

Freedom Food Assessment Plan & Guidance Notes for the Submission of Corrective Action

Introduction

Thank you for wishing to become a registered member of the Freedom Food Scheme, or for renewing your current registration.

The following information is intended to help you understand how membership of Freedom Food is either achieved or maintained, and importantly, the role of on-site assessment in the process.

Membership

Scheme membership is recognised by the issue of a certificate which, subject to an on-site assessment, confirms your farm, livestock haulage or abattoir meets full compliance with the RSPCA Welfare standards for farmed animals applicable to the animals you are producing or handling.

As a member of the Freedom Food scheme you will also have a dedicated registration number, which will be shown on all certification awarded to you.

Certificate duration

Certificates of membership are valid for *12 months.

*(*accept for the seasonal production of turkeys, whereby a certificate covering the lifespan of the turkeys is awarded)*

Certificate renewal

Members are invited to renew their membership 6 weeks prior to the expiry of their current certificate. Following renewal, a new certificate is issued, valid from the date of expiry of the previous certificate, so helping to ensure continuous approval.

Certificate validation (Assessment)

Applicants for scheme membership receive an on-site assessment visit from a Freedom Food assessor. The purpose of the assessment (application) will be to confirm full compliance with the relevant RSPCA welfare standard for farm animals. This will be necessary before certification can be awarded.

IMPORTANT POINT!

**Please do not submit an application unless you have fully read the RSPCA standards and believe you meet full compliance with them.*

Existing members will be subject to an on-site assessment visit within the duration of their current certificate. The purpose of this assessment (surveillance) will be to confirm continued compliance with the relevant RSPCA welfare standard for farm animals is being maintained to validate certification.

For existing members, the assessment visit needs to have taken place at least *2 months before the expiry of their current certificate.

IMPORTANT POINT!

**It is only possible for us to validate certification by means of an assessment which verifies full compliance with all the applicable RSPCA standards. This requires the site to have livestock present at the time of the assessment. If the site has an extended break in livestock production*

(several months) which prevents an assessment taking place during a certificate's duration, we will not be able to verify full compliance to validate the site's certificate. This will impact on the status of the site's certificate, which will need to be classified as 'inactive'. Only when livestock production recommences, enabling an assessment to take place which verifies full compliance, will the certificate status be returned to normal.

It is important that members inform Freedom Food directly of an extended break in production which will prevent an assessment taking place within their current certification, and any renewal of certification. Furthermore, to inform Freedom Food of a return to livestock production which will enable an assessment to take place.

Please note: No product associated to RSPCA Assured can be made to a livestock production site whilst the certificate status applicable to the site is 'inactive'.

Freedom Food assessors

Your assessment visit is conducted by an approved assessor. This person will have a good knowledge and practical understanding of:

- the management of the species you are farming or handling
- the relevant RSPCA Welfare Standard
- how to conduct the assessment fairly and impartially.

They will identify with you where you comply with the RSPCA standards and where you may not be doing so. They will issue you with a report of their findings on conclusion of the assessment visit.

Arranging the on-site assessment visit

Our assessor will contact you to arrange a mutually agreeable *date and time for the assessment visit to take place. They will require either yourself or a representative of the site being assessed to accompany them at all times during the assessment.

IMPORTANT POINT!

**members may be subject to a cancellation charge if cancelling an assessment within 48 hours of the agreed date.*

What is the being assessed?

Our assessor will be assessing if full compliance with the applicable RSPCA Welfare standards for the farm animals is being achieved applicable to the species you are farming and stage within the production chain.

IMPORTANT POINT!

Please ensure you have your copy of the current version of the RSPCA standards, are familiar with them and comply with them. The current versions of all the RSPCA Welfare standards for farmed animals can be viewed at www.freedom.co.uk

The on-site assessment plan

Arrival

- Our assessor will meet you at the agreed location on arrival. They will:
 - confirm their identity to you
 - sign the visitor's book
 - put on suitable protective clothing before entering the site and whilst on-site comply with your site's biosecurity policy and practices.

Opening meeting

- Our assessor will advise you of how the assessment is to be conducted and confirm the applicable RSPCA standard to be assessed against. They will:
 - check the details of the site with you and indicate how long the assessment should take.
 - request their need for you, or your representative to accompany them during the assessment so that any points of non-compliance can be brought to your attention as identified.
 - ensure you that their findings will be held in confidence between yourself and the Freedom Food scheme.
 - advise you of what actions will happen after the assessment, depending on the outcome.

Site inspection

- Our assessor will conduct a full visual assessment of the site to look at the facilities in which the animals are being kept. They will
 - look at the condition of the animals as an indicator of their care. For some species they will carry out a Welfare Outcome Assessment (WOA) following an RSPCA protocol for the applicable species.
 - check production records and services records as necessary.
 - talk, if possible, to other stock persons on-site who have responsibility for the care of the animals.

Documentation Review

- The RSPCA welfare standards require members to keep detailed *documents/records, for example those relating to the health and welfare of their farm animals, training of stock persons and maintenance of equipment upon which stock depend. Our assessor will review these documents/records for their accuracy and completeness.
**Please see sample list in Appendix 1*

Closing meeting

- During the site inspection and documentation review, our assessor will have taken notes of their findings. They will:
 - need a few moments to assemble these into their report, in order to conduct a closing meeting with you;
 - recap on what they have seen and reviewed;
 - inform you of any non-conformities identified against the applicable standard;
 - produce a summary report documenting the outcome of their assessment as either fully compliant with the RSPCA welfare standards, or the presence of non-compliance;
 - ask you to sign the report as a true account of their findings;
 - issue you with a duplicate copy of the report (pink & yellow copies);
 - inform you what should happen next in respect of the assessment findings.

Assessment Outcome

Non-Compliance identified

Where our assessor has considered a non-compliance with the RSPCA welfare standards has been evident, they will:

- make this known to you during the assessment.
- record the detail of each non-compliance, if more than one, in the summary report indicate which RSPCA standard has not been met.

- confirm with you that corrective action is now required for each non-compliance to support your continued certification, or award of certification.

IMPORTANT POINT!

**Please note that ALL non-conformance must be confirmed by Freedom Food as being appropriately corrected no later than 4 WEEKS since the date of the assessment.*

- identified where you will need to record corrective action taken on the duplicate report (pink copy) given to you;
- the objective evidence (photos, document copies) needs to be provided to Freedom Food to confirm the corrective action stated by you on the pink duplicate report has taken place;
- advised you that the certification decision will be taken by NSF Certification based on a review of the assessor's report, your corrective action statement as recorded on the pink copy, and your supporting objective evidence you have submitted;
- confirmed with you your statement of corrective action and supporting objective is to be sent to Freedom Food either:

- o posted to: Freedom Food Limited
Wilberforce Way, Southwater, Horsham, West Sussex
RH13 9RS
- o or emailed to: info@freedomfood.co.uk

No non-compliances identified

There is no requirement to submit evidence. The assessor's report will be forwarded for a certification decision. *(Please Note: Non compliances may be raised by the certifier (NSF), in which case you will be asked to supply evidence as described above).*

When certification has been approved, a certificate of conformity will be issued, either as a new registration for applicants, or validation of a current registration for existing members.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER!

- *if an existing member, you make sure your current certificate can be validated by an assessment, and if not, by an extended break in livestock production, that this is made known as soon as possible to Freedom Food.*
- *ensure you have copy of the current RSPCA welfare standards;*
- *where non-compliance is identified during the assessment, that you send **BOTH** your corrective action statement (pink copy) and supporting objective evidence in sufficient time to enable Freedom Food to consider **ALL** non-compliance has been corrected ***WITHIN 4 WEEKS** after being identified during assessment;
(*failure to provide your corrective action statement and supporting objective evidence by 4 weeks following assessment will result in mandatory suspension of certification for existing members)*
- *respond promptly to Freedom Food if further evidence of corrective action is requested;*

- *where assessment identifies either significant numbers of non-compliance with the RSPCA welfare standards, or serious compromise to animal welfare, certification of existing members may be suspended, or even withdrawn, with immediate effect.*

Code of conduct

It is the full intention of Freedom Food to be respectful and courteous at all times in our dealings with scheme membership, and those wishing to become members. It is the expectation of Freedom Food that this intent is reciprocated on the part of members and scheme applicants. Freedom Food will take responsive action against those who disregard this code of conduct.

Service standard

It is the full intention of Freedom Food to conduct a fair and impartial assessment, as necessary to ensure all certification of scheme membership is warranted. Our approach to assessment is accredited to internationally recognised service standard ISO17065 and, therefore, NSF Certification is subject to external audit by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service.

Your feedback is important

As a recipient of an assessment any comments you may wish to make to us regarding the experience will be of great value to both monitoring and developing this important aspect of the Freedom Food scheme. All feedback will be dealt with in full confidence.

Please mark your comments as 'Confidential: FAO: Field Assessment Manager' and email to: info@freedomfood.co.uk

Thank you

Thank you for taking time to read this document. We do hope this will have helped you understand the process of assessment and what is required of you, both during assessment and after.

Should you have any questions arising from this document please call Freedom Food on 01403 800141.

APPENDIX 1 : Documents & Records

The following is a list of typical documents and records our assessor may request to review during the assessment:

- o Current site specific Veterinary Health & Welfare Plan
- o Site Plan (including building/range dimensions)
- o Records to validate livestock stocking densities, numbers of feeders, drinkers etc. provided for livestock
- o Livestock performance records
- o Feed, water & environmental management records
- o Stock inspection records
- o Animal movement/registration/depopulation records
- o Records of veterinary intervention
- o Animal treatment records (including those in the event of ill health)
- o Training programme & records for stockpersons
- o Maintenance/testing records of equipment/systems
- o Fallen stock records
- o Site biosecurity policy and site hygiene records
- o Wild animal control policy
- o Reference materials & *DEFRA publications
(*as specified in the RSPCA welfare standards)