

Welfare of animals at the time of slaughter

[Experience](#), [Laughter](#)



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Introduction

Animal slaughter is one of the most key processes in gaining food for many human beings. In many countries such as the US and Europe there are strict regulations on the Slaughter of animals (Nakyinsige *et al.*, 2013). The problem arises when these rules are either, not regulated and are continually broken or these rules are not acceptable. A reason for this is due to different countries having different standards for the welfare of animals. In this report these issues and more will be discussed and Solutions and recommendations proposed to deal with these problems, the feasibility of these will also be looked at.

From the dawn of man, man has always slaughtered animals. Firstly this was accomplished in a hunt where the animals were tracked and killed in the wild. But as man began its domination of the world this hunter gather strategy was no longer suitable, introducing the dawn of agriculture in Neolithic western Asia (). This helped with growing populations to have a more readily available food supply. But with this intensification of livestock Massive changes to their Natural behaviour. As you can imagine as the human population grew dramatically over time. A much greater need for livestock was needed to feed this population, thus more intensification grew. These led to cramped conditions and poor sanitation for the animals. This was finally realised in 1978 in Paris where the Universal declaration of Animal Rights stated that “ all animal life has the right to be respected and if it is necessary to kill an animal, it must be instantaneous, painless and cause

no apprehension” (Vorstenbosch, 1999). Using these key ideals, we can see how each of the different ways in which animals are slaughtered to see if they abide by these ideals.

Slaughter of Animals for food in agricultural systems

Firstly we will be discussing the slaughter of animals for food in agricultural systems. There are many problems associated with this type of farming. This could come in the form of housing the animals, transportation and the slaughtering of the animals. According to a vast amount of studies the most important factors in maintaining high standards of animal welfare in the slaughter and transportation of animals is, specialised equipment and a high supervision of employees (Roldan-Santiago *et al.*, 2011, Mota Rojas *et al.*, 2012). There are many different methods of slaughtering animals and each has its own specific group of animals, this is to (as much as possible) keep stress and suffering to a minimum. The methods are stated by the RSPCA (2015) is that it is a two-step process. The first process is stunning, which involves either electrical tongs applied to either side of the brain rendering the animal unconscious, this is typically used in medium sized animals such as pigs, sheep and calves. For larger animals such as cattle a penetrating captive bolt is used, this is a metal bolt that is fired from a gun into the brain of the animal rendering the animal unconscious immediately. In poultry the method is similar to that of the medium sized animals, but the birds are hung upside down from a conveyor, which is then passed through a water bath where the bird's head completes the circuit stunning the animal. The importance of stunning originally was not used for animal welfare its primary function is to allow easy and safe manipulation of the animal before

slaughter, allowing for an easier access to cut the arteries of the neck (Bergeaud-Blackler, 2007). But stunning is now viewed as a key improvement to animal welfare in this sector. The benefits of stunning are that it minimises pain and suffering, thus rendering the animal unconscious, therefore no pain or suffering is inflicted in the killing process (Fletcher, 1999. Craig & Fletcher, 1997). The second Process is inevitably the killing of the animal. This in the Non poultry livestock is the use of a Chest stick which is used as the animal is hung by its hind leg where the animal is stuck in the chest. In poultry there are two methods, The first is a continuation of the conveyer belt which runs the birds neck across mechanical neck cutter severing the vital arteries, or the use of controlled atmosphere systems in which the animals breathe in a mix of gas and air until dead. But the question still remains that how can we gauge if an animal's welfare is being thought of? And if not/so how do we measure the amount of stress put on the animal? A few studies have shown that increased vocalizations in livestock results in an increase of stress (Grandin, 1997). This proposition was confirmed by Warriss et al (1994) where it was found that increased level of pig squeals positively increase with blood lactate and CPK, which are major stress indicators in the body. As we look back at the three ideals we can see that stated by the Universal declaration of Animal Rights in most cases we do see that these are for the most part upheld. But as we see with the gas in chicken slaughter there is no unconsciousness and death is not instantaneous. But the problems come with a balance between productivity and cruelty (Naas et al, 2008).

Slaughter of animal for religious and cultural events

Yet another very highly debated and controversial topic. The act of slaughtering animals is seen as a cruel and barbaric act by some modern cultures. But we must look at this from an unbiased approach to see if there are any welfare issues. First we must ask why this is. The method of halal slaughtering is a worship of Allah for the provision he has provided (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, (2011)). But they do have some strict welfare laws when slaughtering the animals just a few of these are, avoiding conditions which create stress i. e. not sharpening the knife in front of the animal and not slaughtering the animal in front of a crowd (Masri, 1989). As stated by the RSPCA (2015) these regulations follow the 1958 humane slaughter act section two where the animal must be stunned before slaughter, in most religious slaughters this is not the case (Nakyinsige et al, 2013). But the law does permit however the slaughtering of animals in accordance with ritual slaughter. This takes the form of a knife cutting the carotid artery with a sharp blade causing the animal to lose consciousness and eventually die (Collage of law, 2015). The welfare issues arise because of the lack of stunning and therefore the stress induced to the animal while being restrained and slaughtered. There are also concerns with if any pain is caused with the actually cutting of the arteries in the neck and if the animal suffers as it falls unconscious (Gregory 2005). A major welfare concern is how restraints are used while the animal is conscious before the cut is applied? And how do these have an effect on the animal's welfare? It has been found that some plants use painful and harmful measures to restrain that animals often causes bodily harm to the animal (Grandin & Regenstein,

1994). Another argument are welfare concerns about the time that it takes the animal to become unconscious, it has been argued that without stunning the animal can take longer for the animal to lose brain function and die (Gregory et al., 2010). This promotes further concerns about how much pain and distress does the animal experience when it is becoming unconscious? If we look back at the ideals presented by Vorstenbosch (1999) we see that the ideal are not upheld. Due to no stunning process the animals will to feel apprehension and fear, the death is not quite instantaneous and it does take time for the animal to die. And again as some studies have said the process can be painful and can harm the animals during the restraining process.

But how can we improve on these techniques, and improve the animal's welfare at the time of slaughter? And if improvements are made how can these be monitored and policed to make sure that countries and societies can work together to promote good animal welfare practice?

Potential solutions

Slaughter of Animals for food in agricultural systems

The Main problem facing the welfare of animals in agricultural systems is the constant battle between welfare and increased productivity. The end goal for productivity is to have as many animals in a smaller area for as cheaply as possible. But this goes against many of the animal's welfare rights. The solutions will come in a balance between welfare and the ability to find the most painless and as stress free as possible, also allowing the farmer to make a suitable profit from his animals and the methods to be as inexpensive as possible.

Slaughter of animal for religious and cultural events

The main problem facing the welfare of animals in religious and cultural events is that no stunning process takes place. This has already been shown to have a detrimental effect on the animal's welfare. The main solution is to look for methods of stunning or new, less harmful methods of restraint which can improve the animal's welfare. In many religious laws the basic principles are final and non-negotiable, but the application of these laws can be altered and changed to fit the situation (Regenstein et al., 2003). In the use of stunning equipment in halal meat there are three pre-requisites the machinery must abide by. Firstly the person(s) operating the machinery must be of Muslim faith and must have regular checks from a Muslim authority (Nakyinsige et al., 2013). Secondly the stunning must not kill or cause lasting injury to the animal (Riaz & Chaudry, 2003). And finally the machinery used must have never been used on pigs (Nakyinsige et al. 2013).

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