

Abattoir Sector Group strategic aims and priorities for Government

1. Recognise the UK-Wide Abattoir Network as Critical National Infrastructure

Make an explicit commitment that a **diverse network of abattoirs offering the right services in the right places** is essential to:

- Farming viability
- Food security
- Animal welfare
- Environmental land management
- Rural employment and economic growth

2. Empower the Small Abattoir Working Group to Deliver Change

Mandate the **existing Defra-led Small Abattoir Working Group** — which includes stakeholders from across the supply chain, from farmers and processors to industry groups and NGOs — to work **proactively with local and national government** on:

- Ensuring adequate access in all regions
- Coordinating policy with international agreements
- Supporting growth, rural jobs and diversified farm businesses
- Removing structural and regulatory barriers to success

3. Renew and Strengthen the Industry: Government Small Abattoir Task and Finish Group

Reboot the **high-level Task Group**, currently co-chaired by Defra and the Abattoir Sector Group, to:

- Resume **regular direct contact with Ministers**
- Provide **strategic advice** on funding, regulation, veterinary access and legislative reform
- Identify and address systemic constraints in real time
- Develop a coordinated roadmap for long-term growth

This group has already delivered meaningful progress — including securing previous funding and tackling regulatory issues. With renewed Ministerial engagement, its effectiveness can be greatly expanded.

4. Expand and Repeat the Smaller Abattoir Fund

- Offer a **second funding round** to those who missed the first or wish to invest further.
- Promote **case studies** of previous recipients to illustrate return on investment and inspire uptake.
- Enable abattoirs to invest in services like **on-site butchery, scalding, organic certification, and fifth-quarter recovery**.

5. Reform Regulation with Proportionate, Modern Approaches

- Confirm commitment to continuing the **Small Abattoir Discount** on meat inspection charges.
- Finalise and **implement the 5% Rule**.
- Explore and expand the use of **remote inspection technologies** to reduce burdens without compromising welfare.
- Prepare for a **wider legislative review** if needed to deliver fit-for-purpose regulation for smaller abattoirs.
- Align standards with **realistic risk profiles**, especially as BSE status evolves.

6. Enable New Entrants and Community-Led Infrastructure

New abattoirs, including farmer-led initiatives, need support at various stages, including research and design, planning and licensing, building and operating. We therefore urge:

- **Access to rural grant schemes** for infrastructure investment or a dedicated fund for new abattoirs as was promised by the previous government.
- **Proactive support** from officials for groups wishing to set up abattoirs, including guidance and regulatory navigation.
- Exploration of **mobile, micro or pop-up abattoirs** to serve remote areas that lack current services.

7. Address skilled worker shortages in the slaughtering and meat processing sector

With high retirement rates and lack of succession planning, and without enough new entrants to the sector, there is pressure on abattoirs who experience staff shortages. We are grateful that Defra have acknowledged this issue and that some discussion has already taken place regarding apprenticeships. To support this we urge that:

- **A slaughtering apprenticeship** review is fully supported by UK government to enable more flexibility for those wishing to train in both slaughtering and butchery and that funding be brought in line with the butchery apprenticeship.
- **A joined-up approach is taken** to attracting young people into the sector, including working with the Department for Education and embedding the importance of this sector within education and careers advice.