



Humane Slaughter Association

Media Release

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HSA awards grant for a study to establish a framework for permitting “demonstration of life” to Halal certification bodies for use within UK abattoirs

The Humane Slaughter Association (HSA) has awarded a grant to Dr Claire White of the University of Bristol to allow her to travel to New Zealand to research and develop a better understanding of their practices and models relating to stunned Halal slaughter.

The practice of non-stun slaughter, particularly of sheep, is increasing in the UK and is associated with significant welfare concerns. Dr White's study aims to build the knowledge acquired during her visit into a project to establish a framework permitting 'demonstration of life' to Halal certification bodies, which may be utilised to allow stunning practices where they are currently discouraged. The outcome could be a significant improvement to the welfare of millions of animals.

'Demonstration of life' is a practice successfully applied in the New Zealand lamb-processing sector, enabling all exported product to be marketed as Halal, whilst only permitting stunned slaughter. The practice permits individual animals to be allowed to demonstrate potential for recovery, under controlled conditions in participating abattoirs, no more than twice a year. The demonstration must be supervised by the plant welfare representatives, Veterinary Inspectors and representatives of the certifying Halal Bodies, and is tightly controlled within a general framework for export of Halal products.

To facilitate a detailed understanding of the New Zealand model, Dr White will visit lamb exporting abattoirs and engage with the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) which is responsible for verification of welfare compliance in the New Zealand model, as well as Halal Certification Bodies and Meat Industry Trade Bodies, during an 8 day trip.

Dr White said: *The study visit is fundamental to achieving the aims of the wider project – to establish a 'Demonstration of Life' framework for use within those UK abattoirs wishing to undertake stunned Halal slaughter. Once established in sheep, the precedent has potential to be applied to other species, including poultry, where a proportion of birds are also processed by non-stun methods.*

As well as the Humane Slaughter Association, Dr White also has the backing of a group of stakeholders, including the Veterinary Public Health Association

(VPHA), University of Bristol (UoB), National Farmers Union (NFU), Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) and members of the House of Lords. It is anticipated that, with the support of the largest Halal certification bodies and lamb processors, backed by trade bodies and driven by the stakeholders involved in this project, it will be possible to successfully implement the framework.

-ENDS-

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Note to Editors:

Background:

Non-stun slaughter, particularly of sheep and goats, has more than doubled in the last six years, calculated to have reached 27% in 2017; equating to approximately 3.3 million animals. This method has significant welfare implications, as the animal remains sensible to pain during the restraint, cut and bleeding process, before losing consciousness and eventual brain death.

There is public awareness and concern regarding non-stun slaughter, as it receives regular media attention. Critical comment by animal welfare organisations has raised its profile further amongst the wider public and religious communities. Non-stun slaughter is not permitted in Denmark, Malta, Sweden, Finland, Luxembourg and Cyprus, and is tightly controlled in Germany.

Significant growth of the domestic Halal food market in recent years has mirrored the increase in non-stun slaughter – threatening to undermine the UK's legacy of high animal welfare standards. Presently the global Halal food industry is valued at £542 bn, increasing to £921 bn by 2050 (Global Islamic Finance Report, 2013).

The Humane Slaughter Association

The HSA is an independent charity recognised internationally for promoting scientific, technical and educational advances towards improving the welfare of food animals worldwide during, marketing, transport, slaughter and killing. Its work includes researching, refining and demonstrating humane slaughter methods, publishing material such as guidelines, best practice, books and videos, funding research projects and the development of equipment. Specialist technical staff provide expert and practical advice on all welfare issues relating to food animals. The HSA is funded by voluntary donations, subscriptions and legacies.

For more information about the HSA's work call 01582 831919, email info@hsa.org.uk or visit www.hsa.org.uk