), the box width must be at least 100 cm; if the outside area without closed side walls is more than half the box length, a box width of at least 90 cm is sufficient.

The following illustration shows a simplified representation of this situation: The yellow inside area has closed side walls, the grey outside area has no side walls closed to the floor.



What must be taken into account especially when keeping fattening calves individually?

If the side walls of the bays for individual keeping are continuously open so that the calves can put their claws through, they must be at least 90 cm wide. A small deviation of the standing width of a maximum of 5 % (e.g. 88 cm instead of the required 90 cm internal clearance) can be accepted if it is ensured that the calves are generally kept in groups from the sixth week of life onwards. For new buildings (cut-off date 1 January 2021), the standing width of at least 90 cm must be maintained without deviation.

In the case of side enclosures closed to the floor, the freely available bay width must be at least 100 cm.

3.2.8 [K.O.] Alarm system

In which cases must an alarm system be installed?

According to legal regulations and the QS guideline, an alarm system must be available if the ventilation depends on an electrically operated system. This also applies to sheds with a free-range area.

Suggestion: *The functionality of the alarm system should be checked at regular intervals and these functional tests should also be documented. In case of doubt, this can be used to prove that the duty of care has been complied with.*

What must be taken into account during the functional test of the alarm system?
During the functional test of the alarm system, it must be noted that the test alarm is triggered by relevant parameters, such as the simulation of an overtemperature or a power failure. The simulation of an undertemperature and the test function of the system are not suitable.

What type of alarm system must be present in a company?
For electrically operated ventilation systems, a functioning alarm device must be present in every company. For this purpose, for example a phone dialer must be present. Which type of device (or which combination of devices) makes sense for a particular company must be decided on a case-by-case basis. It is crucial that a power failure or failure of the ventilation system is noticed immediately in any case (e.g. also during the night hours or in distant sheds) by a person who can initiate appropriate measures for remedy.

3.2.9 Emergency power supply

Can companies with solar systems use storage batteries as an emergency power supply?
Solar batteries can be used as an emergency power supply so that the animals are supplied with food, water and air also in the event of a power failure. It must be ensured that the batteries have sufficient capacity to supply the sheds with electricity in the event of a power failure.

How must be acted if the ventilation fails?
Assistance is provided by the emergency plan, in which contact details for the technical emergency service are contained.

If the ventilation stops working, the air supply must be restored as quickly as possible. In the event of a power failure, the emergency power supply must be provided, e.g. by an emergency power generator. If the ventilation has failed due to other technical defects (e.g. failure of ventilation motors), it must be ensured via a replacement device that fresh air reaches the compartments of the shed as quickly as possible.

Suggestion: *The functionality of the emergency power generator should be checked at regular intervals and these functional tests should also be documented. In case of doubt, this can be used to prove that the duty of care has been complied with.*

When do companies not need an emergency power supply?
Companies do not need an emergency power supply if both the feed and water supply of the animals and the ventilation of the shed are guaranteed independently of the electricity (e.g. gravity-ventilated shed or open shed).

It is only possible to do without an emergency power supply in sheds where the ventilation is usually operated electrically if sufficient air exchange is ensured, e.g. by fully opening the side walls as a substitute device. Simply opening the windows is not sufficient for this in most cases.

How should the ramps at loading and unloading facilities be designed?
For calves, the angle of inclination must not exceed 20° (36.4 %) and for cattle an angle of inclination of 26° (48.8 %) must not be exceeded. If the angle of inclination of the ramps is more than 10° (17.6 %), the loading system must be equipped with a device, such as crossbars, that allows the animals to climb or descend safely and without effort.

3.2.11 Dehorning of calves

Is it allowed to dehorn calves over six weeks of age?
The dehorning of calves over the age of six weeks is only allowed in individual cases according to veterinary indication. In this case, dehorning must be carried out by the veterinarian and under anaesthesia.

3.3 Feed and feeding

Which agricultural livestock owner must register with the responsible regional authorities?
Note: *In accordance with the Feed Hygiene Regulation agricultural companies that keep livestock must be registered with the responsible regional authorities. Cattle owners who use purchased, ready-to-use animal feed only are not obliged to register.*

How is feed labelled?
Feed from QS-certified manufacturers or traders, must be clearly labelled as QS products (exception: primary agricultural products, e.g. grain).
In the case of bulk deliveries, every article must be labelled as QS product on the delivery documents and bagged/packaged goods must be labelled on the bag tag or on the accompanying documents (e.g. delivery note).

If refined or distilled fatty acids, vegetable glycerine or mixed fats and oils are purchased for animal feeding, it must be clearly marked as suitable for feeding purposes.

Must the labelling of feed be checked by the livestock owner?
No. However, it should be noted that feed which is labelled as "non-QS product" or "not for feed use" may not be purchased or fed to QS animals. Suggestion: Feed must be clearly and article-related labelled.

Suggestion: *Feeds must be labelled clearly and article based.*

3.3.1 [K.O.] Feed supply

What must be considered for troughs of cattle?
In general, only suitable containers may be used as troughs for cattle. This excludes all containers that could injure the animals or adversely affect the feed. For example, cut open canisters of pesticides, cleaning agents, disinfectants, etc. are not suitable for feeding cattle.

Can straw litter in calf boxes be used as roughage?
Feed is usually not intended as litter; conversely, litter is no feed. If calf boxes or igloos are littered with straw, this straw cannot be considered as roughage at the same time. From the 7th day of life, roughage (e.g. in troughs) must be offered in addition to the litter. Ground feeding of roughage is also possible. However, the requirements for feed hygiene must be observed in particular here.

3.3.3 Handling and storage of feed

Must the access area of driving storage silos be closed after each feed pickup?
Basically, feed storage facilities - including driving storage silos - must be protected from contamination (e.g. by pests, rodents, birds, wild boars, other wild and domestic animals). If possible, the cutting area should also be closed after each feed pickup. If the cutting area remains open (e.g. during the day), it should nevertheless be protected as far as possible against contamination.

3.3.4 [K.O.] Feed procurement

What should the livestock owner pay attention to when purchasing feed?
Each livestock owner may only accept feed for his animals that comes from a producer or trader eligible to deliver into the QS scheme. He is obliged to order and purchase feed certified according to QS or a recognised standard. In the audit, it is checked whether the feed purchased was certified accordingly.

If the feed (loose or packaged) is sold directly by the producer, the livestock owner must check that the producer is eligible to deliver into the QS scheme.

If loose feed is purchased from a trader, the livestock owner must check that the trader is eligible to deliver into the QS scheme. For his part, the trader is responsible for ensuring that the feed comes from a producer eligible to deliver into the QS scheme.

If packaged feed is purchased via a trader, the livestock owner must check the QS eligibility of delivery of the trader or the producer respectively; if the trader is listed in the database as eligible to deliver, there is no need to check the producer. If the trader is not eligible to deliver, the producer of the packaged feed must be listed in the QS database as eligible to deliver.

Note: *Livestock owners may only obtain and use feed, that comes from companies, which are registered and if approved in accordance with* ***VO 183/2005****.*

Where can be checked whether the companies (producers, traders, transport companies) are eligible to deliver?
All suppliers can be checked in the database at **QS softwareplatform** (scheme participant search).

For direct purchase from the producer, the following applies: In addition to the company name, the production scope for which the company is eligible to deliver, is also listed.

- When purchasing feed materials, the producer must have an eligibility to deliver for this (production scope: "feed material production").
- When compound feed is purchased (declared as complete feed, supplementary feed, milk replacer or mineral feed), the producer must have an eligibility to deliver for this (production scope: "compound feed production").
- When purchasing premixes, the producer must have an eligibility to deliver for this (production scope: "premix production").
- When purchasing additives, the producer must have an eligibility to deliver for this (production scope: "Feed additive production").

The company, production scope and declaration of the feed (on the delivery note or on the bag trailer) must be the same.

For the purchase from the trader applies:

- When purchasing bulk goods from a trader, the trader must have an eligibility to deliver for this (production type: "Trade").

Who must ensure that a feed transport company is eligible to deliver?

The person who orders the transport. If the livestock owner instructs the carrier to transport **unpackaged** feed, he must ensure that he uses a feed carrier eligible to deliver. If **packaged** feedstuffs are transported, the carrier does not have to have QS approval.

(If a feedstuff is delivered by a carrier on the order of the manufacturer or trader, the supplier (i.e. manufacturer or trader) must ensure that the carrier is eligible to deliver).

If the carrier, on his part, instructs an external transport service provider, then the carrier must ensure that the subcontractor is eligible to deliver for QS.

When does the livestock owner have to check the eligibility of delivery of a feed carrier?

Whenever the livestock owner orders the transport of **unpackaged** feed, he must check whether the carrier is QS-approved.

If the transport of feedstuffs is organised by the manufacturer or trader, the livestock owner does **not** have to check whether the transporter is a QS approved. The livestock owner only checks the eligibility of the manufacturer or trader to deliver (see "What must be taken into account when purchasing feedstuffs?")

Is a QS approval required for feed transports within the own company?

No.

What can the labelling of feed certified according to QS or a recognised standard look like?

Labelling must be carried out on an article-related basis. In the case of bagged goods, each bag must be labelled accordingly; in the case of bulk goods, the labelling is carried out on an article-related basis in the accompanying documents. The following options are available for labelling:

- Printing of the QS certification mark on the bag or article-related on the accompanying documents or
- The terms "QS feed" or "QS goods" are printed on the bag or article-related on the accompanying documents, or
- General indication on the accompanying documents that the company only sells QS feed.

Feed certified according to a QS-recognised standard must also be clearly labelled as certified goods.

The following standards are recognised by QS:

- GMP+ International (GMP+ FSA)
- Ovocom (FCA)
- Agricultural Industries Confederation (UFAS, FEMAS, TASCC)
- AMA (pastus+)
- EFISC-GTP
- Fami-QS
- Oqualim (RCNA International)

Do silage additives must be purchased from QS-approved producers?

Yes, because silage additives are feed additives and must therefore be purchased from producers who are QS-approved. These must also be additives that are certified according to QS or a recognised standard.

What are agricultural primary products?

For the purposes of QS, agricultural primary products are all unprocessed crops (e.g. cereals, rape, grass) produced on an agricultural company which have undergone no more than simple external processing.

In the case of field crops, simple external processing is understood to mean the various degrees of grinding (e.g. whole grains, crushed, ground or milled), as well as cleaning, ensiling (e.g. corn silage), indirect drying and pressing (e.g. hay bales, lucerne press cylinders, straw pellets).

There are no purchase requirements for agricultural primary products - they can therefore be freely purchased from agricultural producers, the agricultural trade or from other sources without the producer or trader needing QS certification. Companies that use agricultural primary products as feed count as self-mixers and must participate in feed monitoring.

If primary products are processed more than simply externally, they lose the status of "primary product". This is the case, for example, if feeds are mixed or if rapeseed is pressed and separated into rapeseed cake and rapeseed oil.

What must be considered when purchasing and using feed containing soy, soy products and compound feed containing soy or soy products?

Since 1st January 2024, only QS-Soy^{plus}-compliant soy has been used in feed in the QS scheme. If QS livestock owners purchase soy beans or soy bean products or compound feed containing soy beans (products), the following points must be observed:

- Purchase of **QS-certified feed**: In this case, no additional requirements for the purchase of feed must be observed. **All requirements are fulfilled with the purchase of QS feed**. In addition to labelling as QS product, the feed is labelled with the claim QS-Soy^{plus} or in accordance with the regulations of a recognised standard for the guideline QS-Soy^{plus}.
- Purchase of soy beans (= primary agricultural product): If soy beans are purchased as a primary agricultural product by QS livestock owners or grown by them and used in their own feed, there are currently no requirements for the certification of more sustainable cultivation: they can be purchased freely - just like other primary products.
- When purchasing **feed via a QS-recognised standard**, livestock owners may only purchase goods that are QS-Soy^{plus}-compliant. When ordering, they must therefore state that the feed is being ordered for a QS company and that it may only contain compliant soy.

***Note**: Annex 4.1 Soy beans/products within the scope of QS-Soyplus for the guideline QS-Soyplus regulates which feeds fall within the scope of the guideline.*

How can livestock owners check whether feed containing soy is QS-Soy^{plus}-compliant and whether the feed companies are eligible to deliver?

- All feed companies that comply with the requirements for the purchase of more sustainable soy are labelled accordingly in the **public scheme participant search**.
- For **QS feed**, labelling - in addition to the labelling as QS goods - is carried out via the **QS-Soy^{plus}** claim or in accordance with the regulations of a recognised standard for the **QS-Soy^{plus}** guideline.
- If a feed company is certified according to a recognised standard (see Annex 4.3 to the guideline Purchase of QS Soy^{Plus}), the regulations of the respective recognised standard apply to the labelling. Most recognised schemes, such as GMP+ Int. use positive labelling: the goods are therefore clearly labelled. However, some recognised schemes, such as EFISC-GTP, use negative labelling (labelling that the soy contained is not sustainably certified). In this case, care must therefore be taken to ensure that no labelling is present.

Are feed companies allowed to sell QS feed containing soy (products) as "not QS-Soy^{plus} compliant"?

No. Since 1st January 2024, QS feed companies must implement the guideline QS-Soy^{plus} or a recognised standard for the guideline QS-Soy^{plus} for all feed containing soy. This means that it is not permitted at the feed sector stage to market soy (products) as QS products that do not meet the requirements of the guideline. It would then no longer be QS products. This applies to new goods as well as to remaining stocks from 2023 and contracts that have already been concluded. The delivery date is decisive: goods purchased after the beginning of 2024 must be QS products as always and also QS-Soy^{plus}-compliant if they contain soy.

May food be fed to livestock?

Yes, food or former food may be used in livestock feeding. However, different requirements apply to the supplying company and the livestock owner, depending on whether it is clearly recognisable to the supplying company that the food can be used as animal feed or if it is not recognisable.

In the case of a clear intended purpose as animal feed, the supplying company as feed producer must be approved to supply QS.

If the purpose is unclear - i.e. if it is not clear at the time of purchase whether the livestock owner is using the food as such, converting it into feed or is using it in any other way (e.g. edible oil, carrots, etc. from the supermarket) - the supplying company is not required to obtain certification. The livestock owner must then, however, comply with the provisions of the **Feed Hygiene Regulation (EC) 183/2005** Annex II. This includes the implementation of a HACCP concept, essentially an incoming goods inspection, the creation of reserve samples and corresponding documentation. In addition, the livestock owner must participate in feed monitoring. The livestock owner does not need a QS certification for feed production if no feed is sold to third parties outside the company.

Some former foodstuffs must be processed before being used as livestock feed. If this is done by the supplying company or by a specialised processing company, a QS certification as a feed producer is required and marketing is carried out as feed. If a livestock owner processes the food himself for feeding in his own company, he

does not need a feed producing certification. Here too, however, he must comply with Annex II of the **Feed Hygiene Regulation (EC) 183/2005**, participate in feed monitoring and may not sell feed to third parties outside the company.

What must the livestock owner consider when feeding stale bread to his animals?
If a livestock owner purchases stale bread or bakery produce from a baking company (e.g. a bakery), the baking company is regarded as a feed producer and must therefore have an eligibility to deliver into the QS scheme. Whether the supplier is eligible to deliver into the QS scheme or not can be seen in the public scheme participant search of the QS database (**QS Softwareplatform**).

Are there exceptions for feeding stale bread or bakery products?
In rare cases, stale bread or bakery produce are purchased for which the intended purpose as feed is not recognisable (i.e. if the supplying bakery cannot identifiable the intended purpose as feed). In this case, a QS certification of the bakery is not necessary.

Example of unclear purpose: If the livestock owner uses the material in the biogas plant, it is conceivable that the bakery does not know whether the material is used as energy or feed. In this case, the livestock owner must comply with the provisions of the **Feed Hygiene Regulation (EC) 183/2005**, Annex II. In the implementation of a HACCP concept, this essentially includes an incoming goods inspection, the creation of retained samples and the corresponding documentation. The company must inform its coordinator about the use of stale bread and bakery produce and participate in feed monitoring.

A QS certification of the livestock company for feed production is not necessary, provided that no feed is sold to third parties outside the company (see definition of self-mixers).

There are also individual cases in which the livestock owner himself prepares stale bread or other bakery produce (see QS-list) for his own use (e.g. removing packaging) and then feeds them to his own animals. Here no QS certification is necessary for the bakery that supplies the product (definition: preparation means a processing process by which a feed is produced from a substance that is not suitable as animal feed). In these cases, the livestock owner is a self-mixer and must be officially registered as a conditioner ("recycling company") and comply with the regulations of the **Feed Hygiene Regulation (EC) 183/2005**, Annex II (see previous paragraph). The company must inform its coordinator about the use of stale bread and bakery produce and participate in feed monitoring. QS certification as a feed producer is not necessary.

3.3.5 Assignment of compound feed deliveries (bulk) to location numbers

Why are location numbers recorded?
By recording the deliveries to the location numbers, feed deliveries within the QS scheme can be clearly allocated to the respective livestock location.

When ordering bulk compound feed, the livestock owner must state the location number (e.g. VVVO number). When the goods are delivered, the specified location number must be checked (delivery note). If no or a wrong number is indicated, the livestock owner must inform the supplier to correct the location number, because the livestock owner is responsible for the indication and correctness as well as for the update with changes. In the audit the livestock owner must prove that this correction has been notified to the supplier.

Does this also apply to (single) feed material?
No, these requirements are mandatory for compound feeds.

Suggestion: *It is recommended that the location number be assigned to feed material, feed purchased or collected by cash sale and packaged or bagged goods.*

What must be written on the delivery notes of bulk compound feed produced in a cooperation?
In the case of bulk compound feed produced in cooperations (e.g. total mixed ration), the location number of the company supplied must be documented on the delivery note, too.

The following exception applies: If the cooperations do not write out delivery notes (e.g. cooperation of several companies of one livestock owner), no location numbers must be shown.

3.3.6 Feed production (on-farm mixer)

What is an on-farm mixer?
On-farm mixers in the sense of QS are agricultural companies that

- grow their own primary agricultural products for their own use or buy them from other farmers or via trade and/or
- procure QS-compliant feed (components) and

- produce feed or farm mixtures (self-mixed feed) from these themselves or in cooperation with other livestock owners and use them for their own livestock.

When purchasing feed components, on-farm mixers must observe the requirements of criterion *3.3.4 [K.O.] Feed procurement*. The feed (components) may be subjected to simple external processing, processed into feed materials, and mixed and.

The self-produced feed may only be used within the own company or within a cooperation for the production of feed. No feed may be sold to third parties (QS scheme participants) outside the own company or the cooperation.

The responsibility for ensuring that the components used meet the legal and QS requirements, as well as the responsibility for the production of the feed, lies with the producing agricultural company. This counts as an on-farm mixer and must participate in feed monitoring. Companies that only purchase ready-mixed feed within a cooperative and do not use any primary products are not counted as on-farm mixers, but they do take part in feed monitoring.

Do all companies that use agricultural primary products have to participate in the feed monitoring as on-farm mixers?
Yes. In principle, all companies that use agricultural primary products as feed count as on-farm mixers. This also applies to companies that exclusively use agricultural primary products that are purchased **as QS goods** from QS-approved producers or traders. Consequently, they must also participate in the feed monitoring.

Is it allowed to blend feed?
This is not permitted if a maximum content of undesirable substances has been exceeded. This is because it is prohibited to place a feed containing a level of an undesirable substance that exceeds the maximum level laid down in Annex I to **Directive 2002/32/EC** on the market, to feed it or to mix it with the same or another feed for dilution purposes (prohibition of blending).

It is permitted to subject such feed to appropriate treatment to reduce or remove (cleaning) or inactivate (decontamination) the undesirable substance. The feed may only be used if the content of this substance after treatment does not exceed the maximum level laid down in Annex I to **Directive 2002/32/EC**.

Must the use of silage additives (such as lactic acid bacteria) be documented according to HACCP standards?
No. The documentation is mandatory for almost all feed additives but does not include the use of specially designated silage additives.

How must the use of feed additives be documented?
The use of feed additives must be documented in accordance with HACCP principles. This applies, for example, to the use of preservatives (including propionic acid for the storage of moist grain), amino acids, vitamins and trace elements (see **Feed Hygiene Regulations** (Art. 5 of **Regulation (EC) 183/2005**), supporting documents for the use of acids, leaflets for the use of feed additives in the agricultural business of the ZDL (acids as preservatives; urea and its derivatives; amino acids)).

3.3.7 Feed production in cooperation

When is a cooperation for feed production possible?
Cooperations for feed production can be concluded between livestock owners in the QS scheme. The cooperations can be concluded between several livestock owners as well as between several locations of one livestock owner.

Within the cooperations, feed may be subjected to simple external processing, processed into feed materials and mixed (see on-farm mixers).

What must be considered for a co-operation of livestock owners producing feed together?
All companies participating in the cooperation must participate in QS feed monitoring.

What documentation requirements do cooperations for feed production have to observe?
Within cooperations for feed production, the supply routes of the feed must be traceable. In the producing company, the name and address of the companies supplied as well as the type and quantity of feed delivered must be documented. In addition, delivery notes must be issued for the companies supplied. Collective documentation or collective delivery notes, e.g. weekly summarised delivery notes for daily feed deliveries, are also possible. The supplied companies must be able to provide evidence of these delivery notes in the audit.

Two cases are excluded from this documentation for the traceability of the delivery routes:

1. A livestock owner has several locations (location numbers) for which he produces or purchases feed in a cooperation for feed production.
2. Several location numbers at the same location (company grounds) form a cooperation.
   Example: Companies of mother, father and son located at the same site.

In these cases, the documentation for the traceability of the supply chains in the producing company as well as the delivery notes can be dispensed with. The contract for feed production in cooperation must be available in any case.

How does the loss of the eligibility to deliver of a QS livestock owner affect the cooperation for feed production?
A temporary loss of the eligibility to deliver (= blocking of delivery) has no effect on the cooperation for feed production. However, if a livestock owner is no longer a QS scheme partner, participation in the cooperation is no longer possible.

Is it possible to cooperate with a "QM-Milch" company in the production of animal feed?
Yes, if the "QM-Milch" company with production type 1320 is registered in the QS database and is thus eligible to deliver for QS, a cooperation for feed production can be formed.

The cooperation must be contractually fixed. In addition to the usual requirements, in the case of a cooperation with a "QM-Milch" company, it must also be stipulated that the responsibility for feed production lies with a QS company and that feed production is thus audited in the QS audit.

If the QS and the "QM-Milch" company are registered under the same location number, no cooperation for feed production is necessary. In this case, however, feed production must also be audited in the QS company.

3.3.8 [K.O.] Use of service providers for feed production

Where can be checked which service providers are eligible to deliver?
The service providers which are eligible to deliver into the QS scheme can be checked in the **QS software platform**.

Must retained samples of produced feed be taken by the service provider?
There's no obligation.

Suggestion: *It is recommended to take a retained sample of all feeds produced by a service provider and to keep it at least until the product is fed.*

When do service providers not need to be QS approved?
Service providers for the production of feed do not require QS eligibility of delivery if they only carry out simple external processing.

The following also applies to mobile feed milling and mixing plants: If feeds are only milled and not mixed, no QS eligibility of delivery of the plant is required. If feed mixing equipment (e.g. for mixing, mincing or distributing raw feed) is used, no QS eligibility of delivery of the feed mixer is required either.

What must livestock owners consider who produce feed together?
If livestock owners deploy their own mobile feed milling and mixing plants individually or jointly, no QS approval of the equipment is required, as long as it can be guaranteed that no feed is being produced for third parties. A written agreement is required therefore.

3.4 Drinking water

3.4.1 [K.O.] Water supply

May other drinkers than bowl and trough drinkers also be used?
Yes, no drinking facilities are excluded due to their construction. In addition to bowl and trough drinkers, the use of other drinker types such as nipple drinkers or ball drinkers is also possible.

For how many drinking places can a larger drinking trough be taken into account?
For drinking troughs that are large enough for several animals to drink from them **at the same time**, the number of animals for which the drinking troughs can be credited can be calculated based on the number of drinking places. One drinking place roughly corresponds to the width of one animal. The deciding factor is always how many animals can drink from a drinker at the same time. For example, if two cattle can drink at the same time, the drinker can be counted as two drinking places, i.e. for a maximum of 30 animals. The animal-drinker place-ratio must then be 15:1 (recommended 10:1), as for single drinkers. Depending on the size of the animals, the number of drinkers that can be counted can be reduced during rearing or fattening.

How many drinkers must be available in tethered housings?

In tethered housing, a self-drinker must be available at every place. This means that every animal must be able to drink from a drinker, but not that every animal must have its own drinker. If a drinking trough can be reached from two places, it can be considered for both places (e.g. right or left for one tethered stand).

For how many animals does an individual-animal drinker installed in the bay partition wall count?

In group housing, a maximum animal-drinker place-ratio of 15:1 (recommended 10:1) is required for individual-animal drinkers. This ratio also applies when installing individual-animal drinkers in the bay partition wall, if the drinker can be used by animals from the two adjoining bays. The drinker in the bay partition wall cannot be counted twice (i.e. for 15 animals per bay); the animal-drinker place- ratio of 15:1 applies per drinker regardless of whether there is a wall between the animals or not.

In practice, two variants can be found:

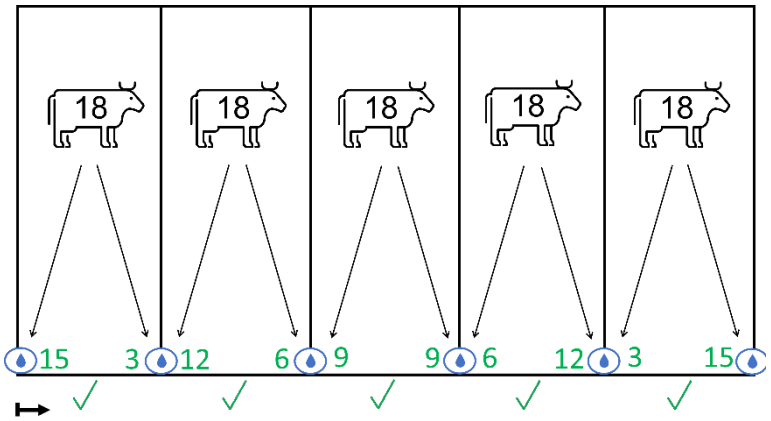
Variant 1: In addition to the drinkers in the bay partitions, there is another drinker on the outer walls of the first and last bay.

Variant 2: There are only drinkers in the bay partitions, so the outer bays do not have an (additional) drinker for sole use, but only a common drinker with the neighboured bay.

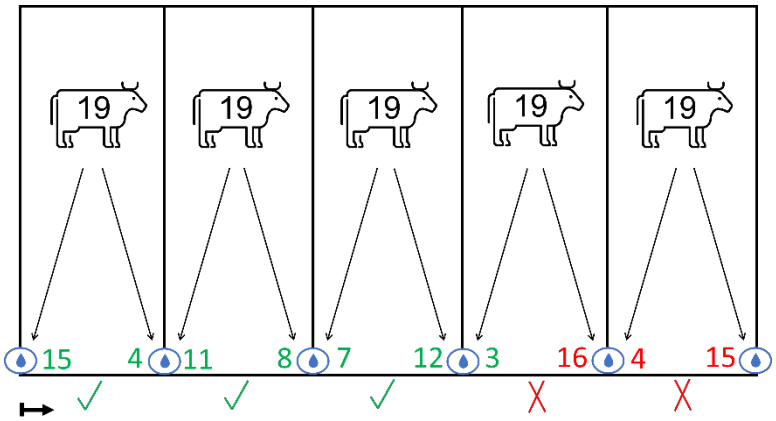
Each group of animals must always have sufficient access to drinkers. A purely mathematical determination of the animal-drinker place ratio, e.g. from the total number of drinkers and animals in the shed or a random sample of individual inner bays, is not sufficient.

An exact halving of a common drinker (7.5 animals on each side) to the two neighbouring groups is not appropriate.

Calculation examples for variant 1:

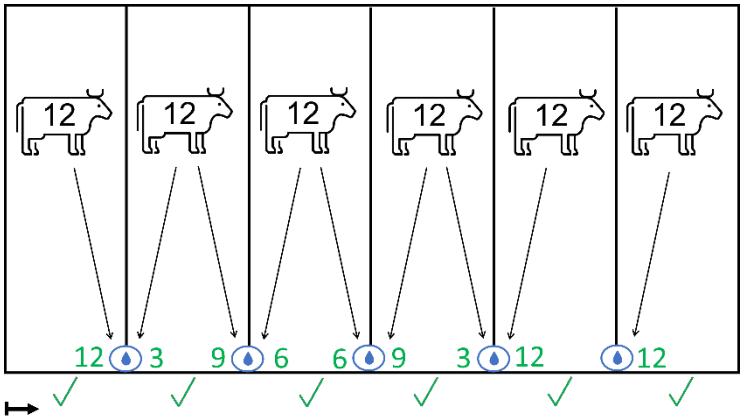


With the stocking of 18 animals per bay, the animal-drinker place ratio is maintained in all the bays in this example.

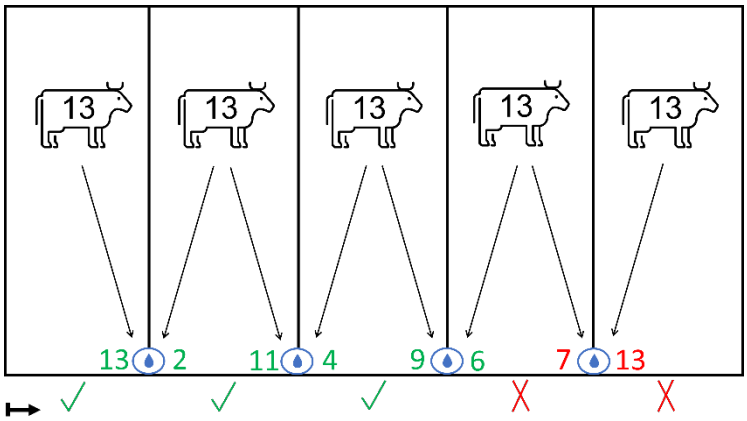


With the stocking of 19 animals per bay, the animal-drinker place-ratio is not fulfilled in two out of five bays.

Calculation examples for variant 2:



With the stocking of 12 animals per bay, the animal-drinker place-ratio is maintained in all the bays in this example.



With the stocking of 13 animals per bay, the animal-drinker place-ratio is not fulfilled in two out of five bays.

What must the flow rate of a drinking trough be at least?

The flow rate should be at least 20 l/minute for trough drinkers and 10 l/minute for bowl drinkers. These specifications are explicitly recommendations, not binding requirements. The decisive factor is that the animals can drink in an animal-friendly way.

Must drinking water be available to calves?

Yes. Except for calves younger than two weeks, all cattle must have access to water of sufficient quantity and quality at all times. This also applies during the feeding of milk or milk replacer. Here too, calves must be offered drinking water - parallel to milk. The only exception to this are troughs for milk feeding where milk is rationed at a 1:1 animal to drinker ratio and which are filled with clean, clear water between the (short) drinking times immediately after milk intake (e.g. via aqua-level systems).

What must be observed when using additives in drinking water?

Only products that are approved for this use may be used as additives in drinking water. Drinking water additives must also be microbiologically harmless and must not have a negative effect on the microbiological condition of the drinking water. The requirements for the quality of drinking water ("clean, clear and without extraneous odour") must not be impaired by the additives.

Must products which are added to the drinking water be QS-approved?

Yes, all additives that are added to the drinking water in the occupied shed and are thus consumed by the animals while drinking must be approved as animal feed or animal feed additive. These products must also be QS-approved and purchased from a QS-approved producer or trader. (Exception: When biocides are used for drinking water, no QS approval is required).

In the case of products that are used in an unoccupied shed and therefore cannot be consumed by the animals, approval as animal feed and QS approval are not required. This can be the case, for example, with the use of cleaning agents or biocides for disinfection when cleaning the drinking facilities between two fattening cycles.

The agents must be used in accordance with the producer's instructions. If necessary, the pipes must be rinsed before animals are re-housed so that the drinking water is not contaminated.

Is a drinking water check required for QS?
No, a drinking water check is not mandatory.

Suggestion: *It is recommended to analyse samples of the drinking water regularly (e.g. annually). These should always consider microbiological parameters (bioburden at 20 °C, bioburden at 36 °C, E. coli count). If the water for the drinkers is supplied from own sources and not from the public drinking water supply, chemical-physical parameters should also be examined (pH value, electrical conductivity, iron, nitrate and sulphate content).*

If the orientation values (see BMEL orientation framework or Animal Welfare Initiative criteria catalogue) are exceeded or undercut, measures should be taken to improve the values.

3.5 Animal health/medication

3.5.1 Care contract with farm veterinarian

Must the veterinarian use the QS sample form?
No, the sample form serves as a working aid. It contains all the relevant points that must be contractually regulated in the QS scheme for the care of livestock. The veterinarian can also use his own documents. The following points must be formulated in each stock care contract:

- Definition of the veterinary stock care
- Maintain/restore health of individual animals, animal groups and herds
- Curative and preventive services as well as monitoring and screening measures
- Preparation of an animal health and hygiene management plan in case of jointly identified need for action
- Development of an action plan in case of need

At least the following points must be clearly regulated:

- Transparency with regard to the scope of application, i.e. animal population and location number (even if there are several registration numbers according to the VVVO and/or production orientations, it must be clear which livestocks are managed)
- Frequency of visits for regular and plannable care outside acute cases of illness
- Documentation of stock visits (incl. results) and veterinary treatments, storage of documents (veterinary examination results and documents) by the company

Must the stock care contract be updated annually?
No, the stock care contract only needs to be adjusted if there is a change. Either a new contract can be signed, or the old contract can be updated with annexes.

3.5.2 [K.O.] Implementation of the stock care

What is the aim of the veterinary stock care?
Note: *The objective of veterinary stock care is to use a uniform approach for maintaining the animals' state of health and improve it, if necessary. Regular, scheduled veterinary care is an essential component of the animal welfare, in order to maintain or improve the health of individual animals, groups of animals and the entire stock.*

3.5.3 [K.O.] Procurement and application of medicines and vaccines

Must the procurement and application of medicines and vaccines be documented in a stock book?
No, the documentation does not necessarily require a stock book. Provided that all required information is contained, and the documentation cannot be subsequently changed, other forms of documentation are also conceivable (e.g. by combined receipts or electronically).

Suggestion: *In order to obtain a clearer overview, it is recommended that livestock owners keep a stock book.*

Note: *Telephone/verbal instructions from the veterinarian should be documented by the pet owner.*

How should multi-day medicinal product applications be documented?
Even with multi-day applications of medicinal products, the documentation must always be carried out immediately after each application.

For multi-day applications in which the same application (animals/animal group, operator, administered quantity) is carried out daily and on each day of the treatment period, the first day of treatment must be documented on the first day of treatment so that the administered quantity, operator and treated animals/animal

groups are clear. The next documentation is then required on the last day of treatment at the latest. In this case, documentation with 'from... to...' is also possible. If the treatment differs from day to day or if treatments are not carried out daily, but only every two days, for example, the documentation must be carried out individually for each application, immediately after the application (daily). This also applies if applications are carried out by several people (operators) during the treatment period.

What must be considered when administering medicines orally?
Suggestion: *For the oral administration of medicines via feed and water, see Guideline of the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) "Oral application of veterinary medicinal products in the livestock sector via feed or water".*

If the procedure is the same, does a new application plan always have to be drawn up when new quantities of the same vaccine are delivered?
No. As long as the same vaccine is obtained and there is no change in the vaccination procedure, the application plan can continue to exist even when new quantities of vaccine are given, unless it is terminated by a time limit imposed by the veterinarian.

3.5.4 [K.O.] Storage of medicines and vaccines

Can medicines and vaccines be stored in the domestic refrigerator?
Medicines and vaccines must be stored out of reach of unauthorised persons, especially children. If it is ensured that no children and unauthorised persons can access the medicines and vaccines, storage in the kitchen refrigerator is also conceivable (e. g. in a separate box). Protection against unauthorised access is also provided, for example by a locked box in the refrigerator.

Suggestion: *Medicines should always be stored separately from foodstuffs.*

What needs to be considered when a joint storage of medicines is used for several locations or different animal species?
If a medicine storage is used for more than one location (several location numbers) or for different animal species, the stored medicines must be clearly assigned to the respective location or animal species for which they were prescribed. This can be done, for example, by marking or separate storage for each location or animal species.

3.6 Hygiene

3.6.1 Buildings and equipment

What are buildings and facilities?
This includes the entire company area, all technical facilities, company buildings and also the carcass storage. These must be clean and kept in proper condition. If necessary, appropriate cleaning measures must be taken.

What should plant growth look like in the immediate environment of the shed?
Suggestion: *In order to keep vermin away from the shed, shrubs, ground cover plants or bushes should not be planted directly adjacent to the shed. The plants should be pruned back regularly. Grass growth should also be kept short.*

What does proper condition mean for the outdoor facilities of the company?
All buildings and facilities must be clean and kept in a proper condition. This also applies to the outdoor facilities of a company. No materials or objects that are no longer needed (e.g. rubbish and scrap, building materials, silage foil, non-functional machines, old pallets, tires, green waste and similar) may be stored there permanently, so that no shelter is provided for rodents.

Note: *Materials (such as building materials) that are currently required may be stored on the company for the duration of the conversion.*

3.6.2 Hygiene on the farm

How many signs indicating the livestock must be placed?
Sheds must be identified by a sign "Livestock - Access prohibited for unauthorised persons" or similar. These signs should effectively prevent unauthorised persons from entering the sheds at any time and indicate that it is forbidden to enter the sheds. To ensure this, the signs must be placed at all shed entrances or, in the case of enclosed companies, optionally at the entrances to the company. Anyone wishing to enter the shed must be informed by means of a sign that unauthorised entry is prohibited.

How can the cleaning and disinfection measures be simplified?
Suggestion: *Cleaning plans and/or procedural instructions and/or records of cleaning and disinfection measures should be conducted.*

Who is responsible for the cleaning and disinfection of transport vehicles and equipment used by other companies?

Note: *In the case of transport vehicles or equipment used in other companies, these must be cleaned and, if necessary, disinfected in the supplying company.*

What hygiene requirements must be observed for the delivery and loading of animals?

When delivering and loading livestock, it must be ensured that drivers who are not employed by the company only have as little access as possible to the company premises, sheds and loading ramps (black-and-white principle) and that it is ensured that unauthorised personnel do not access the driver's cab or cargo area of the vehicle.

Are swallows allowed to nest in the shed?

Basically, swallows may be in cattle stables. Nests must not be removed. However, precautions must be taken to avoid contamination of troughs/drinkers and feed/water with faeces (e.g. placing boards under the nests).

How should dust bags be handled?

Note: *Dust bags used when filling feed silos, BigPacks, and other containers/packaging used for feed delivery should remain on the farm for biosafety reasons and must be disposed of if necessary.*

3.6.3 Handling litter

Can wood chips and sawdust be used as bedding?

Wood chips and sawdust can be used if they are made from low-dust heart wood that has not been chemically treated. This does not apply to the use of wood chips and sawdust for short periods when shifting livestock from one shed to another and during transport.

3.6.4 Carcass storage and pick up

What must be considered when storing carcasses?

Carcasses must be stored on paved surfaces and if possible outside the shed area. The paved area should be equipped with a drain or a collection facility for liquids. Liquids leaking from carcasses or resulting from the cleaning and disinfection of the carcass stores must not be drained into unpaved surfaces. If the carcasses are stored in a container that is protected against the leakage of liquids, it can also be placed on an unpaved surface, such as gravel.

Note: *Carcasses should be protected against unauthorised access and should not be stored in openly visible places as far as possible.*

Suggestion: *Stand times should be kept as short as possible. In addition, the transfer point for disposal vehicles should be fixed and easy to clean and disinfect.*

Note: *Transport of carcasses on public roads is only permitted to the special carcass disposal company responsible.*

3.6.5 Pest monitoring and control

What is the purpose of the monitoring?

The monitoring serves as a regular and systematic control of whether the company has a pest infestation, particularly by rodents and insects (both crawling and flying). Checks can be carried out by means of placing adhesive traps, bait boxes and similar devices in critical areas of the company

How must pest monitoring and control be documented?

It is recommended to draw up a bait location plan in which all bait locations are listed. Pest monitoring should and any necessary control measures must be documented for each of these bait locations. For this purpose, the sample form "Pest Monitoring and Control Protocol (*QS agriculture livestock farming*)", which is published on the QS website, can be used.

What information must be documented as part of pest monitoring and control?

The following information should be documented as part of pest monitoring and as part of pest control:

- Date of the control
- Controlled bait site
- Pest being observed or controlled
- Monitoring measure (e.g. non-toxic baits)
- Control measure (e.g. poisoned bait, beating trap, electric insect killer, sticky fly trap, …)
- Documentation of infestation: Observations/findings from the inspection of the respective bait site.

In addition, the following information is useful:

- Consumption (quantity)
- User (name)
- Signature of the user

For the documentation of pest monitoring and control, the combined Pest Monitoring and Control Protocol (QS agriculture livestock farming) can be used. In the documentation it must be clearly recognisable for each entry, if it is a pest control (in the QS sample form, this distinction can be made in column 5, e.g. with the entry of "M" for Monitoring or "C" for Control/Combat for each line).

The observations/findings from the monitoring should and for the pest control must the documentation record the individual bait sites. Column 4 of the sample form can be used for this purpose, in which the respective observations/findings from the monitoring of the bait sites can be entered, e.g. "feeding traces", "no change of the bait".

Can the pest monitoring and the pest control be documented together?
Yes, a joint document for pest monitoring and control is possible. It is decisive that all information on pest control is documented. Monitoring does not need to be documented, but documentation is recommended.

What must be considered when documenting pest control of crawling and flying insects in the sheds?
If control measures are carried out, e.g. if granules are used in bowls or surfaces are sprayed with biocides, the application must be documented, stating the relevant information (see explanation on information for pest monitoring and control). The (continuous) use of adhesive traps or electric insect traps must be described in a comprehensible manner and the traps must be checked regularly and renewed if necessary.

At what frequency must pest monitoring be carried out?
There is no minimum frequency requirement for pest monitoring. The aim of pest monitoring is to ensure that a pest infestation is detected as quickly as possible. In this way, control measures can be taken promptly if necessary and an expansion of the infestation can be prevented. The aim is to effectively prevent or contain a pest infestation on a company.

Pest monitoring must be carried out continuously for this purpose. How often the inspection for pest infestation must take place depends on the individual situation on the company. The inspection interval of the bait points can be determined on a risk-oriented basis but must ensure that pest infestations on the company are detected promptly and reliably.

3.6.6 Risk assessment for biosafety

How long ago can participation in the risk traffic light system or risk assessment using an officially recognized concept have taken place?
All animal owners must either have their location analyzed for the risk of disease introduction using the risk traffic light system or be able to provide evidence of a risk assessment using an officially recognized biosecurity concept (e.g. Baden-Württemberg, North Rhine-Westphalia, Bavaria and Lower Saxony). Evidence provided before January 1, 2025, cannot be taken into account.

3.7 Monitoring programmes

Who must participate in the Feed monitoring?
In principle, every company that uses primary products as feed, mixes feed itself or obtains ready-mixed feed from a cooperation, is subjected to monitoring.

Livestock owners, who only use purchased QS complete feeds do not have to participate in the QS feed monitoring. With companies which are certified for QS crop farming, grassland use or forage production, the self-produced feed quantity is not taken into consideration for the calculation of the control plan. Samples for feed monitoring can still be taken in this kind of companies. Likewise, in the case of companies that only purchase ready-mixed feed from a cooperation, the amount of feed purchased is only taken into account in the calculation of the control plan at the manufacturing company. However, samples for feed monitoring can still be taken at these supplied companies.

Does the monitoring also relate to foodstuffs?
Yes, if a livestock owner procures food from the food retail sector (e.g. edible oil) and uses it in animal feed, this food is to be evaluated as self-produced feeds and integrated accordingly into the monitoring. If stale bread or bakery produce are procured, the regulation Chapter in *3.3.4 [K.O.] Feed procurement* applies.

Can "QM-Milch" companies participate in QS monitoring for diagnostic data from slaughter?
Diagnostic data of slaughter animals originating from companies that have an eligibility of delivery into the QS scheme (e.g. from the "QM-Milch" standard) can be reported voluntarily. Companies from the "QM-Milch"

standard must first agree to the passing on of the diagnostic data by the abattoir in a corresponding declaration to their "QM-Milch" organisation.

3.8 Transport of own livestock

What does "loading" include in relation to livestock transport?
Loading always includes both uploading and unloading the animals during transport.

3.8.2 [K.O.] Available space during livestock transport

What must be documented during in-company transport?
An in-company transport of animals also counts as livestock transport. The maximum possible number of animals (if necessary, graded according to animal age or weight) must be noted for the available space (e.g. in the company data or on the vehicle). The individual transport processes within the company do not have to be recorded.

Explanatory notes
Agriculture Cattle Farming

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