

9 October 2017



The Rt. Hon Michael Gove MP  
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
Nobel House  
17 Smith Square  
London SW1P 3JR

25 Red Lion Square  
London WC1R 4RL  
TEL: 020 7404 3126  
FAX: 0870 762 8971  
EMAIL: [enquiries@secularism.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@secularism.org.uk)  
WEB: [www.secularism.org.uk](http://www.secularism.org.uk)

Dear Mr Gove

### **Non-stun slaughter and labelling**

We have long advocated for an end to the religious exemption that allows livestock to be slaughtered without prior stunning. Whilst we support the right to religious freedom, we recognise that this is not an absolute right, and do not support religious exemptions from animal welfare regulations intended to ensure that farm animals are slaughtered under the most humane conditions possible.

We are therefore alarmed by new data published by the FSA that indicates a sharp rise in the number of animals being slaughtered without pre-stunning over the last four years.<sup>1</sup>

The Government has previously stated that it would prefer animals to be stunned before slaughter. **We would therefore like to know what considerations the Government has given to reviewing the regulations concerning the welfare of animals at the time of slaughter in the context of UK's exit from the EU?**

As long as the law allows slaughter without stunning to take place, we are keen to ensure that the minimum number of animals as possible are killed under the exemption.

It is clear that the supply of meat from animals that have not been stunned massively outstrips the demand from the communities for which it is intended and is entering the mainstream market unlabelled.

The exemption from animal welfare law to allow religious non-stun slaughter in schedule 12 of the Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) (WASK) Regulations 1995 clearly states that it applies to people of that religion, not to everybody.

This is clarified in the government's guidance on halal and kosher slaughter which states: "the meat must be intended for consumption by Jews or Muslims". **We therefore seek clarification on how the government is ensuring that this targeting of supply is happening.**

With this in mind, we wish to draw to your attention to Lancashire County Council's policy of routinely supplying un-stunned halal meat for the school dinners of 12,000 pupils at 27 schools across the county. We are urging the Council to amend this policy at its next council

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/fsa170905b.pdf>

meeting on 26 October. This is however not a unique situation.

We hope you will agree with us that imposing un-stunned meat from religious slaughter methods on public service users and the general populace is unacceptable, and potentially unlawful.

One obvious means of addressing this problem would be to introduce a method of slaughter labelling. The mandatory labelling of meat as either stunned or non-stunned would at least allow consumers to make an informed choice. **We would therefore like to know what consideration the government has given to the introduction of such labelling.**

Ideally, we would prefer that you went further and required all animals to be stunned before slaughter to ensure they are insensible to pain. In the short term the Government should at least reduce the welfare harm of non-stun slaughter by introducing immediate post-cut stunning.

We would be happy to meet with you to discuss this matter and we look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Evans  
Campaigns Director