



**PRESENTATION TO ALL PARTY GROUP FOR ANIMAL WELFARE  
AT THE HOUSE OF LORDS – 3 JULY 2018**

**GIVEN BY PRESIDENT JOHN METTRICK BSc MB.FinstM**

My Name is John Mettrick and I am very pleased that through Professor Tim Morris I have been invited to speak to you today to give you an insight into the small abattoir sector.

I am an accredited Master butcher and a fellow of the Institute of Meat. At present I am serving my 3rd term as president of the National Federation of Meat and Food traders, an organisation that has run for 130 years and represents over 800 butchers in England and Wales.

My family business has been running a small abattoir for over 100years. During my working life I have seen meat inspection through Local Authority control, the Meat Hygiene Service and the Food Standards Agency.

Our business has been fortunate to receive many awards over the years including Best Butcher in the UK and Ireland and BBC Food and Farming awards for Best Local Retailer. We have won national awards for our meat, pies, bacon, sausage and burgers, some of which I have brought with me today for you to take and sample at leisure.

We have featured with most of the TV chefs over the years and BBC programmes such as the Food Inspectors and perhaps, most notably in our industry for the ground-breaking series Kill it Cook it Eat it.

I would put a large part of our past success down to having our own small abattoir enabling us to have that short supply chain - farmer butcher customer. Enabling us to give the consumer confidence on provenance, welfare, hygiene and quality. Perhaps now you can see why I am before you today, as that unique selling point is threatened.

In my opinion large convoluted supply chains are always at risk of breaking down no matter what assurance schemes or mountains of paper work are employed. So, how can we evolve regulation to both support local abattoirs and animal welfare? The small plants have limited resources to deal with ever increasing paper work, therefore the regulatory bodies could make better use of technology, to alleviate this burden not add to it. The FSA, AHDB, BCMS,

EAML and ARAMS need to co-ordinate to avoid duplication for the small food business operator. Make the meat inspection regime risk based rather than rule based. The provider, the regulator and the food business operator are in an EU rule based straight jacket at the moment. We need to apply as many flexibilities to the small plants as possible, within the EU regulations asap. Then post Brexit amend the regulations, not diminish them but make them fit for purpose.

We need to make better use of veterinary resources not just because there are recruitment problems but because some of the veterinary input in small plants is disproportionate. The biggest obstacle to reducing veterinary attendance is that the EU states that ante mortem must be carried out by a fully qualified vet. Whilst we remain in the EU we should have vets carry out the ante mortem in small plants and move onto another plant whilst the MHI comes back to do cold inspection. This will reduce costs for the food business operator and the FSA.

In the longer term the advent of CCTV in abattoirs must be seen as a positive move for monitoring animal welfare and give us some opportunity to review veterinary input. I am not suggesting CCTV should replace vets but that the vet could adopt a more supervisory role. This can be backed up by farmers certifying they are sending healthy stock and further FBO and MHI staff training. The OV would be responsible for monitoring, auditing and licensing plants. This would be seen as an advance on the system operated pre-1990.

Post Brexit it could be possible to have an artisan stamp which would mean that the meat from small plants, who did not have ante mortem by a vet were not allowed to export but to supply locally or direct to end user within the UK. This effectively would be a return to the square stamp. The problem with this is that some would regard it as two different standards of inspection - one inferior to the other. I would argue that this is not the case, just complying with an EU standard for export in the same way a supplier might need BRC for a customer. It shouldn't mean that the product or the inspection regime is inferior just for a different market. To make sure that meat is not entering the supply chain for export it should be possible to correlate kill figures and weights with sale figures for small plants.

If ministers and civil servants can apply current flexibilities we do not need other bodies attacking these as a reduction in standards. Otherwise, this will deteriorate rapidly into mudslinging with a reduction in public confidence in the meat industry.

We are at a cross roads in meat inspection and need all parties to work together to find a solution otherwise the small plants will all close to the detriment of animal welfare through longer journey times and to the consumers ability to choose locally produced meat.

The views I have expressed are a mixture of my own through hands on experience and those of my colleagues and Federation members. There is a lot more detail in the report I have provided which I would be happy to answer questions on. I am very proud to have managed, with my brother to have retained our small abattoir despite some oppressive regulation over the years. It's something I am very passionate about and would be happy to contribute to any further work to ensure the survival of small plants nationally.

*Posted 30/07/2018*