



**Humane Slaughter Association**

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **New Policy Roadmap Outlines Path to More Humane Slaughter Practices for Wild-Caught Finfish**

The [Humane Slaughter Association \(HSA\)](https://www.hsa.org.uk) has today launched a [landmark report](#), *Humane Slaughter of Wild-Caught Fish: A Roadmap for Industry and Policymakers*, alongside a peer-reviewed scientific paper [published in the journal \*Animal Welfare\*](#). Together, these publications address one of the world's most urgent and under-recognised animal welfare issues: the suffering of over 1 trillion wild-caught finfish slaughtered each year without humane stunning.

Despite the growing legal recognition of fish as sentient beings, capable of experiencing pain and suffering, in countries such as the UK, New Zealand, and across the EU, humane slaughter remains the exception rather than the norm in wild-capture fisheries. This new report provides the first comprehensive, science-based roadmap to support the uptake of humane stunning methods and improve fish welfare at scale.

Drawing on a two-year research project led by researchers from Harper Adams University, and funded by the HSA with support from [Open Philanthropy](#), the report sets out practical recommendations and a six-stage roadmap for change. It outlines not only the ethical imperative, but also the feasibility and potential benefits of adopting humane slaughter practices, from improved product quality and worker safety to long-term economic gains for fishers.

#### **Key findings from the report include:**

- Most wild-caught fish are slaughtered without stunning, often dying slowly by suffocation, bleeding, or live processing, with some species remaining conscious for several minutes to hours.
- Humane stunning methods exist, such as electrical or mechanical techniques, but are rarely used in wild-capture fisheries due to cost, logistics, and lack of regulatory requirements.
- Scientific evidence confirms fish sentience and supports urgent reform to minimise suffering at slaughter.
- Continuous-flow in-water electrical stunning, a method already used in aquaculture, shows strong potential for adaptation in wild-capture fisheries.

- Significant knowledge gaps remain, particularly around species-specific stunning parameters and practical deployment in mixed-species or high-volume fisheries.
- Humane stunning may support industry benefits such as maintaining or improving product quality, enhancing shelf life, reducing labour demands, and improving crew safety.
- The proposed six-stage roadmap offers a structured, collaborative path for industry, policymakers, and technology developers to adopt humane slaughter practices.

**Dr Katy James**, lead author of the research paper and senior researcher at Harper Adams University, said:

*“This work draws attention to an often-overlooked animal welfare issue – the inhumane slaughter of wild-caught finfish. Our evidence-based research indicates that the use of humane stunning or stun/killing methods provides an opportunity not only to improve fish welfare but also, in some cases, to deliver benefits to industry and consumers.*

*There are, however, complex challenges and evidence gaps creating barriers to uptake in wild-capture fisheries. We present a roadmap for stakeholders to engage with and build upon, and we urge collaboration across the fish supply chain to co-create solutions and close these gaps.”*

**Dr Huw Golledge**, Chief Executive Officer and Scientific Director of the HSA, commented:

*“The lack of humane stunning for wild-caught fish is one of the largest animal welfare problems worldwide, but also one of our greatest opportunities to make meaningful improvements.*

*By commissioning this research, we aim to provide the fishing industry, policymakers, retailers, and researchers with the tools and evidence they need to take practical steps forward.*

*With growing interest in new stunning technologies and increasing consumer concern for animal welfare, now is the time to act. This report is a call to action for the global fishing community: humane slaughter is not only necessary, it is achievable.”*

To read the full report, click [here](#)

To read the scientific paper, click [here](#)

#### **Notes to Editors:**

The Humane Slaughter Association (HSA) is a UK-based, independent Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). It is the only UK charity concerned exclusively in promoting the humane treatment of all food animals during transport, at market, slaughter, and killing for welfare reasons or disease control.

It works through research, education, training and promoting technical advances to bring real, practical and lasting improvements in food animal welfare.

The HSA is funded by voluntary donations, subscriptions and legacies. For more information about the HSA’s work call + 44 (0) 1582 831919, email [info@hsa.org.uk](mailto:info@hsa.org.uk) or visit [www.hsa.org.uk](http://www.hsa.org.uk)

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