



National Sheep Association

NSA policy position on welfare at slaughter

- High welfare standards throughout the food chain are paramount, including at the very end of an animal's life.
- NSA believes standards are high in the large majority of slaughter facilities, underpinned by well enforced legal requirements.
- NSA considers it best practice and desirable to stun animals before slaughter, but recognises a proportion of some religious faiths insist on slaughter without stunning.
- The majority of sheep are stunned by electrocution or captive bolt before slaughter. Halal does not mean the animal was not pre-stunned and NSA recommends this [AHDB video](#) explaining different sheep slaughter methods.
- NSA believes the UK Government should take immediate action to allow processors to demonstrate recoverable stun. This is when a single animal is selected on the slaughter line and, under strict criteria, instead of being slaughtered after the stun is administered, is allowed to recover. Other countries doing this on an occasional basis in front of representatives from Muslim communities have been able to offer assurance that, in line with religious requirements, the blood-letting kills the animal rather than the stun. This has reduced demand for non-stun product and, therefore, improved welfare standards. NSA also encourages processors and religious communities to explore and raise awareness of alternative options, such as post-slaughter stun.
- Everyone involved in public discussions about welfare at slaughter should be aware of unintended consequences. For example, misinformed discussions about halal in the past have increased demand for non-stun product, not reduced it. Given that consumer misunderstanding is considerable in this area, NSA reacts when the topic hits the news agenda but does not raise the issue otherwise.
- NSA is in support of responsible labelling of all food products, but this is not a straightforward area when it comes to slaughter methods.
 - A stun/non-stun label may be more useful in mainstream supermarket outlets than halal labelling.
 - A halal label may be useful in ethnic-focussed outlets, so as not to draw attention and potentially drive up demand for non-stunned product.

Consumers concerned about buying non-stun meat should be advised to look for a farm assurance label, such as the Red Tractor, or organic certification, as 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.

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