

Non-stun halal and kosher meat served in parliament, NSS finds

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Meat from animals not stunned before slaughter is being sold in parliament, the National Secular Society has found.

In response to queries from the NSS, the House of Commons said: "Both halal and kosher meals sold by the House contain meat from animals not pre-stunned before slaughter."

Parliament rolled out its new halal and kosher menu last month, after Labour MPs Charlotte Nichols and Zarah Sultana [coordinated](#) a cross party letter to MPs urging them to write to the parliamentary authorities asking them to provide kosher and halal food.

Most animals killed by the halal method in the UK are stunned beforehand.

However, some sections of the Muslim community do not accept an animal as 'halal' if it has been stunned.

Parliament's decision to supply halal meat from the less common non-stun slaughter method has been criticised by the NSS.

All kosher meat certified in the UK is from animals that were slaughtered without stunning.

UK law requires animals to be stunned before they are slaughtered to avoid unnecessary suffering, distress or pain. However, an exemption allows sheep, goats, cattle and poultry to be slaughtered without pre-stunning for religious purposes.

The government's own advisory body, the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC), has said that non-stun animal slaughter should be banned completely. The FAWC have concluded that animals slaughtered without pre-stunning are likely to experience "very significant pain and distress" before they become unconscious.

RSPCA, Compassion in World Farming and the British Veterinary Association all support an end to non-stun slaughter to improve animal welfare at the time of death.

A 2015 YouGov poll [found](#) almost 80 per cent of the UK wants an end to non-stun slaughter.

Parliament's decision to supply halal meat from the less common non-stun slaughter method has been criticised by the NSS.

An NSS spokesperson said: "Most animals slaughtered for halal meat are stunned first. It's lamentable that in accommodating halal dietary preferences, parliament has chosen to prioritise a more hardline interpretation of Islam over animal welfare."

"The vast majority of the British public want non-stun slaughter to end. They may well feel aggrieved that their parliament has opted to supply meat from such unnecessarily cruel slaughter methods in its catering outlets."

Compassion in World Farming also [criticised](#) parliament's decision, saying: "Successive governments have made it clear that they prefer animals to be pre-stunned, Parliament should not have a policy on its own premises that goes against that.

"I call on the relevant authorities to stop serving these meals immediately."

Notes:

- An [investigation](#) by the NSS in 2018 revealed that around one in 12 councils provided non-stunned halal meat for school meals, reaching thousands of children across Britain. In many of these schools, there was no separate meat option for children who do not want to eat non-stunned meat.
- A November 2018 investigation by [The Times](#) found that in several cases, schools providing only non-stunned halal meat were not informing parents of the nature of the meat and how it was slaughtered.
- A proposed [amendment](#) to the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill would, if passed, require slaughterhouses to provide proof of a religious requirement in order to perform slaughter without pre-stunning. However, the amendment has faced opposition from Conservative constituencies with large Muslim and Jewish populations.

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