

Welfare at slaughter – joint statement of principles by the British Veterinary Association (BVA), Humane Slaughter Association (HSA) and the RSPCA

- Scientific evidence¹ demonstrates that slaughter without pre-stunning compromises animal welfare.
- Our principle is that all animals should be effectively stunned before they are slaughtered.
- Food derived from animals slaughtered without stunning under the legal exemption, should be destined for the consumption by the specific religious communities according to whose beliefs the animals have been slaughtered. The size of these specific markets should determine the amount of non-stunned meat produced. Slaughterhouse operators must be able to demonstrate that the conditions for exemption from stunning are met.

If government is not to create a legal requirement for all animals to be stunned before slaughter, but intends to continue to allow an exemption for non-stun slaughter, then we would encourage it to explore a range of alternative options and actions to improve animal welfare and consumer awareness. These are not in order of priority and include:

- working with Government agencies, the appropriate authorities and stakeholders, to enhance enforcement of existing welfare at slaughter legislation where non-stun slaughter takes place
- immediate post-cut stunning
- ensuring sufficient time and facilities for the Official Veterinarian to be able to adequately monitor welfare when non-stun slaughter is taking place
- educating consumers about animal welfare at slaughter and giving them confidence when buying meat or meat products by:
 - providing them with reliable explanatory information about food labels or logos of assurance schemes that require stunning before slaughter, so they can make informed choices
 - introducing a simple logo for packaging to indicate meat obtained from non-stunned animals, or considering promoting labelling of existing farm assurance schemes which require stunning before slaughter
- meeting and working with representatives of the relevant religious communities
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¹ Examples of relevant evidence: 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.

Gibson, T.J., Johnson, C.B., Murrell, J.C., Hulls, C.M., Mitchinson, S.L., Stafford, K.J., Johnstone, A.C. & Mellor, D.J., 2009. Electroencephalographic responses of halothane-anaesthetised calves to slaughter by ventral neck incision without prior stunning. *New Zealand Veterinary Journal* 57 (2), 77 -83.

Gibson, T.J., Johnson, C.B., Murrell, J.C., Chambers, J.P., Stafford, K.J. & Mellor, D.J., 2009. Components of electroencephalographic responses to slaughter in halothane-anaesthetised calves: Effects of cutting neck tissues compared with major blood vessels. *New Zealand Veterinary Journal* 57 (2), 84-89.

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.