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The stunning and slaughter of cattle within the EU: a review of the current situation with regard to the halal market

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Abstract

The slaughter of animals for the halal market is both ethically and economically significant. There are animal welfare and spiritual requirements that must be met for meat to be considered fit for Muslim consumption. These requirements are enshrined in Islamic law, known commonly as the Shariah law, derived from commandments in the Holy Quran and the Hadith (teachings or traditions of the Prophet of Islam, Mohammed, Peace Be Upon Him). Islamic jurists widely interpret the Shariah law differently, and this has led to debate as to whether pre-slaughter stunning is acceptable for halal slaughter. This paper reviews how these laws are interpreted and implemented and reviews the methods of stunning accepted by proponents of halal stunning. It also describes why some proponents of halal stunning do not accept irreversible stunning methods for producing halal beef within the EU, a situation which has meant that thousands of halal cattle are slaughtered without any form of stunning.

Keywords: animal welfare, cattle, halal, reversible stunning, slaughter, stunning