



الهيئة الإسلامية في أيرلندا

Islamic Foundation of Ireland

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Statement of the Islamic Foundation of Ireland (IFI) about non-stun slaughter discussion on RTE radio

It is well known that the slaughter of animals is an emotive issue, whether they are stunned prior to slaughter or not. However, we recognise the need to use animals for human sustenance, and our obligation to uphold their welfare during slaughter.

The IFI listened to RTE (Radio and Television of Ireland) radio's discussion on non-stun slaughter aired on Monday the 12th of January 2026. We would like to address some of the inaccuracies broadcasted during the programme and shed some light on the practice of Halal slaughter.

1. While we commend RTE for the programme, we feel that the guests missed the opportunity to discuss the incidences of mis-stuns and the use of high concentration of carbon dioxide gas for poultry which are arguably more stressful and painful than non-stun slaughter. Only one speaker briefly touched on ineffective stunning during the entire programme.
2. It is worth mentioning that under Article 4/4 of Council Regulation EC 1099/2009, non-stun slaughter is a permitted and regulated process in most member states. Article 4/4 states: "In the case of animals subject to particular methods of slaughter prescribed by religious rites, the requirements of paragraph 1 shall not apply provided that the slaughter takes place in a slaughterhouse." This is an exemption from the requirements of Paragraph 1 of article 4 which states: "Animals shall only be killed after stunning in accordance with the methods and specific requirements"
3. We would also like to mention that despite all sheep and poultry slaughtered in meat plants in Ireland are being electrically stunned before Halal slaughter, the programme failed to acknowledge this.

4. Non-lethal stunning or stun to stun (not stun to kill) is acceptable in Halal slaughter as long as the animal is rendered unconscious and insensible. If the animal is dead after stunning and before slaughter, it is deemed fatally beaten to death (called Mawqouza – in Qur’anic terms.) The meat of dead animals is prohibited for Muslims to consume. The use of penetrative captive bolt does not only stun the animal but causes its death.
5. The discussion was mainly centred on the use of the penetrative captive bolt for cattle, we would like to mention that there are other acceptable non-lethal stunning methods that are suitable for Halal slaughter, such as the Jarvis Beef Stunner (electric), the chosen method in New Zealand. In the UK a few meat plants also installed this system. We would also like to mention that there are ongoing developments around the use of Diathermic Syncope for the stunning of Halal cattle.
6. Religious slaughter of meat animals has been subjected to much controversy and received attention in recent decades. Debates and concerns about religious slaughter focus mainly on two questions:
 - i) Is the neck incision painful during the cut and/or immediately afterwards?
 - ii) Is sensibility and consciousness lost quickly enough following the loss of blood?These two questions are related. Scientific methods to trying to measure 'pain' had limitations and did not provide ‘proof’ to answer the questions conclusively for many years and the debate goes on and on.
7. The lack of conclusive evidence regarding pain resulting from slaughter, explains why the vet-guest on the RTE programme instead of supporting his arguments with science was suggesting the use of the precautionary principle in animal sentience. The precautionary principle as he stated it: “if something would be painful, distressing to you as a human, and unless you can categorically prove otherwise, then you must make the exact same assumption for an animal.” (ends.) However, this principle is debatable.
8. The assessment of pain on the assumption that animals are as sensitive to pain as is man is arguable. The skin from which painful stimuli arise and the site of their perception, the brain, are qualitatively different in man and animal. From the point of pain even humans are not equally sensitive. Some are insensitive some are even born without sensation of pain. Generally speaking, the thicker the skin, the less sensitive it is. In the case of animals all are far thicker skinned anatomically and metaphorically than the thickest-skinned man.
9. How much painful is the method of Halal slaughter? From the point of pain, we have to consider, the cut on the neck, bleeding and convulsions. In Halal slaughter, the quick cut with a sharp knife severs four major blood vessels in the neck, through them so much blood

is lost so quickly that the animal faints and the sensation of pain in the sensory centre of the animal's brain is eliminated. If the cut were to be made away from these major vessels it would be painful and that is the reason why cutting on the back first and then extending it to involve the blood vessels on the front of the neck is horrendous and painful.

10. Bleeding is not painful. If it were, very few would be prepared to be bled to donate blood. Convulsions, the rhythmic movements of the body of the animal, are symptoms of hypoxia of the brain (decrease in oxygen supply). Convulsions are essential for squeezing the meat of blood. Convulsions do not occur if the spinal cord is cut. This is why cutting the spinal cord or breaking the neck is abominable. In the abattoirs convulsions do not allow the operator to dress the animal, they have to wait till the convulsions die down. This waste of time is uneconomical to the industry. This is the reason that spinal cord is destroyed in commercialised slaughterhouses.
11. Slaughtering procedures that produce meat for human consumption need to maintain product quality (hygiene) as well as protecting animal welfare. All stunning methods as well as possible mis-stuns have disadvantages relating to meat quality and public health. Animal meat is purified by draining away the impure blood. Blood carries nutrients and chemicals to the tissues and brings back the waste products of tissue metabolism into the circulation. These waste products of tissue metabolism are harmful. Blood contained in a closed circuit can only be let out by cutting the blood vessels. Deployment of an incision to cut the vessels and the overlying skin is therefore essential. The best place anatomically to cut these vessels is the neck where four major vessels are accessible, lying not far from the skin. It is also evident that the longer the heart beats from the moment the vessels are cut open and the more strongly it beats, the greater will be the blood loss.
12. It was refreshing that one speaker on the programme mentioned the gassing of pigs at the end which is arguably more barbaric than the perception about non-stun slaughter. These discussions must not be one-sided; it should consider the welfare aspects of all slaughter methods and mis-stuns too.