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The brain, unconsciousness and death: a critical appraisal with regard to halal meat production

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Abstract

Muslims derive their dietary laws from the Quran (Islamic Holy Book) and other Islamic scriptures. These religious scriptures prohibit them from consuming meat from animals that die before they are bled-out. Some Muslim authorities have interpreted this to mean that, in addition to the animal being alive, it must also be conscious prior to neck-cutting. This has led to a section of the Muslim community rejecting pre-slaughter stunning for halal meat production with the belief that all forms of stunning lead to instantaneous death. It must be noted that some jurists have debunked claims that animals must be conscious before they are bled-out because it does not appear to be mentioned anywhere in the scriptures. This paper reviews literature on the role of the brain in the control of conscious perception and death and considers the different scholarly definitions of death and how they impact the interpretation of halal slaughter rules and the impact on animal welfare.

Keywords: *animal welfare, bleeding-out, consciousness, death, halal slaughter, unconsciousness*