



Media Release

12th October, 2009

For Immediate Release:

Humane Slaughter Award winner provides evidence for pain in slaughter without stunning

The Humane Slaughter Association (HSA) has presented its inaugural Humane Slaughter Award to Dr Craig Johnson and his colleagues at Massey University, New Zealand, for groundbreaking research investigating pain in cattle slaughtered without prior stunning.

The HSA is an independent registered charity which works through scientific, technical and educational advances to promote high standards of food animal welfare during transport, at markets and at slaughter. The Humane Slaughter Award was established by the HSA to promote and recognise significant advances towards the welfare of livestock at slaughter.

The first such award, accompanied by a £1,000 prize which will be put towards further research in this field, was presented to Dr Johnson on behalf of the HSA by Professor Christopher Wathes of the Royal Veterinary College, Chairman of the Farm Animal Welfare Council, at an event held at the Farmers Club in London on October 6th. Prior to the award presentation Dr Johnson gave a talk on the research and its findings to an audience representing industry, veterinary, scientific, government, animal welfare and other interests.

Dr Johnson is Associate Professor of Veterinary Neurophysiology at the Institute of Veterinary, Animal and Biomedical Sciences at Massey University in New Zealand. Along with co-researchers Dr Troy Gibson, Professor Kevin Stafford and Professor David Mellor, he used new electroencephalogram analysis technology to investigate the effects of slaughter of cattle by ventral neck cut without prior stunning. The results were reported in a series of five papers published in the New Zealand Veterinary Journal in April 2009, and concluded: 'This...demonstrates clearly for the first time that the act of slaughter by ventral neck cut incision is associated with noxious stimulation that would be expected to be perceived as painful...'

Animals were anaesthetised so that no pain was actually felt during the experiments – the EEG analysis showed that it would have been had no anaesthetic been administered. The research was funded by Defra and by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of New Zealand.

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Dr James Kirkwood, Chief Executive and Scientific Director of the HSA commented, "Scientific advances have resulted in major welfare improvements in livestock slaughter methods during the past century, by leading to both better understanding of the impacts of various procedures on animals and to better technology. However, a great many animals around the world are slaughtered without prior stunning. This work provides significant support for the value of stunning animals prior to slaughter to prevent pain and distress, and the HSA hopes that it will help to change attitudes to the importance of stunning."

-ENDS-

Media contacts:

James Kirkwood, HSA Chief Executive and Scientific Director. Tel: 01582 831919,
email kirkwood@hsa.org.uk

Charles Mason, HSA Technical Director. Tel: 01582 831919, email charlie@hsa.org.uk

Attached photo:



Professor Christopher Wathes (left) presents Dr Craig Johnson with the Humane Slaughter Award on behalf of the HSA.

Note to Editors:

References for papers published in the New Zealand Veterinary Journal

Mellor, D.J., Gibson, T.J. & Johnson, C.B. 2009. A re-evaluation of the need to stun calves prior to slaughter by ventral neck incision: An introductory review. *New Zealand Veterinary Journal* 57 (2), 74 -76.

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Gibson, T.J., Johnson, C.B., Murrell, J.C., Mitchinson, S.L., Stafford, K.J. & Mellor, D.J., 2009. Electroencephalographic responses to concussive non-penetrative captive-bolt stunning in halothane-anaesthetised calves. *New Zealand Veterinary Journal* 57 (2), 90-95.

Gibson, T.J., Johnson, C.B., Murrell, J.C., Mitchinson, S.L., Stafford, K.J. & Mellor, D.J., 2009. Amelioration of electroencephalographic responses to slaughter by non-penetrative captive bolt stunning after ventral-neck incision in halothane-anaesthetised calves. *New Zealand Veterinary Journal* 57 (2), 96-101.

The HSA

As an independent registered charity, the HSA is unique in working exclusively to achieve the highest worldwide standards in food animal welfare at markets, during transport and at slaughter through scientific and technical advances, education and training. 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

The Humane Slaughter Association
The Old School, Brewhouse Hill
Wheathampstead,
St Albans, Herts. AL4 8AN
Tel: 01582 831919
Fax: 01582 831414
Email: info@hsa.org.uk
www.hsa.org.uk

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