

# NSS responds to Lancashire consultation on use of non-stun meat

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The National Secular Society has urged Lancashire County Council (LCC) to proceed with plans to stop supplying non-stun meat to schools.

The NSS said a change in the plans, which the council initially approved in a vote four months ago, would have "nationwide implications".

"If the council reverses its democratic decision to stop supplying unstunned meat in schools, it will give greater power to religious interest groups to assert their agenda on councils in other areas," the NSS wrote.

"If LCC decides to supply unstunned meat to schools, it will amount to state support for slaughter methods that are regarded worldwide as unnecessarily cruel. It will send the message that the UK prioritises the demands of orthodox religious minorities over the basic welfare needs of animals."

In October the council [voted](#) to stop supplying non-poultry meat to schools and other establishments unless the animals were stunned before slaughter. But last month its leaders said they would [reconsider](#) the policy after the Lancashire Council of Mosques (LCM) said it would launch a judicial review and encourage a boycott of school meals.

The current [consultation](#) was launched in response. It will close on 7 March. The NSS is urging supporters in Lancashire to respond.

The council currently supplies non-stun halal meat to 12,000 pupils at 27 schools in Blackburn, Nelson, Burnley, Rawtenstall, Hyndburn, Clitheroe and Preston.

In its response the NSS wrote: "Councils have a duty to provide healthy and nutritious school meals. They also have a duty to ensure the food they provide is sourced ethically, in a manner that does not harm people, animals or the environment.

"They do not have a duty to cater for every religious dietary preference of every pupil's family, especially if those preferences mean contravening the advice of veterinary and farming associations, and causing harm to local businesses."

The NSS added that "the scientific consensus is clear that it is more humane to stun an animal prior to slaughter than not doing so". It pointed to calls from Government bodies, an EU scientific panel, veterinary experts and animal welfare charities to make pre-cut stunning of animals mandatory. It highlighted the fact non-stun slaughter is against the law in countries including Denmark, Iceland, New Zealand and Norway.

And it said it was "not true that all Muslims agree that unstunned meat is more 'authentically' halal than stunned meat, or that unstunned meat is more widely accepted".

The NSS's chief executive, Stephen Evans, said: "Local authorities should be free to pursue policies that promote animal welfare without being bullied into submission. I would urge the council

to take a stand for animal welfare and the principle of one law for all.

"The current situation in the county is unacceptable on two levels: it leads to animals suffering unduly and it imposes a hardline interpretation of religious dogma on children. If the council changes course it will validate religious bullies' sense of entitlement and set a precedent that unreasonable demands will be accommodated. That will have implications across Lancashire and beyond.

"Ultimately this requires a national solution. The religious exemption to animal welfare laws is unjustifiable and should be rescinded. The Government should take its advice on the slaughter of farm animals from veterinary experts, not clerics."

The NSS is [campaigning](#) for an end to religious exemptions to animal welfare laws, amid concern that the non-stun slaughter industry is growing.

In November the Government [told](#) the Society it was considering introducing labelling requirements to ensure consumers know whether halal or kosher meat has been stunned before slaughter. Earlier this month the Labour party [outlined](#) proposals for mandatory method of slaughter labelling. The NSS has welcomed these suggestions but warned they do not go far enough to end unnecessary suffering.

## End non-stun religious slaughter

We campaign to end religious exemptions to animal welfare laws.

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