

Text of letter from the BVA President to the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition.

Tuesday 13 May 2014

### **Labelling of non-stun slaughter**

You will be aware of the recent news coverage of restaurant chains and supermarkets using meat from halal and kosher slaughter and the strength of public feeling about the animal welfare issues related to non-stun slaughter.

The British Veterinary Association has been campaigning for many years for an end to non-stun slaughter because of the significant animal welfare compromise at the time of death. It is a position supported by the government's own expert committee, the Farm Animal Welfare Committee (formerly Council), the Humane Slaughter Association, the RSPCA, and the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe.

Unfortunately some of the recent media attention risks this important animal welfare issue being hijacked by people and groups with other agendas. We have always made it very clear that we are not concerned with the practising of religious belief, but with the throat cutting of animals that have not been rendered insensible to pain.

Recent media coverage has also revealed a very strong feeling amongst the general public for better labelling about the provenance of food they are buying and eating. We very much hope you will listen to this sentiment and take forward the debate about clearer food labelling.

The suggestion of labelling all halal and kosher products (as per the amendment to the Consumer Right Bill) will do nothing to inform the public about the very proper concerns regarding welfare at slaughter but could fuel further confusion and potentially feed prejudice.

Halal labelling does not recognise that around 88% of halal slaughter in the UK is prestunned. At the same time the 12% that isn't stunned, along with the hindquarters of animals slaughtered by the shechita method that are not kosher, could continue to enter the mainstream food chain unlabelled.

To move the discussion away from one about 'halal' and 'kosher' we would strongly urge the government to compel the industry to label whether meat is from stunned or non-stunned animals, ie whether it's from animals that have been slaughtered in line with UK and EU welfare legislation or under the derogation.

We are calling on all three political parties to support better consumer information and better animal welfare.

Yours sincerely,

**Robin Hargreaves BVSc MRCVS  
President**