



### Animal Health

Good herd health management plays a vital role in minimising the risks associated with dirty hides. Stressed animals are more prone to shedding disease organisms in their faeces.

#### Preventative Steps

##### Ensure:

- Animals are routinely dosed against gastrointestinal parasites to prevent parasitic scours.
- Sick animals are isolated in suitable facilities and professional help sought if required.
- Sheep presented for slaughter are dagged to prevent soiling of the fleece.
- Animals have unrestricted access to straw, hay or high dry matter silage for the final 48 hours immediately prior to slaughter. Remember, all changes to the diet must be introduced gradually.
- Animals have unrestricted access to water.
- Animals are handled humanely and are not subjected to undue stress, as stressed animals are more likely to release pathogenic bacteria and in particular, *Salmonella*.
- Compound feeds are properly stored and only sourced from reputable outlets.

##### Avoid:

- Clipping animals immediately before transport to slaughter.
- Long transport journeys to slaughter.
- Fasting animals for long periods prior to slaughter (more than 12 hours, including duration of transport).



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faecal  
contamination

# preventing faecal contamination of meat



...a shared responsibility to ensure food safety



## PREVENTING FAECAL CONTAMINATION

### Farmers

Many potentially harmful organisms are present in the gut, faeces and hides of healthy cattle and sheep. These organisms include, among others, *E. coli*, *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* which are responsible for foodborne illness in humans.

**Healthy animals carrying these organisms may show no symptoms, and it is not possible to distinguish carrier animals from non-carrier animals by visual inspection alone.**

Therefore, it is vitally important that you make all reasonable efforts to ensure that the animals you supply for slaughter are as clean and dry as possible.

### Remember:

- Hides and gut contents contain harmful bacteria.
- The hide is a source of possible contamination of meat during the dressing of an animal in the slaughter plant.
- The dirtier the hide of animals presented for slaughter, the greater the potential for carcass contamination and therefore, the greater the risk to human health.
- Wet hides increase the risk of contamination.
- It is essential that all animals presented for slaughter comply with the Irish Clean Livestock Policy.
- The objective is to produce meat from slaughtered animals which is free from faecal contamination.



good animal husbandry will ensure cattle are as clean as possible

**While it is recognised that it may be difficult to supply cattle for slaughter which are completely free from faecal contamination, due care in the following animal husbandry practices will ensure cattle are as clean as possible.**

### Diet

The type of diet fed to animals has a significant effect on the cleanliness of the hide.

- Diets based on low dry matter, silage and roots are likely to produce dirtier cattle due to production of large quantities of wet dung.
- The addition of cereals to certain diets may increase the level of faecal contamination.
- Sudden changes in diet lead to digestive upsets and possible scouring.

### Preventative Steps

- As far as possible, provide cattle with free access to straw or other suitable long fibre.
- Alternatively, incorporate hay, straw or other suitable long fibre into the diet for two weeks immediately prior to slaughter.
- Always make diet changes gradually.

### Housing

Poor housing type and design are significant contributory factors in the soiling of hides with faeces. It is important that animal housing is designed, constructed, maintained and managed in a manner that guarantees adequate space, ventilation, floor drainage and a dry lying area.



poor housing design increases the risk of soiling of hides

### Slatted Housing

The correct stocking rate is essential throughout the housing period, as both over stocking and under stocking may give rise to excess soiling of hides.

### Preventative Steps

#### You should ensure:

- Correct stocking densities are maintained as far as possible throughout the fattening period.
- Stocking densities are dependent on size and nature of pens as well as type of animal.
- Slatted housing is kept in a clean condition and is properly ventilated.
- Extra care is taken with livestock management prior to slaughter.

### Straw-Bedded Housing

Stocking density has a significant effect on hide cleanliness. Remember, extra straw will not compensate for overstocking. The amount of straw required will depend on factors such as stocking rate, animal weight, diet and shed design.

### Preventative Steps

- Avoid overstocking.
- Provide a sufficient amount of fresh straw as required.
- Ensure the house is adequately ventilated and drained.