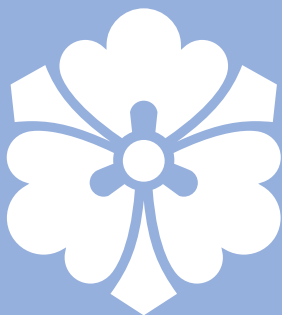


# ALL ON THE TABLE



THE PRINCE'S  
COUNTRYSIDE  
FUND

An economic  
analysis of the  
role and viability  
of small abattoirs  
in the red meat  
supply chain



Note: The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is responsible for food safety in England and Wales, while the Food Standards Scotland (FSS) is responsible for food safety in Scotland. Further references have been added to this shortened report for the purpose of up to date background information and context.

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The full version of this report is available at [www.princescountrysidefund.org.uk/research](http://www.princescountrysidefund.org.uk/research)

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by Lord Curry of Kirkharle

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# FOREWORD

In June 2019, our Patron, HRH The Prince of Wales convened a roundtable on abattoirs at Dumfries House. At this meeting, a number of grocers, abattoir owners, butchers, and others involved in the red meat supply chain came together to discuss the context in which red meat abattoirs were operating, the specific situation facing smaller abattoirs, and to explore their sustainability and what specific practical actions needed to be taken forward in order to create a viable abattoirs sector that meets the specific needs of different sectors of farming and food production.

The overarching recommendation from the meeting was to undertake this research. As part of the PCF's ambition to support thriving farming families, the need to support a diverse abattoir sector is clear – that farmers should have access to a range of abattoirs, offering a wide range of services regardless of size, to support their farming ambitions.

To achieve this, abattoirs of all sizes should be supported to ensure high levels of animal welfare, environmental sustainability, and food quality. The PCF became concerned about the rapid shrinkage in the number of local abattoirs – from 1,146 licenced red meat abattoirs in Great Britain in 1979, to just 213 such abattoirs across the UK in August 2020 (with 13 smaller abattoirs who offered private kill having closed in the 20 months prior). This decline is what this report looks at – the specific benefits offered by smaller abattoirs. Yet we fully recognise that abattoirs of all sizes, offering different services, have their place to support the UK's diversity of farming systems and food production.

Smaller, local abattoirs tend to offer private kill services more frequently than larger ones; our research has demonstrated that farmers using abattoirs for private kill are happier with the relationship with their abattoir than farmers using larger slaughterhouses, and one fifth of farmers who don't use a private kill service would like to, but this service is not offered near them. At a time when farm business profits are being squeezed, creating the opportunity for farmers to add value to their business is vital.



The proximity of farm businesses to a suitable abattoir is essential to support local food systems, which showcase the best of what Britain can offer. One third of consumers say that buying local food is important to them, and this proportion is expected to grow now that Britain has left the EU. And on top of this, smaller abattoirs often support the local economy; alongside the employment they offer, they also supply butchers, caterers, farm shops, pubs and restaurants, and so much like the smaller family farm, they add value back into the local economy. The growth of regional or local food branding initiatives will only further increase this.

From an environmental point of view, the types of abattoir available affects which livestock farmers can keep – for example, native breeds with thicker coats or longer horns, which may not be accepted for slaughter at all abattoirs – and therefore a well distributed abattoir network is critical to the conservation of genetic and habitat diversity. The importance of conserving rare and native breeds has recently been recognised in the Agriculture Act 2020 as a crucial public good, and therefore abattoirs able to service these beasts are indispensable.

Here at The Prince's Countryside Fund, we hope that this research will help to illuminate the reasons that smaller abattoirs require unique support, and how the disappearance of these businesses will negatively impact the rural economy, food sustainability, and the profitability of our nation's farming families.

**Lord Curry of Kirkharle**  
*Chairman, The Prince's Countryside Fund*



# CHAPTER 1.

## THE UK ABATTOIR LANDSCAPE AND HOW IT'S CHANGING

Abattoirs form the cornerstone of a complex, time-sensitive meat supply chain. They are an essential part of the infrastructure that supports UK livestock farming.

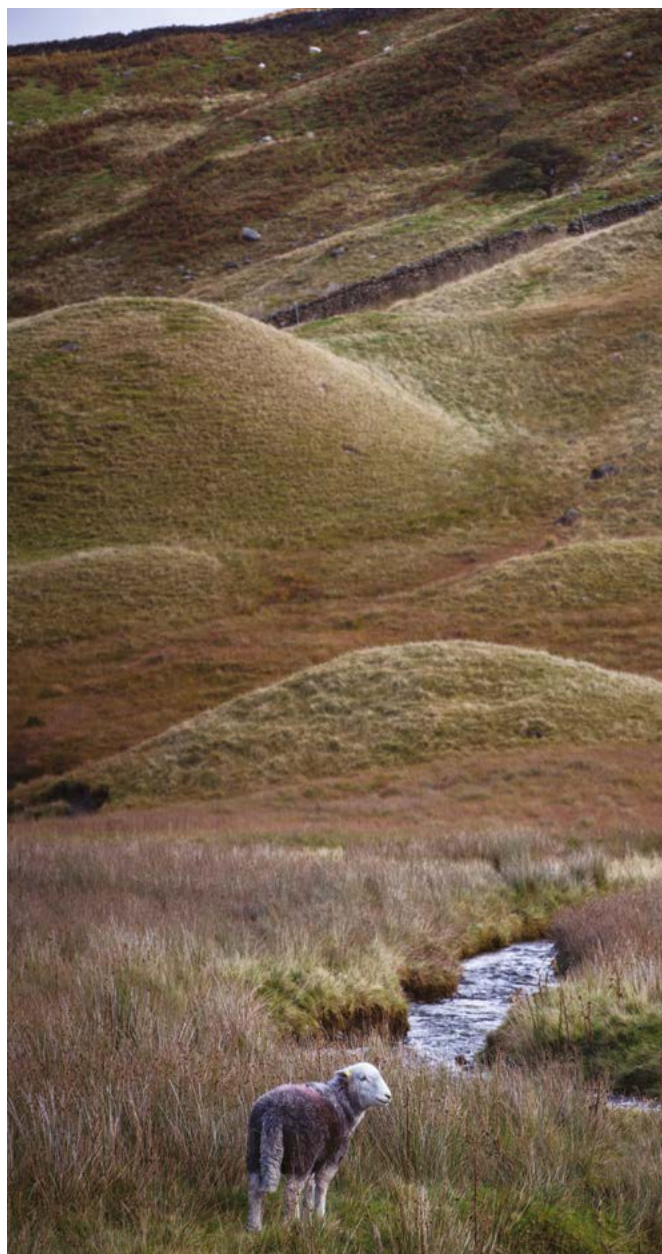
The diversity of abattoirs is significant: at one end of the spectrum are large abattoirs with integrated supply chains that buy one or two species direct to fulfil retailer contracts and supply export markets, and which are able to slaughter more than 90,000 LSU a year.

### **Livestock Units, calculated as:**

1 cattle = 1 LSU

2 pigs = 1 LSU

5 sheep = 1 LSU



At the other end of the scale are small abattoirs that operate part-time, offer private kill services to local farmers covering multiple species, butcher almost all carcasses themselves, and have a throughput of between 1,000 to 5,000 LSU annually.

For many decades now, economies of scale have been gradually eroding the diversity in the abattoir sector. This has resulted in a growing number of larger, more specialist abattoirs, and there are now some 13 UK abattoirs with a licensed throughput of more than 90,000 LSU a year, and 31 able to slaughter between 30,000 and 90,000 LSU annually.

This has also resulted in fewer abattoirs in total, with a 65% reduction between 1979 and 2000 in Great Britain – from 1,146 licensed red meat abattoirs to 404, according to a Farm Animal Welfare Committee report. By August 2020, there were 213 such abattoirs across the UK, with 13 smaller abattoirs – all of which offered private kill services – having closed in the 20 months prior to this date.

Small abattoirs in particular – which are often the only abattoirs offering private kill services – have been squeezed, and only 147 of the remaining 213 abattoirs now offer this service.

In 2018 this restructuring meant that the 71 smallest abattoirs slaughtered an average of 285 cattle a year each, accounting for just 1.1% of throughputs, whereas the 13 largest abattoirs slaughtered an average of 76,283 each, totalling 56% of throughputs (Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board [AHDB] 2019).

The distribution of abattoirs is also uneven across the UK. As of August 2020, England had 159 abattoirs, whereas Scotland had just 23, Wales 18, and Northern Ireland 13.

The impacts of the loss of smaller abattoirs include an increase in the distance livestock have to travel to slaughter, and therefore a greater risk to animal welfare; limits on farms being able to add value to meat from their livestock and therefore farm business viability; and a reduction in provision of locally produced food and supply chains.



## CHAPTER 2.

### CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FACED BY SMALL ABATTOIRS

Using economies of scale, larger abattoirs have been able to lower their operational costs and slaughter fees. This has put smaller abattoirs under pressure to match prices to unsustainable levels – if this persists, these businesses will continue to close.

To compete, many smaller abattoirs offer bespoke slaughter and butchering services to their farming customers, enabling farmers to retail their meat through their own farm outlets. Many small abattoirs are only commercially viable because of this, yet many others lack the capital to invest in these services.

Staff retention is an issue for all abattoirs. A 2020 survey of 28 abattoir managers, found that larger abattoirs worried about the availability of overseas workers and fully qualified official veterinarians, whereas smaller abattoirs had difficulty recruiting multi-skilled slaughtermen, and then retaining them.

### NON-SPECIALISATION AND THROUGHPUT

Larger and smaller abattoirs adopt different approaches to managing a constant and stable supply of livestock through seasonal fluctuations. Larger abattoirs specialise in just one or two species, which reduces their equipment costs and allows for efficient and specialised management of throughput.

Larger abattoirs employ in-house logistics, planning and procurement teams to purchase livestock from, generally, larger farms. This team uses its combined technical knowledge of livestock production systems and animal growth rates to plan livestock delivery schedules. International companies that own multiple abattoirs are even able to redirect livestock between abattoirs to keep slaughter lines running at full capacity.

In contrast, operators of smaller abattoirs often feel forced to retain the capacity to slaughter all three main species (sheep, pigs, cattle) for economic viability and to help even-out the monthly variation in stock. This adds to staffing

and equipment costs, and can mean capacity going unused, which further increases fixed costs.

The increased specialisation of livestock farms into breeding, rearing or finishing businesses, has also affected where livestock are finished and this has created a lack of livestock for some smaller abattoirs. For example, island farmers are increasingly selling livestock as stores rather than taking them on to slaughter weight.

None of the smaller abattoirs in a survey of 28 businesses, slaughtered every day of the week, and several slaughtered only one day a week. Many ramped up production at Christmas, but closed entirely for a month or two in the New Year.

The principal constraints to smaller abattoirs increasing throughput, however, was the capacity of their butchery hall and the fridges needed for hanging carcasses. The investments needed to comply with new regulations, such as the installation of CCTV, has absorbed capital that could otherwise have been used to improve efficiency and capacity.

### BALANCING THE CARCASE

The margins abattoirs can make from purchased livestock depends in-part on their ability to ‘balance the carcase’ – how well they can find markets for all cuts of meat and the ‘fifth quarter’ (offal, hides and fleeces), and therefore create more value per carcase.

***“[Finding markets for the entire carcase is] the Holy Grail for all processors, large and small, as it enables a positive margin to be realised and keeps the business viable.”***

Scottish Association of Meat Wholesalers, 2019



The higher throughput of larger abattoirs allows them to sell cuts and offal into domestic wholesale markets and/or overseas. They are also better placed to treat and store hides and fleeces (traditionally the most valuable parts of the fifth quarter) in sufficient quantity to export. A fall in the value of hides and fleeces means it is no longer cost-effective for smaller abattoirs to do this, and the disposal of these products adds to their waste removal costs. An important reason why many smaller abattoirs have retained their own butcher's shop is to help balance the carcass.

## CONTROLLING COSTS

Under these financial pressures, smaller abattoirs need to control costs and management time. But survey respondents consistently referred to their difficulties controlling animal by-product waste disposal charges (lack of competition between companies), FSA arrangements (lack of flexibility), managing Food Chain Information paperwork (lack of consistency across livestock species), and the cost of recruiting, training and retaining staff.

In addition, many smaller abattoirs find financing the investments needed to continue in business difficult. In particular, the cost of complying with new regulations absorbs capital that could

otherwise be used to increase efficiency by upgrading processing lines.

## ACCESSING DIFFERENT RED MEAT SUPPLY CHAINS

The majority of larger abattoirs are contracted to directly supply a single multiple retailer, with livestock supplied by farmers who are members of the retailer's dedicated producer groups. This prevents smaller abattoirs from supplying the large-volume red meat supply chain, should they wish to do so. Perhaps for this reason, many smaller abattoirs are not members of assurance schemes.

Conversely, large abattoirs face practical management and operational barriers to offering private kill services. For example, the different stages in processing carcasses often take place in different plants and at different sites, so the trained staff needed do not always work in the same location.

The deliveries from private kill customers generally involve small numbers of livestock, so large throughput abattoirs require many deliveries, which increases staffing and lairage costs, and requires more time to maintain records to identify and segregate the carcasses and meat so these can be returned to the farmer.

***“Without an abattoir, [we]  
would wind the farm down.”***

Farmer





## CHAPTER 3.

### PRIVATE KILL AND THE VIABILITY OF FARM BUSINESSES – A SURVEY

This chapter looks at the results of an online survey of 300 UK red meat producers (14 April - 26 May 2020), 62% of which use private kill services to retail meat from their own livestock. Private kill services – where abattoirs slaughter livestock for a farmer so that the farmer can retail the meat themselves – are mostly provided by small-medium sized abattoirs.

Around 10% of English farmers processed or retailed farm produce using private kill services in 2018-2019, according to Defra, but there is evidence more farmers would like to do this if the service was available.



### Farmer 1: Texel sheep sold through own farm shop

Farmer 1 sells 350 Texel sheep annually through their farm shop, which the farmer says generates better prices for heavier lambs. Gross retail value is estimated to be £200/ head.

The farmer delivers the livestock to the abattoir, and the carcasses are returned by a wholesaler. Costs include a slaughter fee (£12/ head), own butcher costs (£25/ head), and retailing costs such as staff and packaging (£5/ head), taking the retail value of each animal to £158.

If the farmer did not retail the sheep themselves, the livestock would be sold as deadweight direct to an abattoir, achieving an estimated market price of £105/ head, minus transport costs (£2/ head) and fees (£1.50/ head). This route would result in a sales value £101.50/ head – £56.50 less than when sold through the farm's own shop.

### CASE STUDY 1: THE FARMERS USING PRIVATE KILL RETAIL TO ADD VALUE TO THEIR LIVESTOCK

In our survey, 15 farmers in England who use private kill retail, showed they were able to add significant value to their carcasses by retailing meat themselves – from £56 additional revenue for an individual sheep, to £3,775 for cattle.

### Farmer 2: Oxford Sandy and Black pigs sold through own retail shop

Farmer 2 sells 18 Oxford Sandy and Black pigs each year through their own farm shop, a box scheme, online sales, and at markets and festivals. They work closely with an abattoir and butcher:

*“We take our animals to the abattoir, which takes the carcasses to the butcher, who turns them into what we need for the next few weeks, i.e. sausages, bacon, and primals to fulfil our orders. If retailing at shows, 90% of the meat is sold as barbecue items.”*

This model results in an estimated gross retail value of £844/ head. Processing costs include slaughter fees (£30/ head), butcher fees (£2.85/ kg live weight) and transport (£0.18/ mile), which the farmer estimates to be £519/ head, leaving a retail value of £325/ head – about £183/ head mark up on a live ring price. Costs are high, but the farmer says there would be hidden costs otherwise and retailing direct is worth it financially:

*“We do not have to have a fridge room, or pay for disposal of heads, trotters, blood etc. There are a lot of hidden charges the butcher and abattoir pay which we would have to pay if we did it all ourselves. Having in the past sold 8-month-old pigs for £35, I can only say we would not keep pigs if we were not retailing them ourselves.”*



## PRIVATE KILL IS IMPORTANT FOR FARM BUSINESS SURVIVAL

Farmers who retail their own meat can add significant mark-up to their produce, so the closure of abattoirs that offer private kill can hit farm revenues hard, and limit farmers' ability to diversify their incomes.

As the Basic Payment Scheme is phased out, being able to add value will become even more important for many livestock farms, which already struggle to make a profit: in 2019/20, 33% of lowland grazing livestock (LGL) farm businesses failed to make a profit, even with Basic Payments. That same year, both LGL farms and Less Favoured Area grazing livestock farms failed to make a positive return from agriculture alone, including the best performing businesses (Defra).

## CASE STUDY 2: THE YORKSHIRE FARMER MAKING £10K INCOME FROM BURGERS

If the farmer from Huddersfield took their over 30-month rare breed beast to a large abattoir they would get £2.70/kg, which for a beast at 400kg dead weight comes to £1,080.

Instead, they take the beast to a small abattoir where it is killed and processed into burgers, which costs him £1.20 per burger. They are then sold for between £8 and £10 each as part of a restaurant meal. If they use 50% of the dead weight (or 200kg) of the meat, plus water and seasonings, this will make 1,250 burgers, providing a total income from the burgers of £10K (less overheads – rearing the animal, restaurant costs, and producing the burgers which comes to about £1,500) – a significantly better return.

*(Case study 2 courtesy of the Sustainable Food Trust)*

Nearly half of respondents (45%) who had a private kill retail business said it was “essential” to their farm business’ viability, and 21% said it was “very important”. Yet 46% said they had no alternative abattoir they were prepared to use, if their current abattoir closed, and half (50%) said they had just one acceptable alternative. Over a quarter (28%) of private kill farmers said their retail business would have to close if their current abattoir shut its doors, and roughly a quarter (23%) said they would have to reduce livestock numbers and shrink their grassland area.

This action would have implications for the food chain – 61% said they would have to reduce the size of their breeding herd/ flock, and 58% said they would have to decrease the number of animals finished, although a small number said they would switch to a larger processor. Others would sell their livestock as stores, but some would cease rearing livestock altogether.

***“I value very highly our small local abattoir, we take our animals, know our butcher really well, it feels as wholesome as an abattoir can! There is integrity through the whole process ... I would struggle to stay in the beef business if our abattoir closed or became too expensive to use.”***

Farmer



There would also be an impact on the species farmed, with 30% of farmers saying they would have to stop producing rare and/or heritage breeds. Even farmers with at least one acceptable alternative abattoir faced problems: 29% said switching abattoirs would increase their costs, 27% said they would have to transport animals further, and 15% said it would become economically unviable.

CLOSING ABATTOIRS MEANS LIVESTOCK HAVE TO TRAVEL FURTHER

The average distance a farmer had to travel to an abattoir was significantly longer for commercial business (59 miles/ 95 kms) than for private kill (27 miles/ 45 kms).

The closure of abattoirs offering private kill services leads to longer journeys for farmers seeking this service. Longer time spent in transport increases the risks to animal welfare, including fluctuating internal temperatures, inadequate ventilation, and possible lack of food, water and rest. Stress before slaughter can also affect meat quality.

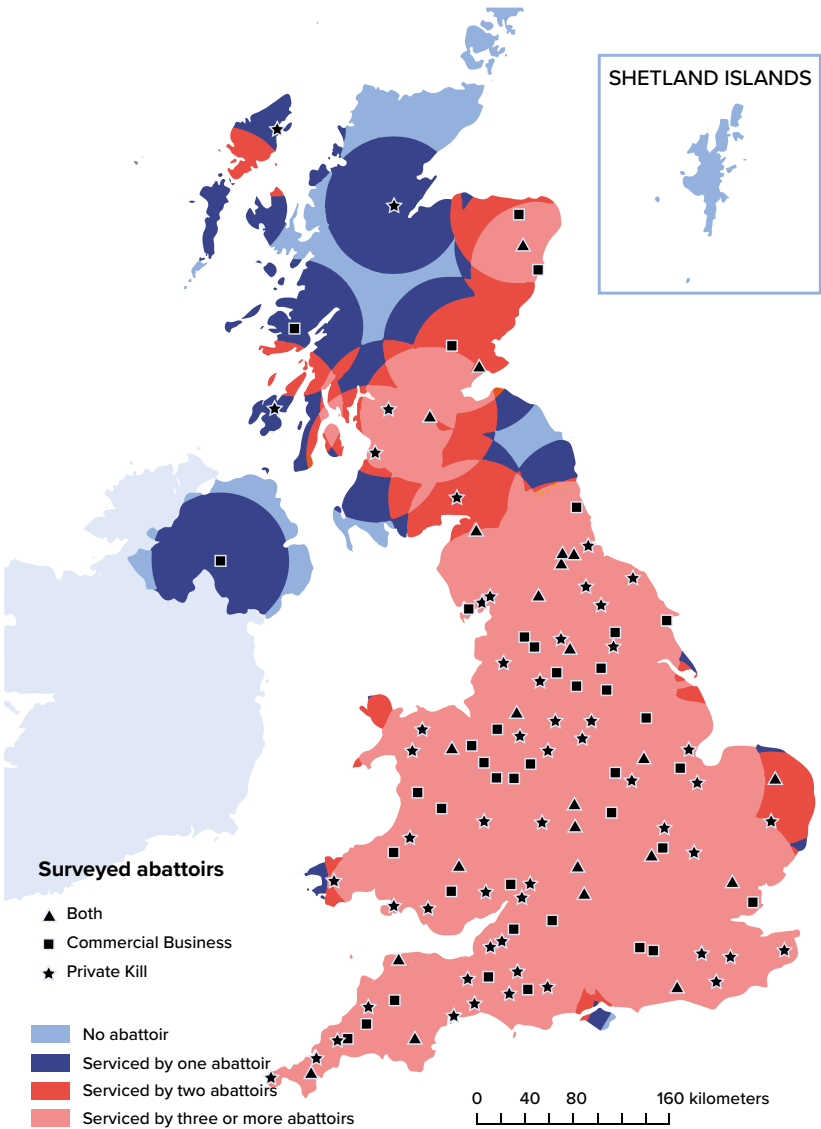
A well-distributed network of small abattoirs providing private kill services can therefore significantly reduce risks to welfare and meat quality. It would also meet UK Government objectives to reduce travel time of livestock from farm to abattoir.

Table 1. What effects would changing abattoir have on your private kill retail business?

IMPACTS OF CHANGING ABATTOIR	%
Increased costs	29.4
Transport livestock over greater distances	26.5
Reduced abattoir services available	19.6
Reduced animal welfare	16.7
Become economically non-viable	14.7
Reduced meat quality	12.8

Respondents could choose multiple options.

Figure 1. The geographical coverage of UK abattoirs used by survey respondents (assuming a 65km buffer).





## LIMITED ABATTOIR CHOICE AFFECTS COMPETITION

Farmers needing private kill services had fewer abattoirs to choose from, with 32% saying they used the only abattoir available to them.

The majority of both private kill and commercial farmers said the number of abattoirs affected the terms and conditions they were offered,

suggesting farmers believe the existing abattoir network fails to provide effective price-competition. Only 8% of commercial business farmers said they were happy with their abattoir relationship, with 20% saying they faced uncompetitive prices. This was in stark contrast to private kill users – 37% said they were happy with their abattoir, and none said price was an issue.

**Table 2. Does a lack of choice between abattoirs mean the terms are dictated to you?**

COMMENT	% PRIVATE KILL RETAIL RESPONDENTS	% COMMERCIAL BUSINESS RESPONDENTS
Happy with abattoir relationship	36.6	8
Use the only abattoir available for their farm business	31.71	16
Forced to transport animals over long distances	15.9	14
Unhappy with the hanging / butchering services available	14.6	N/A
Unable to choose the days/ times of bookings	8.5	6
Non-competitive prices	N/A	20
Cannot access the private kill services needed to retail own meat	N/A	26
Others, including abattoir's QA requirements, livestock age slaughter restrictions, no carcase delivery service, unhappy with animal welfare standard.	14.6	18

*Respondents could choose multiple options.*

## PRIVATE KILL RETAIL IS IMPORTANT FOR RARE AND HERITAGE BREEDS

A significant 76% of private kill retail farmers sell rare or heritage breeds of livestock, suggesting the provision of private kill services is important to the continuation of these breeds.

These livestock generate premium products and can often only be slaughtered at small abattoirs because these premises are more willing to adapt to meet the breed's specific requirements. For example, large-scale abattoirs are generally unable to adapt their high-throughput systems to scald and remove the thick coat of outdoor-reared pigs.

Small abattoirs must retain their multi-species slaughter capacity if they wish to provide an all-inclusive service. However, the throughput

***“Our small local abattoir is entirely suited to small producers of rare breeds. These small abattoirs are essential if rare breeds are to continue as it is mostly difficult or inappropriate to take these breeds to large operations.”***

Farmer

of some rare breeds – such as longhorn cattle - may be too small to justify the purchase and maintenance of the specialist equipment needed. A well distributed network of small abattoirs is therefore critical to the conservation of genetic and habitat diversity, species biodiversity and enhanced rural landscapes.



## CASE STUDY 3: MIXING CONSERVATION GRAZING AND PRIVATE KILL RETAIL

Conservation grazing uses grazing livestock to maintain and increase the biodiversity of natural or semi-natural grasslands, heathlands, wood pasture, wetlands and many other habitats.

These environmentally valuable habitats are usually not economic to farm, but often benefit from less intensive grazing. Conservation grazing is widely used by organisations including the Wildlife Trust and The National Trust.

### North-East of England

Flexigraze CIC is a non-profit organisation which provides specialist conservation grazing across agricultural land and sites throughout the North East of England. It is currently operating on 24 sites across 590 acres, with a mix of Swaledale, Hebridean, Shetland and Soay sheep. They graze meadows, small paddocks, or scrubland that are often poor quality and need hardier, native breeds to graze them, and which local farmers do not want to graze.

The company buys lambs from hill farms in Northumberland, grazes them for up to 18 months, and then either sells them on through the live ring, or retails their meat through a box scheme direct to customers. Once lambs reach maturity, the grazing manager contacts a network of customers and takes orders and payments, before taking groups of 3-5 sheep to the local livestock market where they are collected by the abattoir. After slaughter, the abattoir delivers the carcasses to one of three butchers, who makes up half-carcase boxes for customers to collect.

If the sheep have to be sold through the live ring, Swaledales will fetch an average of £80/head, although this can vary between £55-£85/head, while Hebrideans might make an average £45/head. But by retailing their meat direct to customers, the farmer can add £55-60 value to each animal, or £20-£50/head for Swaledales.

*“On our website we say ‘buy conservation grazed mutton’, and that is a huge part of our story – it is so important for our meat boxes, says Duncan Hutt, chairman at Flexigraze. These sheep have never left the North East – they have been grazing on conservation land and have a longer life. We could almost tell our customers what their sheep has eaten.”*

The business relies on their abattoir being prepared to organise a livestock collection and meat delivery service, without which the private kill business would not be economical, since

the abattoir is far. Withdrawal of this service would mean having to replace the Hebridean flock with a more commercial breed, causing a ripple of other impacts: consumers would no longer be able to support conservation grazing; biodiversity and landscape value would be reduced, as would the contribution to the local economy; an important market for smallholders’ surplus Hebridean stock would be removed; and local butchers could no longer offer this service.

*“We would not be able to add value to our stock without a small abattoir providing us with a private kill service,” says Mr Hutt. “Private kill allows us to tap into markets that we wouldn’t be able to otherwise. Alongside this, consumers would not be able support conservation grazing in the same way. We also have a client who makes charcuterie from our animals and without private kill and our story, their business would look very different.”*

## South of England

Steve Proud, Farm Manager for the Surrey Wildlife Trust provides bespoke and contract conservation grazing with 450 Belted Galloways on 8,000 acres in Surrey, and sells 80-90 prime beef cattle each year through his private kill retail business. He estimates that by marketing his livestock this way, he significantly increases the value of the over 30 month animals.

Nearly all the conservation grazing is driven by agri-environment schemes on Sites of Special Scientific Interest and high wildlife designated habitats. Most of the habitats are lowland heathland and river floodplain that require summer grazing followed by a smaller amount of grazing from the late summer into autumn and winter on chalk grassland.

*“Selling the carcasses is a byproduct of the ecological service that we provide, which also produces revenue at the end of our system and off-sets some of the costs,” says Steve. “We have a niche market working with seven local, artisan butchers and tend to kill 6-10 cattle each month. These cattle have been produced to benefit the environment and the uniqueness, provenance, and ecological backstory of this is of great importance to the butchers that we work with. Most of them have been out to*

*visit the farms and some have even brought photographers with them to tell the story of how the beef is produced so they can be totally transparent with consumers.”*

Steve sells the whole carcass in advance to the butchers. He then delivers the livestock to the abattoir, which afterwards delivers the carcasses to the nominated butchers, who are responsible for paying the delivery charge. *“If we didn’t have the option of private kill and delivery (which I see as just as important as private kill) for our cattle, then we would probably only achieve 70% of the price we do now for them,” says Steve. “If we had to go wholesale, we would be unable to set our own pricing and would be unlikely to be able to achieve the carcass specification required from a commercial wholesaler.”*

However, his preferred abattoir involves a 60-minute journey, and it has a short term tenancy, which is a significant problem since it cannot make any long-term investments to improve facilities or capacity. If the abattoir closed, Steve says he could be forced to change his farming system by either producing stores from the herd, or moving away from a suckler herd totally and buying in and rearing stores.

FARMERS CHOOSING PRIVATE KILL ARE MORE SELECTIVE IN THEIR ABATTOIR CHOICE

An abattoir’s animal welfare standards, proximity to farm, and slaughtering fees, are more important to farmers who use private kill services, when selecting an abattoir, although all farmers said these factors were important to them. A personalised service and confidence that they would get back meat and offal from their own livestock, was also high a priority, as was the specific butchering services offered.

A quarter of commercial business farmers had no choice in the abattoir they used. Those who were able to choose, were motivated by the promptness and value of payments, the accuracy of carcase grading, and how quickly carcase information was returned to them.

Farmers who use private kill services often use the opportunity of transporting their livestock to inspect operating standards and therefore provide an additional level of scrutiny over animal welfare and meat hygiene standards.

*“We like the nature of the work at [abattoir name] with animal welfare paramount. We don't spend 18-24 months rearing our sheep to the best standards for their last few hours to be very stressful.”*

Farmer

*“Reform regulations surrounding small abattoirs to make them proportional to the risks.”*

Farmer

Table 3. What factors affect farmers’ choice of abattoir?

FACTOR	% OF PRIVATE KILL RETAIL FARMERS
Animal welfare standards of abattoir	73.5
Closeness to farm	70.3
Slaughtering fee	19.5
Total assurance to get own animals back	86.5
Total assurance to get own offal back	37.8
Type of butchering services offered	30.8
Butchering fee	13
Other: including delivery of carcase back to farm, quality of butchery, small family run abattoir, slaughters multi-species	4.8

Respondents could choose multiple options.

## DEMAND FOR PRIVATE KILL SERVICES AND MOBILE ABATTOIRS

18% of the farmers who did not use private kill said they were either “extremely” or “very” interested in starting a private kill retail enterprise, but access to an appropriate abattoir was the primary barrier.

***“I would love to find a way to meaningfully access my end market. The difficulties in finding a user friendly and local home kill, or even intermediate butchery service. I am envious of the farmers down south who have much greater choice of abattoirs.”***

Farmer

Of the respondents who did not use private kill services, around a quarter supported the introduction of mobile abattoirs. This supports a recent study into the viability of mobile abattoir services in Scotland, which found that over 90% of farmers supported mobile abattoirs, principally for animal welfare reasons and the desire to create local meat businesses.

***“[I would like] licensed mobile killing units, where they either go from farm-to-farm, [or] to local locations [that are] well-advertised among farmers/ small holders and [where] animals are booked in, killed in the unit and then delivered to/ collected by the local butcher, or farmer. This would reduce animal transport times and carbon footprints.”***

Farmer

## FARMERS WANT GOVERNMENT TO SUPPORT PRIVATE KILL RETAIL

Farmers were strongly in favour of government supporting private kill through existing small abattoirs (69%), believing they offered improved animal welfare, environmental footprints and food traceability.

***“I believe it is essential we keep red meat supply chains local. It's good for welfare and it's better for the environment and it's good for food traceability.”***

Farmer

There was support for government to fund new small abattoirs (16%) and mobile abattoirs (17%), as well as support abattoirs through reduced bureaucracy and regulatory costs.

***“[We need a] local abattoir in Orkney. It can only happen though with significant public funding in the same way that schools are provided for benefit of the community and parents don't have to build, staff and run the schools themselves. We've got the butchery skills, and a product where demand greatly exceeds supply.”***

Farmer

***“Small abattoirs are under tremendous pressure to survive. Their kill costs are more than the big ones. They need help in any way possible.”***

Farmer

**Table 4. What government support would most help your farm's private kill retail business?**

RESPONSE	TOTAL %
Support small, local abattoirs	69.0
Fund mobile abattoirs	17.2
Fund new small abattoirs	15.9
Reduce bureaucracy for small abattoirs	14.5
Reduce regulatory costs for small abattoirs	9.7
Advertisement / transparency about benefits of these businesses	4.8
Fund the development of local processing facilities (e.g., butchery and hanging facilities)	4.1
Reduce costs of vet inspection	3.5
Subsidise PK retail businesses	3.5

*Respondents could choose multiple options.*





# CHAPTER 4.

## HOW TO IMPROVE ABATTOIR PROFITABILITY – A STUDY

In Summer 2020, 29 abattoir managers were surveyed to assess the financial performance and economic viability of abattoirs in the UK, and how to improve their profitability.

Combined, the abattoirs slaughtered an estimated 1.56 million cattle, sheep and pigs in a typical year (roughly 5.6% of the total slaughtered in the UK each year): 52% slaughtered fewer than 5,000 LSUs/ year. Three respondents with throughputs of 30,000-90,000 LSUs offered private kill services.

These businesses were well-integrated into their local communities: 96% provided private kill services to farmers and other retailers; 89% supplied butcher shops; 61% supplied caterers; 54% supplied other retailers such as farm shops, 46% supplied wholesalers, and one abattoir sold to a boning plant.

The majority employed full-time staff, averaging 22.5 people. Estimates provided by sixteen abattoirs suggest that 71% of business expenditure went to other businesses or employees located within 30 minutes' drive.

### PROFITABILITY AND STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE IT

Only half of abattoir managers said their businesses had been consistently profitable in the three years prior to Covid-19, with 32% hanging on by breaking even. Significantly, 11% said they had not been profitable in that time.

The data provides some evidence that to break-even, abattoirs need a throughput of at least 10,000 LSUs/ year, but that to be profitable they need to slaughter over 22,000 LSUs/ year, although there is variability in the data.

Profitability varied greatly: the annual revenue of abattoirs that were profitable ranged from £30,000 to over £300,000, while one abattoir was making a loss even though its income was above £300,000.

Some respondents who offered private kill provided further detail: their primary revenue source was slaughter fees, followed by butchering service – these were the only sources of revenue for seven out of nine respondents. The principal revenue for a third was the sale of carcasses.



## IMPORTANCE OF PRIVATE KILL BUSINESS TO ABATTOIRS

Dependency on private kill business varied by size of abattoir, but 18% of total abattoir throughput was private kill business. 45% of the throughput of the smallest abattoirs (with throughputs below 5,000 LSUs/ year) and 49% of medium to large abattoirs (throughputs between 30,000-90,000 LSUs) was for private kill customers, making these abattoirs dependent on their private kill business.

This fell to 16% for the abattoirs processing 5,000-30,000 LSUs, and the percentage of private kill business of the largest abattoir (more than 90,000 LSUs) was very small.

96% of abattoirs surveyed provided private kill work, and for an average of 79 farmers, but this ranged widely, from 5 to 400 customers. 15% of cattle and 9% of sheep were slaughtered for private kill customers, while half of pigs slaughtered by the abattoirs were also for the private kill market.

A second source of information was gathered during the study: 34 UK abattoirs that offered private kill services were chosen at random and asked how important the private kill business was to them. Their answers confirmed that private kill business can be important to the viability of large, as well as small, abattoirs.

For 90% of the smallest abattoirs, and 100% of those with throughputs of 1,000-5,000 LSU, private kill business was “essential” or “important” to their business, accounting for at least 30% of throughputs. Of the 10 smallest abattoirs (processing less than 1,000 LSUs), 80% said private kill was “essential” to their business, accounting for over 50% of their throughput.

The findings from both surveys show that abattoirs with an annual throughput between 30,000 LSUs and 90,000 LSUs can manage private kill services across a number of species whilst also supplying wholesale markets – it is therefore in principle possible for a small number of larger abattoirs to deliver substantial private kill capacity across the UK.

**Table 5. Importance of private kill business to abattoirs, by abattoir size (LSUs)**

Importance of PK business (as a % of throughput)	Abattoir size (LSUs)				
	<1k	>1k <5k	>5k - <30k	>30k - <90k	Unknown
Essential (>50%)	8	2	5	2	2
Important (>30%<50%)	1	4	3	2	0
Useful (>15%<30%)	0	0	0	0	0
Not important (up to 15%)	1	0	4	0	0
Total	10	6	12	4	2
% of “essential & important” to total	90	100	66.7	100	100

\*. No abattoir contacted in the >90k throughput provided private kill services.

**Table 6. Over the previous 3 years (excluding 2020) how would you describe the profitability of your business?**

Profitability over previous three years	Percentage %	Mean LSUs slaughtered per year (range)
Profitable	53.6	22,181 to 50,174
Breaking even	32.1	9,824 to 14,388
Making a loss	10.7	6,623 to 9,160
Prefer not to say	3.6	(small abattoir: < 1k throughput)
Total	100	16,099 to 38,392

### Increase throughput

There is scope for the majority of abattoirs to use their assets more intensely to create additional economies of scale. Almost all the abattoirs (93%) said they had surplus slaughtering capacity, with the majority able to increase throughput by 10% or more – in line with findings that most smaller abattoirs do not slaughter every day. However, larger abattoirs also said they had surplus capacity.

This means policy changes which increase imported meat cuts and products (e.g. lower import tariffs or phytosanitary standards), and/or which reduce UK livestock production, are likely to increase abattoir closures, with a disproportionate effect on smaller abattoirs.

The main barrier preventing abattoirs expanding into their existing capacity, was related to bottlenecks in the processing line, including limited chiller capacity and cutting-room space. Other challenges included the need to employ additional labour; lacking capital to fund the necessary investments; market uncertainty; lack of managerial time; and difficulties competing on price with large processors. Only four of the

eleven respondents said expansion was limited by the supply of livestock, and only four said they were constrained by the demand for their products.

### Increase revenue and fees

One strategy for increasing profitability is to raise prices charged for the services offered. Whether this is a viable strategy will depend on existing price-pressure competition; farmers' evaluation of the quality and range of services offered; the impact of raised charges on the profitability of livestock farming, and of private-kill retail businesses in particular; and changes this may cause to livestock production systems.

Where there is limited private kill provision in a geographical area there may be scope to increase fees. However, farming in marginal areas is not generally prosperous, and the withdrawal of direct payments is likely to be severely felt. More generally, the majority of livestock farmers failed to cover their full economic costs in each year during the 2010s, according to AHDB's Stocktaker survey. Therefore, the extent to which these abattoirs can raise fees is likely to be limited.

Rather than price, evidence suggests most private kill farmers choose their abattoir based on closeness to the farm, animal welfare considerations, and the types of services. Differentiating their services may therefore be a more successful strategy for abattoirs to increase slaughter fees and butchering charges. But again, this may not be feasible with current livestock farm profitability, and could force further specialisation in the sector towards farming systems which only breed, rear, or finish livestock, and thereby reducing abattoir throughput in some areas.

## Widen services offered

The widespread availability of emergency slaughter services for casualty animals helps improve animal welfare and the provision of this service offers an opportunity for smaller abattoirs. Defra has even said provision of higher animal welfare – such as emergency slaughter – should be considered a public good.

There is no national register of the abattoirs which offer emergency slaughter services in the UK, but of those surveyed, 39% did not provide this service. Smaller abattoirs may not be slaughtering on the day an animal is injured and larger abattoirs may not be willing or able to interrupt processing schedules for this slaughter.

Although specialist slaughter for problematic, rare and/or heritage breed livestock can present challenges, twenty-four abattoirs (86%) already offered this service. However, doing so requires specific equipment and staff need additional training to handle some species, such as long horn cattle, which may pose a risk to handlers.

## Reduce costs

Abattoir costs averaged £235,833 per year, although this ranged from £20,000 to £500,000 (based on six respondents, all who offered private kill).

The majority of costs faced by abattoirs cannot easily be cut: livestock prices are dependent on local markets; the AHDB slaughter levy is a

standing charge; and labour shortages result in competitive wages. Together these account for 67% of costs. Half of abattoir managers also said FSA requirements were onerous, and the cost of paying for the official FSA veterinarian is a significant concern for many smaller businesses.

The economic value of animal by-products, like hides and fleeces, has also been shrinking, so that rather than generate revenue, these now create disposal costs. At the same time, waste collection costs have increased and are a key concern, particularly for small abattoirs. Surveyed abattoirs expressed considerable concern about the lack of competition between companies, supporting findings by the 2020 All-Party Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare report and its recommendation that the Competition and Markets Authority evaluate the market's competitiveness.

Where abattoirs are close enough to each other, they may be able to collaborate to secure lower waste disposal fees, and even collect more offal for pet food brands. Ultimately, cost reduction often requires investment in new technologies and/or processes, and almost half of abattoirs surveyed said they needed to make business-critical investments in the next two years or they would have to close. These investments ranged from £20,000 to £1 million, but with margins so tight, many abattoirs felt stuck.

***“[Waste removal companies] are run like monopolies. Some won't deal with you because they all have agreements with each other.”***

Farmer

Businesses also need certainty to make investments, but changes to agricultural policy, trading tariffs and phytosanitary standards as a result of leaving the UK, was a key concern for the majority of abattoir managers.

When asked about support, only 14% of respondents said they did not need any financial support. Around half said unconditional grant aid

would be a good way to support abattoirs, while others supported additional public procurement by government bodies, rate relief, and training.

### Grow the market for local meat

Better and more varied marketing, and digital skills, could help abattoirs grow the market for locally-sourced meat, reach more customers and add value to what they do.

The majority of respondents were already integrated into the red meat supply chain, for example by having their own butchers shop, retail outlet, or farm, but only four sold online, and only four retailed through box schemes. Nearly 40% were interested in help to set up and manage their own online site, and around a third said digital skills training would be useful.

There was high support (63%) for developing a 'locally procured' meat brand or label, and

a third said they would be willing to develop an online marketing site with other local meat suppliers.

To reach the biggest meat markets of the supermarkets, many of which now take local brands, abattoirs would need to comply with retailer quality assurance standards though, and almost half of respondents were not members of such a scheme. This is consistent with 2019 FSA findings that 52% of English and Welsh red meat slaughterhouses were not members of any quality assurance scheme.

However, there may be scope to develop a low-throughput stamp for small abattoirs exclusively supplying local meat markets. UK Geographical Indication (GI) schemes (which will take over from the EU's Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) scheme) also provide a way to differentiate locally produced meat.

***“We need to invest money across the business in all areas. However, due to the very fine line between making any money or making a loss, investment in new plant, fixtures and fittings has been nearly non-existent, and we are reaching a point where it will be better to close the business than burden it with heavy loans.”***

Farmer



## CASE STUDY 4: HOW A GEOGRAPHICAL MARQUE IS HELPING AN ABATTOIR MARKET LOCALLY-PRODUCED MEAT

A collaboration in Cumbria has enabled a small abattoir and surrounding Herdwick sheep producers to add value to their meat by marketing it as specific to the local area. Herdwick sheep are iconic to the Lake District and play a vital role in maintaining the area's landscape, due to their hardiness and ability to graze over a wide area of fell. Their meat is also renowned for its distinctive flavour and quality.

By working together, a small family-owned abattoir, 'Aireys', local farmers, and The Herdwick Sheep Breeders Association (HSBA), achieved an EU PDO marque for Lakeland Herdwick meat and offal. This status is indicated by a stamp that guarantees all carcasses and cuts of meat sold under this marque are derived from pure-bred flocks of Hardwick ewes and rams that have been born, raised and slaughtered in Cumbria, in an area widely known as "Lakeland".

The PDO requires all sheep sold under the Lakeland Herdwick PDO to be processed

through the local Aireys abattoir, which was established in 1830.

The HSBA oversees the criteria under which Herdwick sheep may be accepted for sale as Lakeland Herdwick. It conducts annual audits of farmers and companies known to be selling Herdwick products and records these details on the HSBA database.

In this way, consumers know that their meat is truly local, and that they are helping to protect a breed well-adapted to the area, and a centuries-old farming system – and associated businesses – key to the management of the Lakes' World Heritage Site landscape.

A typical Herdwick lamb is slaughtered at 8 to 12 months, which is older than most commercial breeds, and even then has a smaller liveweight, it can be difficult to market through more commercial channels. Adding value is therefore key.



***“My butcher has seen sales increase  
300% [during the pandemic].”***

Farmer



# FAMILY BUTCHERS



## CHAPTER 5.

### CONSUMER DEMAND FOR LOCAL MEAT

Many consumers have positive associations with 'local' food and local meat in particular. Quality, taste and supporting local producers and the local economy, are the biggest reasons given for buying local food (CPRE 2012).

Consumers also attach feelings of 'nostalgia, wholesomeness, and a simpler, less stressful way of life' to local food (Defra 2008). When questioned, the majority of people think it is important to buy local produce. Vegetables (51%) and meat (40%) top the list for the two local products consumers are most likely to buy (YouGov 2015).

Consumers say they also trust smaller farms more – these businesses are more likely to use private kill services and feed into the local, low volume, meat supply chain. However, for most people, British goods still have to compete strongly on price (61%) and quality (55%) before they will favour them over imported items (Simon-Kucher & Partners 2019).

### THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON LOCAL FOOD CHAINS

Though the Covid pandemic at first exposed vulnerabilities to supermarket's just-in-time production and delivery approach, with sudden and unexpected spikes in demand resulting in empty shelves in some key categories, it has also given local food a boost.

Local supply chains seemed less vulnerable, and farm shops and butchers saw an increase in sales as consumers sought-out local suppliers, with 38% of Brits shopping locally to some degree due to lockdown restrictions (YouGov 2020). During the first 12 weeks of lockdown, British shoppers spent an extra £45m at butchers' shops compared to the same period the previous year, according to Kantar Worldpanel (2020).

This increased support continued through the year: over 2 million households visited their local butcher between the beginning of August and end of October 2020 – 100,000 more than the same time the year before. The growth in sales

at butchers' shops often outstripped that seen in main retailers, boosting butchers' share of UK spend on meat and poultry to 3.7%, a rise of 0.7%.

Farm shops also benefited – 92% of farm retailers surveyed by the Farm Retail Association reported a 'significant' rise in new customers since lockdown rules began in March 2020. Furthermore, a 2020 NFU South West member survey reported that 71% of those offering direct sales like vegetable or meat box delivery experienced a positive impact on sales.

With these newly established and strengthened relationships, could interest in local food continue to grow? Certainly, 70% of those who shopped locally during the first lockdown, said they would continue to do so to some extent, even when lockdown is fully lifted (YouGov 2020).



## IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON ABATTOIRS AND FARMERS – A SURVEY

As supply chains initially worked to readjust, abattoirs faced challenges. The sudden closure of the hospitality sector – which is key for many smaller abattoirs – meant meat needed to be redirected towards retail. However, exclusion of many abattoirs from the multiple retailer supply chain prevented them supplying this retail market.

In an overview of initial impacts, it was reported that 10 small abattoirs and 51 cutting plants closed mainly due to the drop in demand from food service (British Meat Processors Association 2020). Running abattoirs while maintaining 2 metre distancing between employees, slowed production and reduced throughput in some abattoirs, while others totally or partially closed. Others were forced to withdraw private-kill services, due to biosecurity concerns; a shortage of staff who were ill, isolating, or distancing at work; and food business customers closing.

About a quarter of respondents to our survey reported a decrease in throughput – all offered private kill services, but were less likely to retail their own meat. This decrease had a significant adverse impact on the short-term viability of five of the seven abattoirs.

About half of those who had lost business attributed it to the closure of their customers' businesses, and half to a reduction in the number of farmers supplying their abattoir.

However, a survey of 29 abattoir owners/managers and 300 red meat farmers, showed that smaller abattoirs were more likely to have experienced an increase in throughput in the first four months of the pandemic. 46% had an increase in throughput in February-May 2020, compared to a typical year, and all of these offered private kill services, giving further evidence about increased demand for local food. Half of these said the extra throughput had made a significant difference to the short-term viability of their business. 69% supplied their own retail outlets – the existence of which proved to be an important factor for benefiting from this increase.



### How can abattoirs retain this additional business post-Covid?

Of those abattoirs that experienced an increase in throughput, some believed it would be entirely up to consumers whether they continued to support local businesses after the pandemic, while others believed marketing could help retain demand.

One abattoir owner, said “Raise awareness of eating local meat, highlighting that meat procured and processed locally has minimal effect on global warming and a positive effect on local economy and dietary benefits.”

Another said their abattoir needed grant support to continue to increase efficiencies and supply the additional customers.

Abattoirs that saw throughput decrease had mixed thoughts on how to recapture lost business: about half believed their trade would not recover until after Covid-19, one said it could not be recaptured and asked for compensation for lost business, and one advocated an advertising campaign.

Some abattoirs had managed to find new opportunities though, even if throughput had not changed, for example: “Previously the foodservice sector took most of our product, directly and indirectly. Supermarkets were out of reach. A surge in demand for the supermarkets opened doors to us previously closed. So, we started at a massive disadvantage and worked hard to turn this around.”

However, not all small abattoirs are able to supply local multiple retailers as the majority do not currently comply with the retailer's quality assurance schemes and standards.

## IMMEDIATE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON FARMING RETAIL BUSINESSES

An online survey of farmers ran between April-May 2020. Two thirds of farmers in both private kill and commercial business supply chains reported immediate, short-term impacts of the pandemic. 27% of farmers using private kill retail reported a rise in sales. However, 20% had their usual routes to markets cut off, such as hospitality and farmers markets, compared to just 12% of farmers selling into commercial supply chains.

Farmers quickly adapted and around half of those affected used alternative outlets or services to sell their produce, including home deliveries and sales to other farm shops, with some even setting up their own retail outlets.

***“[It] has nudged us to look at online [options] and build more local business with regular deliveries.”***

Farmer

Increased interest in local food was felt on the ground by many farmers, but 8% of farming businesses were not able to make use of this due to limited or reduced abattoir capacity.

***“[There is] more interest in locally produced beef. My butcher has seen sales increase 300%.”***

Farmer

Commercial business farmers also experienced a range of impacts, but on the whole were more affected by changes in market prices for their livestock, with 31% saying they had seen an immediate fall in prices – although 2020 would go on to show good prices in general. Farmers in both private kill and commercial supply chains expressed concern about possible longer-term impacts, including how continued restrictions could impact accessing abattoir services.

## USING A LOW-THROUGHPUT STAMP TO MARKET MEAT

Could small abattoirs be supported by a low-throughput stamp if they exclusively supply local meat markets?

Abattoirs on mainland Europe which sell all their produce within a restricted geographical area are currently allowed to apply the “de minimis” derogation to some requirements, thereby reducing their regulatory burden. The UK government could also do this. This type of stamp could be used to communicate ‘local’ attributes of meat produced and supplied through small-scale, local businesses.

The geographical range would need to be determined, as a UK wide stamp could be used by abattoirs of all sizes. This problem may eventually be addressed by using “smart tags” – electronic markers which provide consumers with information to allow them to make their own decisions about what ‘local’ means. With support, managers could also adapt existing examples (like the Lakeland Herdwick PDO) to establish their own local brand.



## WHAT IS 'LOCAL' FOOD?

For abattoirs and farmers to add value to their meat based on 'local' qualities and certification, enough abattoirs need to exist for farmers to slaughter their stock within a 'local' distance.

Different surveys have suggested 'local' should be food produced within 30-50 miles of where it is retailed. Since 62% of private kill farmers transport livestock less than 30 miles to the abattoir, and 90% less than 50 miles, the majority of private kill farmers would currently comply with this 'local' definition. However, if more abattoirs offering private kill close, it will become harder for farmers to slaughter their livestock within this geographical range.

### Current rate of abattoir closures threatens local supply chains

If abattoirs offering private kill continue to close at the same rate as the last 18 months (a rate of 9%), 20% of UK areas are estimated to have no abattoir offering this service within 27 miles (the average distance private kill farmers currently travel to an abattoir), in 18 months' time.

21% of areas will have only one such abattoir to choose from within that distance, 15% will have a choice of two, and less than half (43%) will have three or more abattoirs.

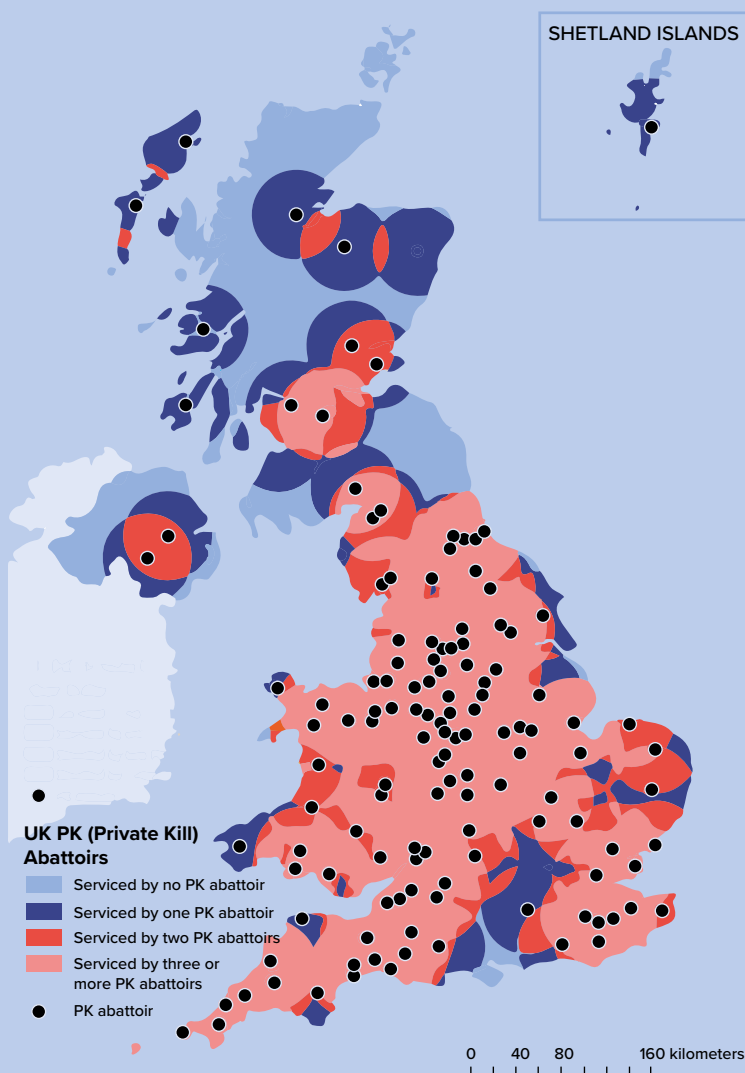
Fast-forward a further 18 months (36 months in total), and the number of UK abattoirs offering private kill will have fallen to 121, leaving almost a quarter of UK land with no abattoir within 27 miles.

Already, 18% of UK land is more than 27 miles/45km away from an abattoir that offers private kill services. Around 21% is only serviced by 1 abattoir in that geographical range, while less than half (47%) has three or more abattoirs locally.

Areas further than 27 miles from private kill provision include parts of Hampshire, Northumberland, East Anglia, South West Scotland, and West Wales, and there is no private kill provision in Northumberland and Hampshire, the Scilly Isles, the Isle of Wight or on Orkney.

The key short-term impacts of this will be a reduction in choice of services offered, and less price competition between abattoirs. Longer-term the loss of abattoirs reduces the resilience of the private kill network, which the Covid pandemic has shown to be essential for food security.

**Figure 2. The locations of the 147 abattoirs offering private kill services in the UK in August 2020 with 27 miles (45 km) buffers.**



# KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

**[1] To monitor and better understand the impact of abattoir closures on the services they provide, UK livestock levy bodies should collect and disseminate additional information on:**

- The number and location of abattoirs working in the UK at any time
- The licences held by individual abattoirs
- The total throughput of each abattoir, by species
- The abattoirs that provide private kill and emergency slaughter services, and the throughput of each of these services
- Rare and heritage breed slaughter capacity
- The number of farmers using private kill services in any month
- The number and type of livestock processed for private kill retail in any month.

**[2] Food standard organisations and regulators should take into account the difficulties their processes and procedures impose on smaller abattoirs. Examples of changes might include:**

- Ensuring the same official veterinarians are always sent to the same abattoirs
- Reducing the time required to cancel FSA staff to help abattoirs avoid unnecessary costs
- Speeding up the introduction of common Food Chain Information procedures across all livestock species
- Applying the 'de minimis' derogation to reduce the regulatory burden imposed on small abattoirs which supply meat locally.

**[3] The UK Government and Devolved Administrations should acknowledge the contributions small abattoirs make to the viability of farm businesses; higher animal welfare; the provision of public goods from land; enhancing rural distinctiveness; the rural economy and wider tourist sectors.**

These bodies should apply the arguments currently used to provide 'public money for public goods' to farmers, to provide funding for the public goods directly and indirectly provided and supported by abattoirs.

**[4] Abattoirs on the Channel Islands (Guernsey, Jersey, Alderney and Sark) receive government finance in recognition of their essential contribution to farming on the islands and their importance to enhance animal welfare.**

The UK Government and the Scottish Government should use the same reasons to support existing island abattoirs and to extend the network of island abattoirs to, for example, the Isles of Scilly, the Isle of Wight, Orkney and the Outer Hebrides.

**[5] If data was collected to monitor the contribution abattoirs make to animal welfare and the rural economy, it could be used to promote current and future support payments, and to improve the services abattoirs provide.**

To enable this, abattoirs should be supported to upgrade IT and recording systems. This would allow them to give accurate and regular information about the number of farmers they provide private kill services to; the type of services demanded; the distance livestock travel from farm to abattoir; the means of transport used; and the abattoir's contributions to the local economy.

**[6] Financial support could be made available through the UK's Shared Prosperity Fund. This might involve capital grant schemes, similar to, for example, the Countryside Productivity Scheme.**

**[7] The small abattoir sector should be supported, either by a government grant or by redirecting a proportion of the slaughter levy, to establish a fully financed Small Abattoir Advisory Group. Its remit would be to work with agricultural sector bodies to provide expert technical assistance to small abattoirs across the UK on a range of issues. Its role could include, for example:**

- To provide bespoke financial and technical advice
- To compare costs and prices of services offered
- To help establish collaborative actions, for example, to establish joint input purchasing groups; facilitate increased co-operation with local businesses; and to establish a nationwide, or several regional local meat brands
- To provide advice to managers who wish to create a local meat brand independently from other abattoirs

- To encourage UK Research Councils and other funding bodies to prioritise research themes that could help small abattoirs. This could include more economically viable uses for animal by-products; improved fridge efficiency; more cost-efficient incinerators; and the potential use of 'smart labels' to enhance food and hide traceability
- To help provide industry participation to research bodies as is often required as part of research proposals
- To help establish mechanisms to support the market value of hides and fleeces.

**[8] A key aim of any Small Abattoir Advisory Group would be to work with other stakeholders to help increase private kill retail business. For example, to work alongside:**

- The national farmers unions, to provide bespoke advice to farmers wanting to diversify into local added value meat retailing
- Conservation grazing organisations, to help conservation graziers increase the value of livestock principally used for habitat conservation and management
- National Park authorities to develop regional local meat brands.

## GLOSSARY

### Lairage

A place where livestock are kept temporarily.

### Phytosanitary standards

Measures to protect humans, animals, and plants from diseases, pests, or contaminants.

### Primals

A primal cut is a basic major cut into which carcasses and sides of meat are separated.

### Suckler herd

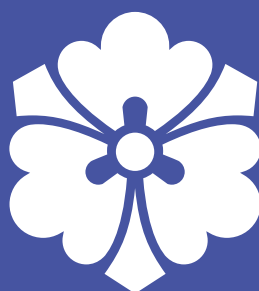
A suckler herd is a herd of cattle which have been bred and remain on farm. The calf will typically stay with its mother for between 7 and 10 months.

### Stores

Animals over the age of approximately 9 months that are sold for breeding or future finishing.

***“As part of the PCF’s ambition to support thriving farming families, the need to support a diverse abattoir sector is clear – that farmers should have access to a range of abattoirs, offering a wide range of services regardless of size to support their farming ambitions.”***

Lord Curry of Kirkharle, Chairman  
The Prince’s Countryside Fund



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