



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

Lord Gardiner of Kimble  
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9<sup>th</sup> November 2017

Dear Mr Evans,

Thank you for your letter of 9 October to the Secretary of State regarding non-stun slaughter and labelling. I am replying as the Minister with responsibility for this policy area.

As you know, the Government encourages the highest standards of welfare at slaughter and would prefer to see all animals stunned before they are slaughtered for food. However, we also respect the rights of the Jewish and Muslim communities to eat meat prepared in accordance with their religious beliefs.

Current national regulations on religious slaughter have a long history. The issue was first debated in Parliament in 1875. The Slaughter of Animals Act 1933 introduced a legal requirement for stunning of animals prior to slaughter but contained an exemption where animals were slaughtered for Jews and Muslims. Over the years the national rules governing religious slaughter have developed to provide additional protection to animals that are slaughtered in accordance with religious rites.

The current legislation in England, The Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015 permits religious slaughter to be carried out by a Muslim or Jew for the food of Muslims or Jews respectively. However, it is not a legal requirement that the meat from such animals must ultimately only be sold to, or consumed exclusively by, Muslims or Jews. In particular there is no specific legal requirement on the slaughterer to track and trace the final destination and consumption of meat they produce, although the slaughterer should believe "food of Jews or of Muslims" was the intention at the time of slaughter.

The Government is aware that there is public concern about meat from animals slaughtered in accordance with religious beliefs being sold to consumers who do not require their meat to be prepared in this way. There are no domestic or European Regulations that require the labelling of Halal or Kosher meat but where any information of this nature is provided, it must be accurate and must not be misleading to the consumer. The Government believes that consumers should have the necessary information available to them to make an informed choice about their food. This is an issue the Government is considering in the context of the UK's exit from the EU.



I welcome your continued engagement with the Government on the issues you have mentioned. Regrettably, owing to diary constraints, I am unable to arrange a meeting at this present time.

I hope you find this reply useful.

Yours sincerely,  
John Pardine