



NSA Policy Position

NSA position on skin-on sheep meat products (smokies)

Background

- Producing smokies is currently illegal in the EU, due to concerns about food safety. Food science research is needed to prove beyond reasonable doubt that this product can be produced safely.
- Smokies are a food prepared by blowtorching the fleece off the unskinned carcase of an adult sheep or goat.
- The process, which gives the meat a unique flavour when subsequently cooked, originates from West Africa and there is a significant demand for skin-on products from specific ethnic communities living in the UK.

NSA Believes

- NSA aims to see a regulated smokie trade legalised if food safety concerns can be addressed.

Reasoning

- An [FSA project](#) found skin-on sheep carcasses had lower microbial counts than conventional carcasses in the same abattoir. Key factors are a wool length of no more than 5mm, singeing and removing wool with gas burners, and pressure wash to remove charred fleece and a final toasting pass at the end.
- This will improve animal welfare and food safety (as demand is currently being met through 'underground' / 'backstreet' production) and exploit an economic opportunity for the sheep sector.
- Legalisation could also decrease rural crime, as there is anecdotal information linking the trade in smokies to sheep rustling.
- This is a move towards diversity and inclusion.



Future

- NSA takes every opportunity to work in a constructive and proactive way with the Food Standards Agency and other Government departments to legitimise this trade.
- New protocols, microbiological testing and vet medicine residue testing are being assessed.
- Focus must be placed on reassuring consumers that no traces of medicinal products used for ectoparasites are present on smokie products.

Updates:

February 2017

January 2019

May 2019

March 2025