

Explanatory notes Initiative Tierwohl

Dairy cattle

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General information

Is it possible to be a participant only with part of a company or location?

A location (= company) is defined by its location number (e.g. in Germany, by its location number) and, where applicable, its shed ID, as well as the production scope. Within a single location number, sub-areas (defined as shed IDs) with different shed IDs may be registered. The prerequisite is that uniform husbandry conditions apply within a single shed or building (under one roof). All sheds must be certified to at least QS standard under the location number.

How exactly is the shed ID defined? Is it possible to have two different shed IDs within a single building?

To register a shed, uniform husbandry conditions must apply within that building ('under one roof'). Exception: If areas within a building are structurally and permanently separated from one another, only part of the building may be assigned a shed ID and thus participate in the ITW. The key factor is the clear separation of the housing areas.

This separation must be clearly evident and verifiable to third parties at all times from the site plan and the farm layout diagram, and will be verified during the audit. During the first audit following the allocation of the shed ID, the auditor must include a site plan in the audit report. Detailed stock records, which are comprehensible to third parties, must be kept for each part of the farm assigned to a shed ID. The plans must clearly indicate which areas are participants in the ITW and which are not.

What needs to be taken into account if parts of a site participate under a single shed ID?

If selected sheds at a site participate in the ITW, records at the livestock farm (e.g. shed-specific records of the livestock population, shed chart, site plan/farm layout) must clearly and verifiably indicate which shed is a participant in the ITW. This is also checked and documented during the audit.

All animals must be kept in accordance with the requirements throughout the entire production phase.

The traceability of animals from the specified sheds must be ensured by means of unique animal identification.

How should regionally stricter husbandry requirements be dealt with?

As with QS, the legal, nationally applicable requirements are taken as a basis.

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

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

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

When can animals be marketed as ITW animals?

Once the successful programme audit has been released in the animal welfare database, the farm is authorised to supply. All animals that were already on the farm at the time of the programme audit become ITW animals once the audit has been released and may be marketed as such. All animals that are only brought in/purchased after the programme audit must be kept continuously for at least six months or, from January 1, 2027, at least eight months prior to slaughter on a company authorized to supply ITW (on the farm itself and/or on the supplier farm). If the animals are purchased from an ITW-approved company, the holding period at this previous farm can be taken into account.

Do the ITW requirements also apply to the keeping of young cattle?

No, the ITW requirements currently only apply to dairy cows including dry cows and calves up to the age of six months.

There are currently no ITW requirements for the keeping of young cattle (from the age of six months until the first calving). As soon as the ITW chain is closed, the ITW will provide advance notice. However, if animals to which the requirements apply (e.g. dry cattle) are kept in a group with young cattle, the ITW requirements must be implemented for the entire group.

Which animals can be marketed as ITW animals via the 1008 dairy cattle production scope?

Slaughter cows can be marketed as ITW animals in production scope *1008 Dairy cattle farming*.

If, in addition to slaughter cows, heifers are also to be marketed as ITW animals, production scope *1001 cattle production* must also be registered.

Do all animals have to be delivered to an ITW abattoir?

No. Animals from ITW companies can be marketed freely. However, compensation under the ITW is only possible if the animals are marketed to an abattoir participating in the ITW.

Important: ITW livestock owners and abattoirs (or recipients) make bilateral agreements on the supply of ITW cattle and delivery conditions. There is no entitlement to payment from the operating company, nor is the operating company liable for the payment of the price surcharge by the slaughterhouse and its actual amount.

1 Basic criteria livestock farming, hygiene, animal health

What is assessed?

It must be ensured that the animals are kept in compliance with the law and in accordance with good professional practice. The animals and the conditions in the shed are inspected during the farm tour; records and documents are only checked if there are indications of nonconformities.

The requirements correspond to the QS requirements, see the Agriculture Cattle Farming guideline.

Important: All requirements always apply to all animals and sheds of a participating company. The company is defined by disease hygiene unit (VVVO number) and production scope (cattle production, calf production, dairy farming). Each production scope can be registered separately and independently of other production scopes under a location number.

How are the basic criteria assessed?

The implementation of the individual criteria is assessed on the basis of the evaluations "fulfilled" (A), "partially fulfilled" (C), "not fulfilled" (K.O. criterion) and - conceivably for some requirements - "not applicable" (E) and documented in the audit report. An evaluation of "not fulfilled" does not necessarily lead to withdrawal from the Initiative Tierwohl. Corrective actions (=C evaluation) with deadlines can be agreed for the basic criteria. Nonconformities must be rectified immediately by the livestock owner, which is why a correspondingly short deadline must be set for the implementation of the measures.

Please note: The location is not eligible for payment from the time of the release of audit report until the certification body has issued the corrective actions.

What criteria must a recovery crate fulfil?

With the exception of scrubbing devices, all criteria must always be complied with in recovery crates.

Are animals allowed to be tethered in the recovery crate?

No, sick and injured animals may not be tethered in the recovery crate - except for individual veterinary indications - .

Animals in temporary tethering (= combination husbandry) may be treated at the tethering area and remain there, depending on the illness or injury.

2 ITW criteria

2.1 Participation in the QS antibiotics monitoring programme

What must be observed?

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

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

Secondly, 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 information listed under "Firstly". More detailed information can be obtained from the respective coordinator or can be found in the guidelines on antibiotics monitoring in cattle farming.

The monitoring system is being continuously developed. In the future, there will be cross-farm analyses and farm comparisons that will be fed back to livestock owners so that they can ensure the health of their animals in the best possible way.

2.2 Participation in the indexed slaughter findings data programme

What exactly does the livestock owner have to do here?

The findings collected independently by the official veterinarians at the abattoir are collected in a central database and analysed regularly. Cattle farmers therefore automatically participate in this monitoring programme and

do not need to take any action. More detailed information can be obtained from the respective coordinator or can be found in the guideline Diagnostic Data Monitoring Cattle Slaughter.

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

What happens if all animals are delivered to abattoirs that do not participate in the ITW or the QS scheme and therefore no slaughter findings data is collected?

All ITW abattoirs must also participate in the QS scheme and therefore take part in the slaughter findings data programme for cattle. If the animals of a company participating in the ITW Cattle are delivered exclusively to non-ITW and therefore non-QS abattoirs, the collection of abattoir data is not mandatory. If the livestock owner is unable to provide slaughter findings data as a result, this is not devalued at the end of the audit. In this case, however, the animals cannot be marketed as ITW animals and the livestock owner is not entitled to payment of the ITW price surcharge.

2.3 Further training measures

When and how often must I take part in a training programme?

Before the initial audit and then once in each subsequent calendar year, a further training programme must be attended.

If the first further training measure was completed in the previous year of the programme audit (max. 365 days before the programme audit), a further training measure must also be attended in the calendar year of the programme audit.

If ITW participation is to be terminated (prematurely), a final confirmation audit must be carried out. Proof of further training for the current calendar year must already be available for this confirmation audit.

Companies that end their participation in the ITW by 31 March of a calendar year (expiry of the participation period or deregistration in the database) do not have to participate in any further training measure for this calendar year. If the term in the calendar year extends beyond 31 March, proof of participation in further training measures for the current calendar year must also be provided.

Who must take part in a training programme once a year?

At least one responsible employee or the livestock owner of the location must always take part in a training event. This person must be designated as an animal carer. The certificate of attendance for the training event must be issued in the name of the livestock owner/employee. If a livestock owner/employee looks after several locations, the certificate can also be used for other locations. The further training of a person external to the company (e.g. consultant) cannot be recognised. It is also not possible to split the hours of further training between several people (e.g. 4 employees who have each received 30 minutes of further training).

What form must the proof of participation in the training programme take?

A personalised confirmation of participation must be submitted as proof for each event (person responsible for livestock farming). In addition to the name of the participant, the contents of the event must be documented on the certificate; it is recommended that the duration of the event be stated. If the duration of the further training measure is not stated on the confirmation of participation, the minimum duration of two hours must be proven by other means (e.g. via a programme overview, invitation or similar).

How long must the continuing education programme be?

The further training measure must comprise at least two hours of content (equivalent to a half-day event). Different training programmes can also be added together.

What content must the training programme include?

The content should be directly related to animal welfare. This can include topics on management, husbandry, animal health, feeding and climate control in relation to animal welfare.

These include (non-exhaustive list):

- Specialist events
- E-learning, webinars
- Training specifically agreed with the technical advisor or veterinarian (e.g. on emergency killing)

Possible contents for further training events are

- Animal welfare-compliant emergency killing
- Recognising and interpreting animal signals
- Carrying out animal observation
- Handling sick and injured animals
- Assessing the suitability of cattle for transport and slaughter
- Improving hygiene management

What does not constitute a required further training measure?

The following are not taken into account

- Advice on farm development (e.g. business management advice or construction advice)
- Shed tours as part of the advisory service, unless they are expressly organised as a further training measure
- Shed tours in connection with veterinary herd inspections, unless they are expressly organised as further training measures
- Internal training courses for company employees
- Attendance at trade fairs or exhibitions
- Subscription to trade journals
- Membership of producer/advisory organisations
- Further training measures that are not related to your own branch of production

Who may organise and carry out further training measures?

Further training measures may be organised and carried out by all qualified persons. This includes coordinators, advisory organisations, veterinarians, consultants, etc. Approval from the Initiative Tierwohl is not required.

2.4 Special husbandry requirements

What must be observed in loose housing?

There are no special requirements regarding the length of stay for animals kept in loose housing; documentation of the stay is not necessary. The minimum space requirements are defined in criterion 2.5. Requirements for daylight and shed climate also apply to loose housing

Do all requirements also have to be complied with for the exercise area that must be made available to the animals in combined housing?

Yes, all requirements that apply to group housing in the shed must also be complied with here. This applies in particular to the criterion of scrubbing devices (except on pasture). The water supply must also be ensured accordingly.

The increased space allowance for group housing is not relevant for the movement area, as there are special requirements for the movement area per animal.

Are there exceptions when animals do not have to be able to move freely?

Free movement for at least two consecutive hours on at least 120 days a year may be restricted for the period specified by the vet, subject to individual animal-related veterinary indications. Written proof of the veterinary indication must be provided at the end of the audit.

In the event of an epidemic, the free movement period may be restricted if the movement area is actually no longer usable due to the epidemic (e.g. official blocking of pastures, compulsory stabling). Indoor exercise yards or exercise pens that are not affected by the epidemic must continue to be made available to the animals. Written proof of the disposition must be provided at the end of audit.

In both cases, the period in which the animals were unable to move freely must be compensated for, if possible. If the weather conditions and/or, in the case of grazing, the vegetation condition of the pastures do not permit utilisation, the period for which there was an individual animal-related veterinary indication or an epidemic event can be deducted from the specified 120 days for the affected animals. Records are also required for this.

How must the animals' stay in the outdoor area be documented?

The animals' time spent in the outdoor area must be documented in a diary showing the movement time of each individual animal. The documentation can also be kept for several animals together, as long as it is always possible to trace which individual animals the documentation relates to. This is conceivable if the animals go to the outdoor area in fixed groups. If individual animals are brought into the outdoor area outside their group or are not brought into the outdoor area according to individual animal-related indications by the veterinarian, this must also be documented in any case.

If the livestock owner decides not to bring individual or all animals into the outdoor area at times, this must be compensated for on other days so that all animals can move freely for at least two consecutive hours on at least 120 days a year.

In addition to the diary, a plan showing the available net area of the outdoor area and the maximum possible number of animals per outdoor area must be submitted at the end of the audit.

Can the animals' outdoor area be restricted in bad weather?

The livestock owner decides for himself on which days the animals have outdoor areas. This means that outdoor areas can be suspended on individual days in bad weather. The decisive factor here is that the animals can still move freely for at least two consecutive hours per day on at least 120 days a year.

Does a net area plan (including maximum possible number of animals) also have to be available for outdoor areas on pasture?

No, a net area plan with the maximum possible number of animals is only required for exercise pens and exercise yards; it is not necessary for outdoor areas on pasture.

Can the outdoor area be added to the unrestricted usable area?

The outdoor area can only be included in the unrestricted usable area if it is guaranteed that it is accessible at all times. Of course, the space allowance may be temporarily reduced for the duration of cleaning.

It must be ensured that the animals have sufficient space even if the outdoor area is restricted, e.g., in the event of an epidemic, a veterinary order, or for animal welfare reasons. Therefore, at least the space allowance specified in the QS Guideline for Agriculture – Cattle Farming must be complied with at all times.

How is the stall length defined in combined housing?

The stall length is defined as the area behind the manger room or the tethering device up to the end of the stall. The entire length of the stall must be designed as a paved surface (with appropriate soft support). Grates or other perforated floors are not included in the stall length.

In the case of short stalls, it must also be ensured that the space above the manger is available to the animals at all times for lying down, standing up (head swing), resting and eating and is not restricted.

Shed climate

To what extent must all windows and air inlets always be open?

The air conditions in the entire shed must be appropriate for the animals. Windows and air inlets must be open, except in adverse weather conditions. However, it is crucial that an optimum climate is created in the barn. If ventilation systems are designed in such a way that windows or air inlets must be (temporarily) closed to ensure an optimal climate in the barn, this is possible.

Light

What should the lighting duration be based on?

The duration of lighting should be based on the natural day-night rhythm. The light phase should be at least eight hours a day.

2.5 Increased space allowance

How is the space calculated?

In cubicle pens, the space does not have to be calculated - each animal must have a cubicle available. In all other sheds, it is a question of the area that can be used by the animals without restriction, i.e. the area on which the animals can move freely (= walk, lie down and stand) (internal dimensions of the crate). When calculating the net pen area, the area under housing facilities such as drinkers, partitions, feed fences and the feed table etc. is not taken into account. The area under scrubbing devices can only be taken into account if it can be used by the animals without restriction. The required space allowance is specified in the criteria catalogue.

Important: the increased space allowance must be complied with for each group of animals and at all times (even during marketing bottlenecks).

Do upstands and steps count when calculating the area?

Upstands and steps, e.g. between the straw and slatted areas, are included in the area calculation.

What applies to a cubicle barn?

If the cows are kept in cubicle barns, each animal must be provided with a cubicle. The space allowance does not have to be calculated separately; a farm plan with net cubicle area is not required.

Can a cubicle free stall barn be extended with a littered barn area without cubicles?

Yes, such an extension - e.g. with a deep litter area - is possible. In this case, the space allowance is considered separately between the cubicle barn and the extension. The space allowance does not need to be calculated separately in the cubicle barn; a farm plan with net pen area is not required for this part. For all animals in the common herd for which no cubicle is available in the cubicle shed, the space allowance of at least 4 m² of unrestricted usable area per animal weighing 350 kg or more must be complied with in the extended area (see also specifications for sheds without cubicles). A corresponding plan for the net pen area and maximum possible number of animals must be drawn up for this area. The animals must also be provided with sufficient soft lying space.

What must be submitted at the end of audit?

A farm plan must be available showing the available net pen area per group of animals kept together and the maximum possible number of animals (with the exception of cubicle pens).

2.6 Cleanliness of the animals

How is it assessed whether an animal is clean?

The following hygiene score is used as the basis of valuation. All animals in a herd are considered when assessing this criterion.



Example pictures of dairy cattle. Source: Modified according to DLG leaflet 281 "Das Tier im Blick-Milchkühe" with extract from the project "cows and more, what the cows tell us" of the NRW Chamber of Agriculture

It should be noted that there are different degrees of soiling between "clean" and "heavy clod formation". The "clean" condition should always be the goal for all animals. A situation in which a maximum of 10 % of all animals are heavily soiled is acceptable for the ITW (see figure "Heavy clod formation").

What happens when animals are heavily clodded?

If animals are categorised as very dirty at the end of the audit or show heavy clod formation, the livestock owner must ensure that the animals become clean again and no longer become dirty in the future. It is recommended that an action plan is drawn up in which both the measures and their implementation are documented.

At the end of the audit, a maximum of 10 % of animals with heavy clod formation is tolerated.

2.7 Scrubbing devices

What are suitable scrubbing devices?

The scrubbing devices must allow the animals to scrub on the sides of the body (head, neck, rump and flanks) and/or on the back and head in a manner typical of the species. The scrubbing devices must be sufficiently large for this purpose. The surfaces of the scrubbing devices must have an uneven profile. Scrubbing-scratching brushes, e.g. rotating swing brushes on which the animals can rub their backs and heads, or fixed brushes are suitable for this purpose. Scrubbing devices must not pose a risk of injury.

Chequer plates and rubber mats are not suitable scrubbing devices for dairy cattle.

How must the scrubbing devices be installed?

The scrubbing devices must be freely accessible to all animals. They must be installed in such a way that all animals (of all sizes) can reach the scrubbing devices and rub themselves on the sides of their bodies (see above) and/or on their backs and heads.

From when must scrubbing devices be provided?

Scrubbing devices must be offered throughout the company from the implementation date.

Do scrubbing devices have to be offered in calf breeding?

No. Scrubbing devices only have to be offered for dairy cows (lactating and dry cows) in group housing.

2.8 Intensified veterinary stock care

What is the maximum period of time that may have passed since the last herd visit before the programme audit?

Herd visits that took place no more than 1 year (= 365 days) ago at the time of the audit can be recognised in the programme audit.

When and how often must an inventory visit be carried out?

An inventory visit must be carried out once before the initial audit (maximum 365 days before the first programme audit) and then regularly at least twice in each calendar year. If the first inventory visit was carried out in the previous year of the initial audit, further inventory visits must be carried out for the calendar year of the initial audit (see below for details). It is recommended that stock visits be carried out approximately once every six months.

The following points should be noted at the start of participation:

- If the initial audit is released **by 30 June** of a calendar year, evidence of **two inventory visits** must be provided for the calendar year of the initial audit
- If the initial audit is released **after 30 June** of a calendar year, only **one inventory visit** must be documented for the calendar year

If participation in the ITW is terminated (= end of term or deregistration in the database), the following regulations apply:

- If participation in the ITW is terminated **by 31 March** of a calendar year, **no inventory visit** must be verified for this calendar year

- If participation is terminated **between 1 April and 30 June**, at least **one inventory visit** must be documented in the last confirmation audit for this calendar year.
- If participation is terminated **after 30 June** of a calendar year, **two stock visits** must be documented in the last confirmation audit for this calendar year.

Can a veterinary stock visit for QS also be used for the ITW?

A veterinary stock visit for QS can only be used for the criterion Intensified veterinary stock care of ITW under certain conditions. For this purpose, the herd visit must also fulfil the requirements of the ITW. This means that special attention must have been paid to the care of the animals during the herd visit and this must be noted accordingly in the visit log.

If the documentation for the last "QS herd visit" does not include the care of the animals or if only simplified documentation (e.g. "no special findings") is available, this is not sufficient.

2.9 Soft lying area

How must the lying area be designed?

All animals must be provided with soft or elastically deformable lying surfaces. In addition to the use of litter, soft surfaces such as rubber mats can also be used for this purpose. Lying areas made purely of concrete or with minimal bedding, e.g. sawdust, are not sufficient.

2.10 Calving pen

Does the stay in the calving pen or its cleaning have to be documented?

No. It must be plausibly recognisable in the audit that the calving pens are available if it is necessary to separate the animals for calving. It must also be clear that the crates are cleaned after each calving. The audit checks whether the crates are available in an appropriate condition.

How must the floor in calving pens be designed?

A soft and non-slip lying surface must be provided in calving pens. The lying surface must be designed in such a way that liquids can be absorbed or drained off during calving. The use of sufficient litter is recommended for this purpose. If the soft lying surface is provided via rubber mats, these are not automatically considered non-slip. They must be designed in such a way that they are soft and non-slip and that liquids are drained away.

Does a company with combined housing also need a calving pen?

Yes, even with combined housing, the animals must have access to a calving pen in which they can move freely.

Are the animals allowed to be tethered during calving?

No, the animals must be able to move freely during calving.

Do scrubbing devices have to be provided in calving pens?

No, no scrubbing devices need to be provided in calving pens.

Do calving pens have to be cleaned after each calving if several calvings take place on the same day?

It must be ensured that the calving pens allow for a clean and hygienic calving for each cow. If several calvings take place on the same day, the calving pens must at least be sufficiently littered before each calving and cleaned

after the last calving. If rubber mats are used as a soft surface, cleaning may also have to be carried out between calvings if the calving pen is otherwise not clean.

Can a calving pen be occupied by other animals?

It must be plausibly recognisable in the audit that the calving pen is available if required - i.e. for upcoming calvings. Other occupancy of the crate with animals that are not calving is only conceivable if no calvings are due during this period, e.g. on companies with seasonal calving. This also applies to the possibility of using calving pens as recovery crates.

Does a calving pen need to be littered?

If separation is necessary, a calving pen with a soft and non-slip lying surface must be available. The lying surface must be designed in such a way that liquids can be absorbed or drained off during calving. Alternatively, an appropriate collection pen can be used, which also holds all calving animals during seasonal calving. The calving pen must be cleaned after each calving and must be large enough to allow the animals to turn around and for labour assistance to be carried out.

Littering the calving pens or calving collection pens is recommended.

2.12 Udder health

What happens if the somatic cell count is elevated?

If the limit values for somatic cell content are exceeded, an action plan must be drawn up in consultation with a veterinarian. The aim of this plan must be to treat animals with elevated cell counts in a targeted manner in order to permanently reduce the somatic cell count/ml in the milk delivered [*target value: 150,000 cells/ml - this value will be targeted as the limit value in the next phase of the ITW Rind programme*]. The concrete measures planned must be listed in the plan and the time frame in which they are to be implemented must be specified. The action plan must be countersigned by the veterinarian: at the conclusion of the measures, the veterinarian must confirm that they have been properly completed.

If the somatic cell count is still elevated after the action plan has been completed, a further action plan must be drawn up with the veterinarian and implemented - until the cell count is in compliance with the limit values.

If there is no action plan at the end of the audit or if it has not been implemented on time, this will be evaluated accordingly in the audit.

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