



## NSA Policy Position

### **Animal welfare at slaughter**

NSA reacts to enquiries or media commentary if appropriate but does not raise the issue otherwise.

#### **Background**

- Most sheep are stunned by electrocution or captive bolt before slaughter.
- Jewish and Muslim communities are exempt from legal requirements to stun animals before slaughter in the UK. All Shechita (Jewish) and some Halal (Muslim) slaughter involves cutting the animal's throat without stunning the animal first (pre-stunning).
- Halal does not mean the animal was not pre-stunned and NSA recommends this [video](#) explaining different sheep slaughter methods.
- Care is needed when being involved in public discussions about welfare at slaughter as misinformed discussions on halal have increased demand for non-stun product, rather than decreased demand.

#### **NSA Believes**

- High welfare standards throughout the food chain are paramount, including end of life.
- Standards are high in most slaughter facilities, underpinned by well enforced legal requirements by Food Standards Agency official veterinarian oversight.
- Stunning animals before slaughter is best practice but NSA recognises a proportion of some religious faiths insist on slaughter without stunning.
- Ethnic markets demanding non-stunned slaughter should be shown the “demonstration of life” process, so they can be made aware that the blood-letting kills the animal and not the stun. A Demonstration of Life protocol has been developed by AHDB in conjunction with other stakeholders – details [here](#).
- Two labels – one for mainstream supermarkets and one for halal outlets – may be useful to create demand for stunned and non-stunned products.
- Consumer misunderstanding is considerable in this area.



## **Reasoning**

- Food Standards Agency oversight and official veterinarian presence ensures standards are maintained and legal requirements met
- Misinformed discussions about halal in the past have increased demand for non-stun product, not reduced it.

## **Future**

- Consumers concerned about buying non-stun meat should look for a farm assurance label, such as the Red Tractor, or organic certification. These schemes insist animals are stunned in the abattoir.
- Buying from local suppliers via farm shops and butchery outlets will also allow consumers to enquire about welfare at slaughter.
- NSA also encourages processors and religious communities to explore and raise awareness of alternative options, such as post-slaughter stun.

Updates:  
December 2015  
May 2019  
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