

# Understanding the Qurbani market



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# Introduction

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It is incumbent upon every able Muslim to follow in the footsteps of Prophet Abraham (PBUH) and have an animal sacrificed as thanksgiving during the festival of Eid-al-Adha. This is one of the most important festivals in the Islamic calendar, during which charitable acts are encouraged. Apart from its spiritual significance, there are significant economic benefits associated with the festival, as tens of thousands of animals (particularly small ruminants) are procured specifically for the festival annually.

The act of sacrificing an animal is called Qurbani (in Urdu) or Udhiyah (in Arabic) and it occurs during the time of Eid-al-Adha. It is celebrated on the tenth day of the twelfth Islamic lunar month of Dhul Hijjah. There is said to be blessings for every fibre of wool or every strand of hair of the sacrificed animal.

For an animal to be used for Qurbani, it needs to meet specific age requirements, as well as being sexually mature. Going over and above the base requirements, many Qurbani performers also look to put Tayyib principles into practice. Tayyib, referring to the holistic notion of all that is good or wholesome, is an Islamic concept analogous to the ethical, organic and fair-trade movements.

Information contained in the following pages aims to help answer some questions on following best practice for Qurbani. Producers need to be conversant with the requirement of Qurbani in order to provide a service that is expected by the consumer.



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# Market size

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During the Eid-al-Adha festival, there are two distinct market routes for beef and lamb: the Qurbani market and the Eid market. The Eid market accounts for 75–80% of the increase in trade, while the remaining 20–25% is associated with the Qurbani market. The Eid market is usually patronised by consumers who are unable to purchase animals to perform the Qurbani rites locally, or they may simply choose to send money abroad for the Qurbani to be performed on their behalf. It is estimated that the total number of

sheep and lambs processed for the UK's Qurbani market is in the region of 50–70,000 per annum. In the UK, relatively small numbers of adult cattle are also used for the sacrifice. In contrast, the total number of sheep and lambs processed in France is estimated to be in the region of 100,000. As a top exporter of sheep meat in the EU, there is room for UK processors to tap into the ever-growing EU Qurbani market by focusing on member states with large Muslim populations.



# Animals for Qurbani

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Sheep (lamb, hogget and old sheep), goats, cattle and camels are all acceptable animals for Qurbani. For the purpose of this booklet, camels will be excluded from the discussion because they are not commonly reared in the UK. Good-quality, healthy animals are essential for Qurbani as the aim is to offer the best animal a person can afford to God. In order to fit with the Tayyib concept, those animals that are poorly, lame, emaciated and with broken teeth, for example, must not be sacrificed. Furthermore, entire ram lambs are preferred to those that are castrated, and animals with minimal ear perforations are preferred to those with a large number of holes in the ear. In summary, animals used for Qurbani should have as minimal invasive procedures as possible.

## Procuring animals for Qurbani

The animal must be mature. Scholars generally agree that for lambs it can be six months, as long as they appear to be one-year-old. Cattle have to be a minimum of 24 months to qualify for Qurbani.

While age may be an important criterion in determining the maturity of lambs, sexual maturity is largely dependent on weight,

therefore, early-maturing breeds can attain sexual maturity at relatively lower weights. Weight and minimum age may therefore be used in estimating sexual maturity of lambs.

In Islamic literature, the maturity of animals is based on two criteria:

**Musinnah** – the literal meaning of Musinnah is ‘possessor of teeth’. This has meant that some Islamic scholars recommend that animals used for Qurbani should have their adult teeth erupted.

The following Hadith makes reference to the age of lamb and sheep to be used for Qurbani.

Jabir reported that Allah’s messenger (PBUH) said: Sacrifice only a grown-up animal (Musinnah), unless it is difficult for you, in which case offer a ram (Jaz’ah) (of even less than a year, but more than six months old).

**Jaz’ah** – this literally means ‘youth’. This is relevant to the sexual maturity of the animal; this is where the weight of animals may be combined with other factors to estimate the maturity of animals. For instance, Vipond and Williams (2020) from Scotland’s Rural College (SRUC) reported that sexual maturity in lambs is related to weight, not age. They suggested that mule lambs become sexually mature when they reach a target weight of 38–40 kg.

It is worth noting that up to seven consumers can use a cow to perform Qurbani, but a sheep/goat cannot be shared among multiple people as Qurbani.

In summary, although not compulsory, there are marketing opportunities for animals with the following features:




- Long tailed (undocked animals)
- Entire rams (uncastrated animals)
- Minimal ear-markings (no notches or too many holes in ears)



# Producer declarations

Abattoirs that are intending to use lambs for Qurbani must make reasonable efforts to ensure that the animals they procure are eligible, sexually matured and do not show any signs of ill health. One means of increasing consumer confidence is the completion of producer declaration forms (similar to FCI – food chain information declarations) to attest that the animals are matured and eligible. Livestock auctioneers can batch declare, similar to how FCI

declarations are made, making it easier for abattoirs to procure the stock that meets the need of this important market. It is good practice to use a combination of minimum weights and age to estimate the maturity of animals. In the case of cattle, a cattle passport may be used to demonstrate that the animal is 24 months or older (see below). For small ruminants, a producer declaration form may be needed.

<b>UK SAMPLE</b> Animal Details Manylion Anifail	Ear tag Tag Clust  <div style="text-align: center; font-size: 24pt; font-weight: bold;">UK SAMPLE</div> 	 British Cattle Movement Service Gwasanaeth Symud Gwârtheg Prydau	
	Electronic Id Id electronig	Breed / Brid: <b>HOLSTEIN</b> Sex / Rhyw: <b>FEMALE</b> Born / Ganwyd: <b>11 03 2019</b>	
	Genetic Dam / Mam Enetig: <b>UK SAMPLE</b> Issue / Version: <b>27 11 2019 / 01</b> Re-Issue / Version: Algyhowddiad / Fersiwn:		
Page 1      CPF 13 (3/02)		 UK SAMPLE	

Example of a UK cattle passport

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## Producer Declaration Form

I declare that the lambs I have presented for Qurbani sale were born on or before: ..... / ..... / .....

I also declare that the lambs I have presented for Qurbani sale weigh on average ..... kg with a minimum weight of ..... kg

Date	
Place of sale	
Number of animals	
Avg Live-weight	
Batch #, Lot #, Animal ID tags/ reference	
Farm Name, Address & Holding Number	
Vendor Signature	
Print Name	
Any other notes	

Sample of producer declaration form

# Lamb carcass classification

While carcass conformation and fat class are not part of the religious criteria, it is vital for processors to understand consumer preferences as lack of the relevant quality traits leads to Qurbani being performed outside the UK, to the detriment of the local trade.

Carcass conformation is generally not an important consumer consideration; however, the fat class greatly influences consumer demand. Muslim consumers generally prefer lower fat classification, with many consumers indicating their preference for fat classes, ideally 2, but 3L is also acceptable. A less fat carcass will also help the trade, as frantic butchers do not need to trim as much fat off when individually preparing the meat for large numbers of end consumers.

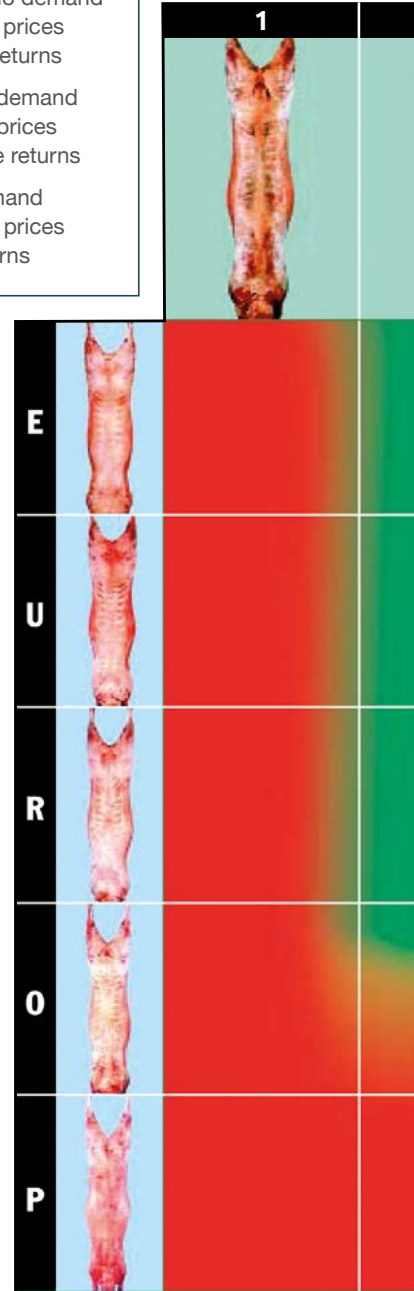
Opposite shows the system of classifying carcasses in the EU and UK; with the EUROP grid for conformation, and fatness level classed between 1 and 5.



Improving conformation

**CONFORMATION CLASS**

Conformation is determined by a visual appraisal of shape, taking into account carcass profile and fullness of legs. No adjustment is made for the influence of fat on overall shape.

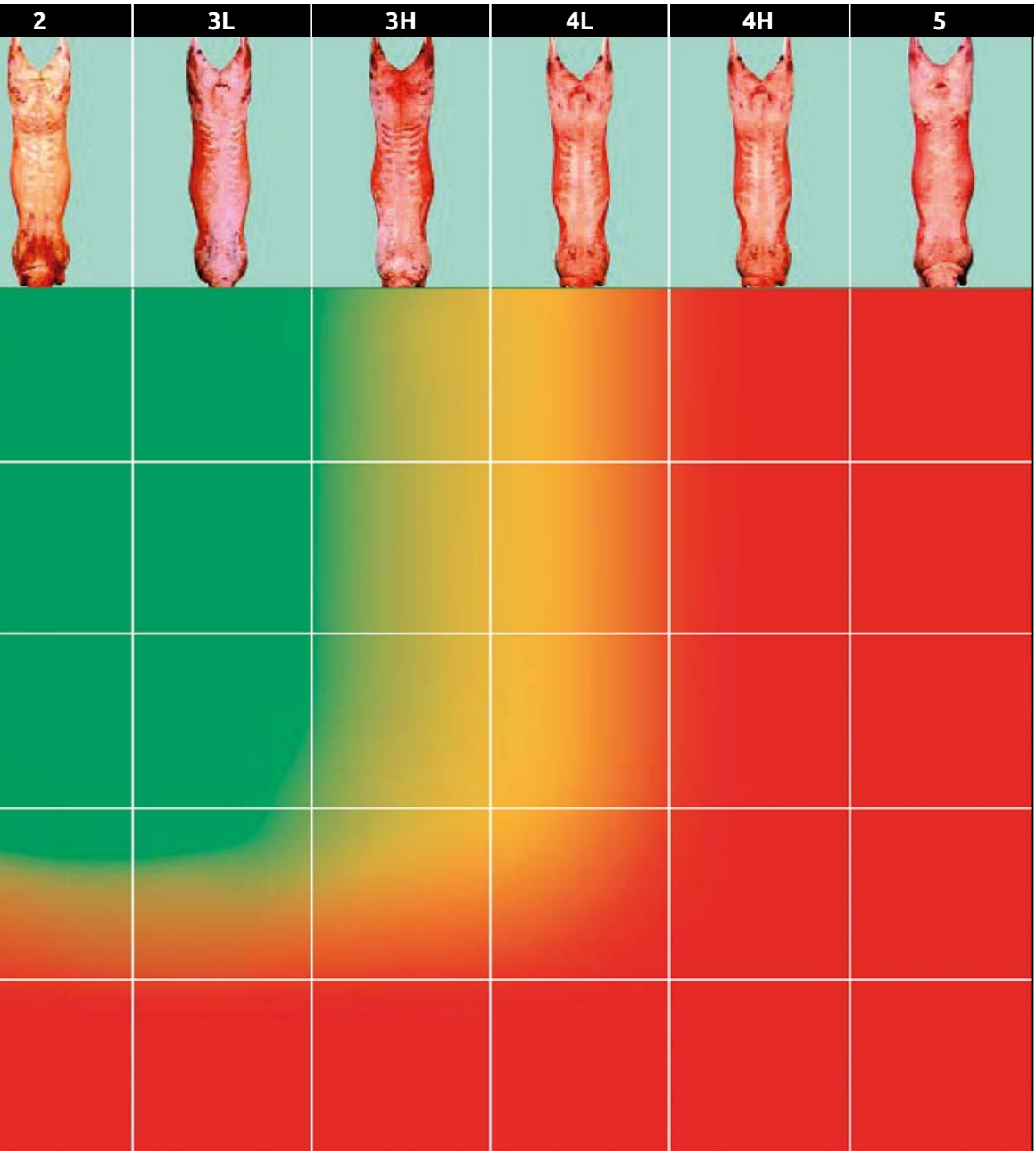




## FAT CLASS

Increasing fatness 

Fat is determined by visual assessment of external fat cover. There are five main classes. Classes 4 and 5 are subdivided into L (leaner) and H (fatter)

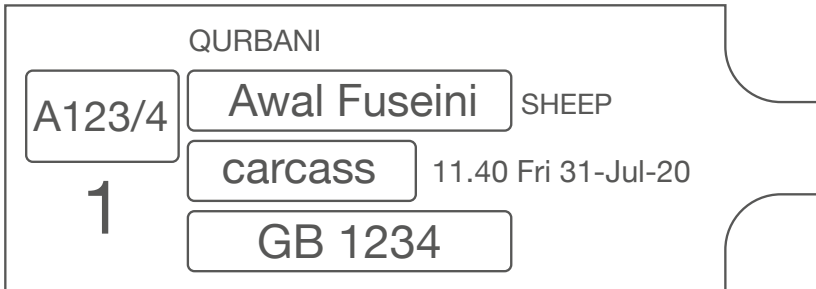


# Timing is critical

Aside from the eligibility of Qurbani animals, there is also a specific finite period during which Qurbani can validly take place. This starts from after Eid prayers on the tenth of Dhul Hijjah, which in 2020 equated to Friday 31 July, and ends at the latest by sunset three days later, i.e. sunset on the twelfth Dhul Hijjah. It is worth noting that while the majority of Muslims perform Qurbani over three days, there is a minority which holds a view that it can be performed on the fourth day (thirteenth of Dhul Hijjah).

Any Qurbani-eligible animals slaughtered outside the stipulated times automatically become non-Qurbani. Some abattoirs print the date and time on the carcass label (see example below) to demonstrate compliance to the end consumer.

As the Islamic calendar is based on the moon and the physical sighting of it, the date of Qurbani moves back 10–11 days each year but is not confirmed until the actual new moon is sighted. This will affect breeders planning on targeting the season as the Qurbani dates will, in effect, rotate throughout the season every 36 years or so.



An example of a Qurbani label



# Qurbani and Eid markets

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It is important to understand that even if producers do not have Qurbani-eligible stock, they can still take advantage of an uptick in demand in the week leading up to Qurbani. This is because most end consumers perform Qurbani abroad, yet they still get together with family and friends to celebrate the Eid festivities. Meat is heavily featured in the diet during these gatherings. It must be reiterated that animals destined for the normal Eid market do not need to meet the requirements of Qurbani.

For the Qurbani market, consumers are required to place their orders with a retailer or directly with an abattoir. The orders are usually placed in advance so that the retailer or abattoir can ensure that the right animals are procured to meet the consumer's specification. In simple terms, the consumer pays for an animal to be slaughtered and processed on their behalf. In contrast to the normal Eid market, consumers do not need to make advance payment for meat for the Eid festival (non-Qurbani meat), Eid meat can be purchased a few days to the festival or on the day of the festival.



# Charity and meat distribution

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There are a number of charitable practices that occur during Qurbani. Part of the tradition is to remember those in need who may not be able to afford meat during this time.

In Islamic terms, Qurbani is the sale of a Qurbani-eligible animal to a designated end-consumer, alongside its subsequent processing into meat. Any parts of the animal which are normally sold, e.g. the skin, casings, etc., and which are not retained for consumption by the end consumer, must be identifiable, such that the value of such proceeds are donated for humanitarian causes.

In practice, this means abattoirs communicate the value of such parts to the trade/end consumer and agreements are made in advance of Qurbani as to whether the quoted Qurbani price is charity-included or charity-excluded. If it is charity-included, then the abattoir undertakes to make the relevant payment(s) to an agreed humanitarian charity. On the other hand, if it is

charity-excluded, then the trade/end consumer is responsible for making the relevant donation(s) and the abattoir's responsibility is simply to communicate the value of those parts to enable the calculation.

Aside from donating the by-product value, sharing of the resultant meat is also highly praised. The tradition is to portion the final meat cuts into three, with one part reserved for the end consumer and his/her immediate family, one part reserved for friends, neighbours and extended family and the final third allocated to foodbanks or charities that can handle the product. In the UK, many food charities continue to receive Qurbani meat, which they then distribute to foodbank users or use for other charitable causes. Some charities also work in partnership with local restaurants or kitchens to offer cooked meat to the homeless who do not have the ability to keep or store chilled meat. The blessings of the meat are there to share with all.

# Fraud

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The following practices do not meet the religious or legal requirements of Qurbani and may be deemed fraud in the form of misrepresentation:

- Slaughter of Qurbani animals outside a licensed abattoir. All carcasses processed in licensed premises must carry health markings that are specific to each abattoir (see photo below)
- Slaughter of animals before the observation of the Eid-al-Adha prayers on the tenth of Dhul Hijjah
- Slaughter of animals on the fourteenth day of Dhul Hijjah. Note that a minority of Muslims celebrate Qurbani over four days – there is no evidence of Muslims celebrating on the fifteenth day of Dhul Hijjah
- Slaughter of animals the day before the tenth of Dhul Hijjah
- Slaughter of animals that are not old enough or sexually matured
- Sale by the end consumer of any part of the Qurbani animal for profit

**GB  
1234**

Example of FSA approved business health marking



# Consumer insight

Abattoir operators should strive to meet the needs of the consumer during Qurbani. While some consumers may prefer to use older sheep (mutton and hogget) for their Qurbani, there is an increasing number of consumers, and in particular European consumers, who prefer to use lambs. There is no concern with regard to the use of older animals; however, where the consumer pays for lamb to be used, processors should ensure that the animals are sexually matured (see guidance on sexual maturity above). Consumers usually place their orders with processors well in advance to ensure the Qurbani animals are procured and sacrificed at the correct time.

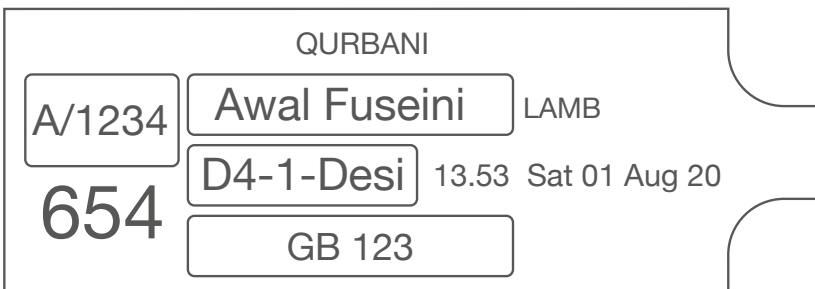
Consumers can check the validity of their Qurbani by checking the EC Number on the carcass label and also confirming the date and time (if available) of slaughter. To ensure clarity, abattoirs are encouraged to use computer-printed carcass labels that clearly state, as a minimum, the date of slaughter, timing of slaughter/carcass inspection/printing of label and EC number of the premises (see below).

## Halal certification

In the UK, there is no legal requirement for Halal meat (or the Qurbani process) to be certified by third-party Halal certification bodies. However, some Halal meat processors have taken the decision to have



their products and processes certified as Halal by third party certification bodies. The essence of Halal certification is to assure consumers that products meet the strict Halal rules, and that the production process has been independently audited or inspected. There are in excess of 15 Halal certification bodies in the UK, processors therefore need to choose the certifier carefully to ensure that they meet the expectations of the consumer.



An example of a Qurbani label

# Projected Qurbani dates

The following table shows projected Qurbani dates. This information is vital for farmers and abattoir operators who wish to tap into the Qurbani market.

Year	Projected Qurbani festival date (+/- 1 day)
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2024	Sunday 16 June 2024
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2025	Friday 6 June 2025
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2026	Wednesday 27 May 2026
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2027	Sunday 16 May 2027
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2028	Friday 5 May 2028
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2029	Tuesday 24 April 2029
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2030	Saturday 13 April 2030
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2031	Wednesday 2 April 2031
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# Further information

You can watch a short video on Qurbani by visiting the **Understanding the Qurbani** market video on our AHDB Beef & Lamb YouTube channel or by scanning the QR code below.



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