

List of questions on the Initiative Tierwohl Cattle

The following is a list of frequently asked questions and answers about participation in the Initiative Tierwohl for cattle farmers.

How and when can I register to participate in the Initiative Tierwohl?

Registration for the Initiative Tierwohl always goes through a coordinator. Cattle farmers must complete the declaration of participation, including annexes, which can be found on the website, and send it to their coordinator. The coordinator will then register the livestock owner in the database. Registration is possible at any time.

Is there a list of coordinators participating in the Initiative Tierwohl programme?

Yes, all coordinators who have registered for the Initiative Tierwohl programme are published on a list in the [download area](#). A coordinator can then be selected from the list. The companies are free to choose whether they want to work with the same coordinator as for QS scheme participation or whether they choose a different coordinator.

Do companies that are already participating have to register again?

No, it is not necessary for companies that are already participants to re-register, as unlimited terms have already been introduced for ITW Rind.

How long can I participate in the Initiative Tierwohl?

There is no time limit on participation in the Initiative Tierwohl. Ordinary termination of agreement is possible at any time with a notice period of three months.

What is an implementation date and when do the criteria have to be complied with?

The implementation date is the start date from which the company must fulfil all criteria in full. From this date, the certification body can carry out a programme audit (initial audit).

The implementation date can be chosen individually and freely.

Note: The criteria do not yet have to be met for registration; the obligation to comply begins with the implementation date.

What criteria do I have to comply with?

The requirements for livestock owners are described in the respective criteria catalogues and associated explanations (see [download area](#)). The basic requirement is participation in the QS scheme. Selected criteria from the QS guidelines form the basic criteria of the ITW. In addition, there are animal welfare criteria, such as "increased space allowance", "further training measures" and "intensified veterinary stock care".

A revision of the criteria catalogues is planned for 2027.

How many audits will be carried out?

One programme audit per calendar year must be carried out in 2025 and 2026. In addition, a completely unannounced stock check will be carried out at one third of the companies per calendar year. The certification body will decide which companies will be audited. If a company participates in the programme for less than 6 months in 2026, no stock check needs to be carried out at the company in that year.

There will be a comprehensive revision of the inspection system in 2027. This will be communicated in good time.

Are the audits unannounced?

Yes, all animal welfare audits are unannounced (for programme audits, contact is made a maximum of 24 hours in advance). This also applies to the first audit at the beginning of participation, whereby the livestock owner himself specifies the implementation date from which he will comply with the criteria and is therefore ready for the audit.

Stock checks are carried out completely unannounced.

How is the animal welfare price surcharge paid out?

Livestock owners receive a price surcharge from the participating ITW abattoir on the market price for the animals that are accepted and slaughtered as ITW animals. For cattle fattening farms, the bodies have issued a recommendation on the level of the price surcharge. This is currently 10.70 cents per kg carcass weight. For dairy farms, a recommendation of 4 cents per kg carcass weight was made for ITW slaughter cows. No recommendation was made for calf fattening farms and suckler cow farms (for the supply of cows for slaughter). The actual price surcharge must be negotiated bilaterally between livestock owner and recipient.

Important: Livestock owners should always actively contact their marketers, abattoirs or livestock traders at an early stage to coordinate the supply of ITW animals - and thus ensure that an animal welfare price surcharge is paid. The mere delivery of ITW animals to an ITW abattoir does not automatically lead to payment of the premium. Livestock owners and abattoirs must agree on the delivery of ITW animals and delivery conditions.

Which livestock owners can participate?

Cattle fattening farms register via the production scope 1001 *cattle* production ; the cattle production criteria catalogue applies to them.

Fattening calf farmers register via production scope 1002 *calf* production; the calf production criteria catalogue applies to them.

Dairy cattle farmers should register for all animals: for production scope 1008 *dairy cattle farming* (dairy cattle farming criteria catalogue) to market cows for slaughter and for production scope 1001 *cattle* production (cattle production criteria catalogue) so that heifers can also be marketed.

Suckler cow farms register with the production scope 1016 *suckling cow production with calves* and can market their slaughter cows via this production scope. In order to market the fattening animals as well, the production scope 1001 *cattle* production must also be registered; the catalogue of criteria for cattle production also applies to suckler cow farms.

Do dairy farms also receive a price surcharge for milk?

No. Dairy farms that participate in the ITW do not receive an animal welfare premium for milk because the ITW cattle focuses on the meat chain.

Dairy farmers should contact their dairy or the providers of animal welfare programmes for dairy farmers in order to receive remuneration for their milk.

Dairy farms that participate in a programme recognised by the ITW can deliver their slaughter cows to the ITW programme. It is important that the respective programme provider ensures that all necessary data is available in the ITW database. An additional ITW inspection is then not necessary for the marketer of slaughter cows.

The QM+; QM++ and QM+++ programmes are currently recognised for the supply of ITW slaughter cows from appropriately certified companies.

Important: If other animals from a dairy farm are also to be marketed as ITW animals (e.g. heifers or bulls), direct participation in the ITW cattle programme is required (production scope 1001 cattle production). The cattle production criteria catalogue must then be implemented for this.

What must be taken into account if participation in the Initiative Tierwohl is terminated?

Participation in the ITW can be terminated at any time with a notice period of 3 months to the end of the month.

To withdraw from the Initiative Tierwohl, a final programme audit must be carried out to confirm compliance with the criteria until the end of participation. Proof of further training for the current calendar year must already be available for this audit. The sheds must also (still) be occupied. The audit must be carried out between three months before the date of deregistration at the earliest and two weeks after the date of deregistration at the latest.

If a company is deregistered without a final programme audit, a contractual penalty may be imposed.

What happens if an audit is not passed?

If a livestock owner does not pass an animal welfare audit, participation in the Initiative Tierwohl is terminated. The operating company can also impose a contractual penalty. The livestock owner has the option of appealing against both the certification decision (to the certification body) and the contractual penalty (to the operating company). In the event of a failed end of audit, the operating company will provide written information about the appeal options.

After a failed audit, cattle-rearing companies can re-register for the Initiative Tierwohl and generally participate again if the points that led to the nonconformity have been rectified. In the event of serious, animal welfare-related nonconformities at the end of the audit, the operating company can issue a temporary or permanent blockage and refuse re-participation.

Corrective actions for QS basic criteria - what must be observed?

Corrective actions with deadlines can be agreed for all basic criteria. If a corrective action is agreed, the company continues to participate in the ITW. The corrective actions must be implemented on time. Nonconformities must be rectified immediately by the livestock owner, which is why the shortest possible deadline must be agreed for the implementation of the measures.

Please note: From the time of the release of audit report until the certification body has issued the corrective actions, the location is not eligible for ITW.

What happens if the company structure changes?

If the farm structure changes - e.g. due to a change of farm manager or owner - or if there are other changes relevant to certification, e.g. if new shed(s) are used or the livestock population is increased, the livestock owner must contact his coordinator, who in turn informs the certification body. The certification body then decides whether an additional programme audit is necessary.

In principle, all criteria must always be complied with for all animals and all areas of the registered company (VVVO number, production scope), including new parts of the company and additional animals. In order to receive a price surcharge for the changed number of animals, the livestock owner must contact his abattoir or recipient directly.

What must be done if the operator of a registered company changes?

All changes that affect the agreement, the size of the livestock or the criteria must be registered with ITW immediately via the coordinator. The coordinator can adjust the data in the database.

If the company is leased or sold, participation in the ITW can be transferred to the next owner. However, the new operator must have an audit carried out after the takeover, as the person responsible changes.

What happens if a registered company is divided or two participating companies are merged?

Farm divisions or mergers can be applied for via the coordinator in the database. If the farm division or merger results in changes to the number of animals, this must be justified accordingly in the application. In the event of structural changes or changes in management, the certification body may decide to carry out an additional programme audit to verify the changes.

Note: Companies that are blocked and therefore have no eligibility of delivery cannot be divided or merged.

Where can the animals be marketed?

Every livestock owner is free to market their animals. There is no obligation to deliver to an ITW company.

Fatteners are also not obliged to supply an abattoir that participates in the Initiative Tierwohl. However, an animal welfare price surcharge is only paid for animals that are delivered to an ITW abattoir with which an agreement has been made to supply ITW animals.

Which abattoirs participate in the Initiative Tierwohl?

All abattoirs approved for the Initiative Tierwohl can be found via the [public search function](#) (Slaughter and deboning level) on the start page of the animal welfare database. Here you can either search for specific abattoirs or use the "Search" button to view a list of all authorised abattoirs without entering search criteria.

Can companies that fatten heifers or steers also participate in the ITW?

Yes, these companies can register with the production scope 1001 *cattle* production.

What must be observed in the event of unoccupied cattle?

Unoccupied cattle should be reported to the coordinator. The coordinator will inform the certification body, as no audits can be carried out as long as there are no animals on the company. As soon as animals are housed again, this must also be reported to the coordinator, who in turn forwards the information to the certification body. If it is foreseeable that no more animals can be housed, the company should be deregistered via the coordinator. In this case, a final audit must be carried out before the farm is unoccupied. If no final audit is carried out at the end, the company must expect a contractual penalty.

What happens if the implementation date cannot be complied with?

If a livestock owner is unable to comply with the self-selected implementation date, this can be postponed via the coordinator. However, this cannot be done retrospectively (i.e. after the selected implementation date), even if the end of audit has not yet taken place.

How long must the animals be kept in an ITW company at a minimum?

All cattle (including purchased cattle) must be kept continuously for at least the last six months prior to slaughter in a farm authorized to supply ITW. From January 1, 2027, all cattle (including purchased cattle) must be kept continuously for at least the last eight months prior to slaughter in a farm authorized to supply ITW. If, in individual cases, marketing is necessary before the expiry of the six-month or, from January 1, 2027, eight-month period, these cattle may not be marketed as ITW animals.

The plan is to close the ITW chain in the future so that all cattle must be kept continuously under ITW conditions. The chain closure is to take place in parallel with the QS scheme. ITW will provide information on this in good time.

What must be observed for the Diagnostic Data Monitoring criterion?

For all ITW slaughtered animals, the abattoirs collect the officially recorded ante-mortem findings in the central QS database. Cattle farmers therefore automatically participate in this monitoring and do not need to take any action. More detailed information can be obtained from the respective coordinator or can be found in the *QS guideline Diagnostic data in cattle slaughter*.

The monitoring system is constantly being further developed. In the future, there will be inter-company evaluations and company comparisons that will be fed back to livestock owners so that they can ensure animal health in the best possible way.

What needs to be taken into account for antibiotics monitoring?

Antibiotic data is collected for all ITW cattle. This is done via QS antibiotics monitoring. Livestock owners must observe two points:

Firstly, notification of the average number of animal places to the coordinator and notification of which veterinary practice is being worked with.

Secondly, an agreement with the veterinary practice that the antibiotic prescriptions will be entered into the central QS database by the veterinarian. Monitoring then continues automatically for the cattle farmers; they only need to take action if there are any changes to the above information. More detailed information can be obtained from the respective coordinator or can be found in the *QS guidelines on antibiotics monitoring in cattle*.

The monitoring system is constantly being further developed. In the future, there will be inter-company evaluations and farm comparisons that will be fed back to livestock owners so that they can ensure animal health in the best possible way.

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