

Religiously slaughtered meat supply outstrips demand, says report

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Millions more animals than necessary to meet demand are religiously slaughtered without stunning, according to a recent study.

Analysis by the [Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation \(CAWF\)](#) has found the total oversupply of non-stun meat could range between 32% to 278%. This represents between 34 and 99 million animals unnecessarily slaughtered without stunning each year.

Animal welfare legislation requires all animals to be stunned before slaughter to minimise suffering. The only exemption is for religious communities to meet Jewish and Muslim religious dietary preferences for kosher and halal meat.

But the total meat supplied from non-stun religious slaughter methods is about four times greater than the proportion of Muslims and Jews in the UK, CAWF's analysis found.

The report also warns that 24% of non-stunned sheep meat is exported each year, while an "unknown proportion" of imported meat is non-stun. This could greatly increase the oversupply of non-stun meat in the UK.

The report expresses concerns that the lack of labelling on non-stun meat results in shoppers "unwittingly buying meat from non-stunned animals when they would otherwise consume stunned animals".

NSS [research](#) has found meat from animals slaughtered without stunning is widely sold without clear labelling in supermarkets.

In December, an NSS-commissioned poll [found](#) 72% of the population think food produced from religious non-stun slaughter methods should be clearly labelled, but 73% are unaware that there is no requirement for such meat to be labelled. Most of the population (58%) believe the religious exemption permitting non-stun slaughter should be removed.

The report also highlights that councils may have blanket policies of only serving non-stunned halal meat in schools. In 2018 NSS research [found](#) at least 17 councils across the UK were supplying non-stunned halal meat to their local schools.

The report urges the UK government "to set more stringent requirements for the use of non-stun slaughter so that these methods are only used to fill the direct requirements of religious communities".

MPs concerned about the welfare of animals at the time of slaughter are planning to table an amendment to the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill to minimise the number of animals killed under the religious exemption.

The government has recently [consulted](#) on proposals to make labelling for non-stun slaughtered meat compulsory.

NSS head of policy and research Megan Manson said: "Slaughtering animals without stunning them first results in preventable suffering.

"It's therefore appalling that millions of animals are dying by this cruel method unnecessarily because non-stun meat supply grossly outstrips demand.

"The government must act urgently to put an end to this needless mass scale animal cruelty.

"Compulsory labelling on non-stun slaughtered meat, a 'slaughter to order' requirement and a ban on non-stun meat exports will go a long way to reducing the number of animals killed by this method while religious exemptions to animal welfare laws remain in place."

Image: [Uschi Dugulin](#), Pixabay

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