

Official Guidance note on Halal food issues/FSA guidance on Halal to local Authorities

ANSA:

“What is halal or haram is not the business of DEFRA or FSA. What is the business of DEFRA is the method of slaughter.

Religious Slaughter is defined as slaughter without pre stunning under the exemption for Jews and Muslims. That is what we need to clarify. So, why is slaughter which is stunned called Religious Slaughter. It contradicts the definition.”



Heads of Environmental Health Services (England)
Directors of Trading Standards
Chief Port Health Officers
cc: LGR
CIEH
APHA

29 September 2010

Ref: ENF/E/10/038

Dear Colleagues

GUIDANCE NOTE ON HALAL FOOD ISSUES

The Food Standards Agency issued guidance for Local Authority enforcement officers on Halal food issues in February 20031.

The mislabelling and misrepresentation of Halal foods is of great importance to the Muslim Community, and continues to be an issue of concern. For this reason we are re-issuing the advice drawn up in association with relevant Muslim organisations, LGR and Defra.

Food enforcement officers are requested to:

- Use this advice when planning inspections, food sampling and labelling checks relating to Halal foods
- Take appropriate enforcement action

It would be very helpful to be informed of any action taken by LAs to enable us to provide assurance that LAs are aware of this issue, and take action where necessary to protect the interests of the Muslim Community.

Should you require any further information on this issue, please contact the Agency's Food Standards Support Team (020 7276 8017).

Yours sincerely



Sarah Appleby
Head of Enforcement and Local Authority Delivery Division

1 The guidance is also included in the Practice Guidance to the Food Law Code of Practice (England).

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GUIDANCE NOTE FOR FOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS ON HALAL FOOD ISSUES

Background

Halal is an Arabic word which means "Permissible", a related word in the Qur'an is Tayyab which means wholesome and fit for human consumption. With regard to food described as Halal, it means food that Muslims are permitted to consume under Islamic law. The opposite of Halal is Haram, which means „prohibited by God, unwholesome, foul.. It follows, for example, that any meat that has not been rendered Halal by Islamic slaughter or that is liable to cause ill health, e.g. meat that is contaminated and unfit for consumption, cannot be considered Halal. Meat also cannot be considered Halal if it is past its "minimum durability marking". If a Muslim is sold Haram food, it is viewed very seriously, as it causes them to eat food prohibited in Islam and, in addition, it may be a form of fraud or deception.

Muslims regard Al Qur'an as the very words of God as revealed to the last prophet Muhammed, and is the primary source of Islamic law. In the Al Qur'an there are prohibitions on the consumption of pork, blood, carrion and alcohol, among other things. For a product to be Halal (lawful) for Muslim consumption, and described as such, all the ingredients should be Halal. The Muslim requirement for food to be Halal applies whether the food business operator is preparing, handling, processing, manufacturing, packaging, storing, importing, distributing, supplying, transporting or selling food, whether for profit or not, from a factory, warehouse, shop, restaurant, van, village hall, community centre or vending machine.

Examples of where the requirements of food law relate to Halal requirements

There are many similarities between aspects of Halal requirements and aspects of food law. A Halal food business operator must not only comply with food law but with the Islamic Shariah (Law) related to food. The requirements of the Islamic dietary laws are that:

- Meat, and other foods, including food ingredients, whether home-produced or imported, must be Halal.
- Meat must be obtained from Halal sources, e.g. an abattoir must have the facilities and personnel to undertake Halal slaughter. See Annex 1 for further information on Islamic Shariah (Law) relating to Halal slaughter, provided by the Agency's Muslim Organisations Working Group.
- Meat must be wholesome and meet food safety requirements - if meat is unfit for human consumption it cannot be considered Halal, even if slaughtered in the prescribed manner.

To be Halal:

- The animal should be alive or deemed to be alive at the actual time of slaughter and slaughter must be carried out in compliance with Islamic Shariah and the Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations 1995 (as amended)². Animals/birds must be slaughtered by severance of neck arteries and jugular veins.
- No pork or pork ingredients must be present in the food.
- No alcohol or other intoxicants must be used.
- Any animal product, such as gelatine, must be produced from animals slaughtered in accordance with the Islamic Shariah.
- Any animal fat or meat must come from animals slaughtered in accordance with the Islamic Shariah.
- Any preparation area and the equipment used should be kept in such a manner as to prevent cross contact, contamination or mixing Halal food with non-Halal food.

Displaying Halal and non-Halal meat on the same premises does not in itself render Halal meat non-Halal. If open, unpackaged Haram food is stored and displayed alongside Halal meat, there would have to be clear separation and suitable labelling. However it should be noted that, as any direct or indirect contact between Halal and Haram food (e.g. use of the same knives or chopping boards etc) would render Halal meat and poultry as Haram, this could be difficult to achieve in practice.

There is no legal requirement to label food as being non-Halal. If a description "HALAL" is made, then it must be clear which product the description refers to, if the business is not to run the risk of committing offences of mis-describing the foods on sale.

At present there are few recognised systems of certifying that a particular food is Halal. However, certain Muslim organisations are collaborating to develop an umbrella certification board for Halal foods.

Officers carrying out routine inspections or following up complaints should whenever possible consider, apart from hygiene issues, checking whether food claiming to be Halal is actually Halal. This may be done, for example, in any informal food sampling programme, of canned meat, where the presence of pork in what is purported to be Halal meat would obviously be Haram to a Muslim and may well contravene food law in terms of composition and labelling.

**Where officers suspect mis-description of fresh meat they should liaise with the Agency's Standards Support Team
(Standards.Support@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk; Tel 0207 276 8017)**

In summary, officers are asked to consider action, where appropriate, against food business operators who sell and mis-describe *Halal* foods, in the same way as they would for any contravention of food law in food premises generally.

Acknowledgement: The Agency is grateful for the help and advice received from members of the Agency's Muslim Organisations Working Group.

ANNEX 1

Islamic Shariah (law) relating to slaughter of animals or poultry

- Animal and birds should have preferably been raised in a natural environment.
- Their feed should not contain animal-based products.
- Animals and poultry at farms or lairages must be cared for properly. They must be fed and watered before slaughter.
- They must receive ante-mortem inspection so that only healthy animals are brought in for slaughter.
- In the slaughterhouse animals must not be able to see other animals being slaughtered, nor must they have sight of blood. This requires cleaning the area before the next slaughter.
- There must be no cruelty to animals or poultry at any time.
- The slaughter man must be a Muslim, who has been properly trained and licensed.
- All slaughtering must be carried out in a licensed slaughterhouse.
- Places where pigs are slaughtered should be avoided.
- The slaughter man must use a sharp knife (which must not be sharpened in front of the animal). He must sever the jugular veins and carotid arteries as well as the oesophagus and trachea, but not the spinal cord as this restricts convulsion, which in turn restricts the pumping out of blood.
- At the time of slaughter he must pronounce *Bismillah Allahu Akbar* (In the name of God, God is the Greatest) on each animal or bird.
- At all times the meat and general hygiene regulations must be complied with.
- Any carcasses found unfit on post mortem inspection must not be used for food for human consumption.

We thank br Mohammed Saleem (ANSA) for these useful informations

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