

# 100,000 join vets and secularists in calling for an end to non-stun slaughter

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A petition calling on the Government to promote animal welfare by ending a religious exemption that allows non-stun slaughter has passed 100,000 signatures and will be considered for a debate in Parliament.

[The petition](#) has been backed by the National Secular Society along with a range of expert agencies and organisations including the British Veterinary Association (BVA) and the RSPCA.

UK and EU animal welfare law requires that animals be stunned before slaughter in order to minimise suffering. However, an exemption allows Jewish and Muslim slaughterhouses to slaughter animals without stunning, in order to conform to their religious beliefs.

According to Jewish law and to Islamic customs, animals must be slaughtered by a single cut to the throat and be healthy and uninjured at the time of death. Jewish groups and some Muslims have interpreted this to mean that animals can't be stunned.

BVA president Blackwell said: "This is a truly fantastic result for animal welfare. BVA has long argued that all animals should be stunned before slaughter to render them insensible to pain and we are delighted that the British public has got so firmly behind our campaign. Consumers value the high welfare of British produce and care deeply about the provenance of their food.

"But under the current legislation meat from non-stun slaughter can end up in the food chain unlabelled as such, which is completely unacceptable. Scientific evidence tells us that non-stun slaughter allows the animal to perceive pain and compromises animal welfare."

Reaching 100,000 signatures requires that the Backbench Business Committee consider it for a debate in the House of Commons. However the e-petition website will close on 31 March due to the general election and it is not yet clear whether the Committee will be able to accommodate a debate.

Stephen Evans, National Secular Society campaigns manager, said: "Given the overwhelming public support this campaign has received, surely the time has come for MPs to debate the appropriateness of allowing religious considerations to compromise the welfare of animals."

The vast majority of e-petitions fail – either because they are rejected or because they do not reach significant numbers of signatures. The non-stun slaughter petition is only the 15th to reach the 100,000 signature mark and is currently the 4th biggest and top trending petition on the site.

When the petition reached 10,000 it received an official response from the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, stating that although the Government "would prefer to see all animals stunned before they are slaughtered for food" they have no plans to end the religious exemption which allows non-stun slaughter to continue.

Many Muslims accept pre-stun slaughter and it is estimated that around 80% of Halal meat in the UK comes from animals that have been pre-stunned. However, figures from the BVA revealed that

in the past year there has been a 60% increase in non-stun slaughter.

Some commentators have attributed this to campaigning by conservative Muslim groups, who do not recognise meat that has been pre-stunned as halal, and who have been putting pressure on halal slaughterhouses to stop the practice. The *Telegraph* [reports](#) that some Muslims also mistakenly believe that stunning kills animals.

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