



Central Moon Sighting Committee of Great Britain

(Jamiatul Ulama Britain, Darul Uloom Bury, Hizbul Ulama UK)

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Fatwa from Darul Ifta, Jamia Darul Uloom Karachi

Regarding stunning and other practices in the Halal meat industry

(Note: the following is a translation from the original Urdu Fatwa, which also incorporates important textual references not translated here)

What do the respected Scholars of Islam say regarding the following:

Q1). In many Muslim slaughterhouses in the UK, the animal is rendered unconscious before slaughtering by administering a mild electrical current. This does not kill the animal, but has an effect of about up to a minute during which the animal remains motionless, and slaughtering it becomes easier. The operators of the slaughterhouses claim the voltage of this stun is so low that there is no danger of the animal dying. Is it permissible to slaughter in this way? And what is the ruling regarding the meat of an animal slaughtered in this way? And if the stunning lessens the blood flow at the time of slaughter, what would be the ruling?

A1. The practice of rendering animals unconscious before slaughtering, which is carried out in different ways, consists of a number of undesirable and objectionable elements, for example:

a. If this act is such that it causes the animal to lose all its senses and consciousness completely, then there is a risk that it will have caused the animal's death before slaughter, especially if the animal was weak or ill.

b. If this act is such that it does not cause the animal to lose all its senses and consciousness completely (such as a mild electrical shock that merely immobilizes the animal), then there is a strong possibility that the animal's pain and suffering will have been unnecessarily increased, since the pain of slaughter remains due to its not being unconscious, and the pain and stress of the electrical shock will have been administered additionally without any need.

c. If this act makes the animal weak (compared to its normal and natural condition), and at the time of slaughter the animal is not at its full physical strength, then there is a risk that this will cause a reduction in the amount of blood that will flow from it at the time of slaughter, compared to what might have flowed in the case of the animal being fully conscious and in full possession of its senses and physical strength, and to undertake such a course of action deliberately is to oppose and counter a Shar'i requirement of slaughter (i.e. the discharge of flowing blood).

d. If the amount of blood discharged is reduced due to the animal's weakness (caused by the stun), then there is a risk that the remaining (non-discharged) blood will be absorbed into the meat of the animal, and this is an undesirable outcome both from a medical point of view and also according to Shari'ah.

e. If the person undertaking this way of slaughter believes it to be a less stressful and painful method than the prescribed Shar'i manner, then this is tantamount to believing an invented method to be superior to a revealed one, and it means that the person believes the revealed method of slaughter to be painful and cruel, which is 'close to disbelief'. (Ref: Imdadul-Fatawa, Vol. 3, P. 605-8 and Ahkamuz-zaba-ih, P. 55-6)

Due to these reasons, it is not correct in terms of Shari'ah to render an animal unconscious before slaughter. And in fact Hakimul-Ummah Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi (Rahmatullahi Alaih) has used the words 'evil innovation, corruption of faith' and 'against Shari'ah' to describe this practice.

As for the ruling regarding the meat of an animal slaughtered in this way, if the animal was definitely alive at the time of slaughter, and was slaughtered correctly, it would be considered Halal. However, due to the reasons outlined above, and the many types of doubts that arise, it is appropriate for Muslims to avoid such meat as far as possible, because staying away from doubtful things is also a part of faith.

Q2) The (UK animal welfare) law requires that an animal slaughtered without stunning should be held down for at least 20 seconds after slaughter, to minimize distress to the animal and possibility of injury to both animal and slaughter man. In such a situation, in order to help abide by this law, if instead of applying a stun before slaughter, the stun is applied immediately after the animal has been slaughtered, so that the slaughter man can move more quickly to the next animal, what would be the ruling?

A2. If the animal has been slaughtered in the correct Shar'i way, its meat is halal and administering an electrical current after this will not affect its permissibility.

Note: This answer should be read with the following note, which was written as a follow-up, clarifying the above answer, by Mufti Taqi Usmani sahib:

"There are two different issues here that should not be confused with each other. One question is to identify the correct way of slaughtering an animal according to the Sunnah and Shari'ah. The answer to this question is that the correct way according to Sunnah and Shari'ah is to cut the veins of the throat with a sharp knife and recite Allah's name whilst doing so, without stunning before or after slaughter. **Stunning an animal either before or after cutting its throat is contrary to the way prescribed by Shari'ah according to Sunnah.**

The second question is whether or not the meat of an animal will be permissible to eat, if it is stunned before or after its slaughter. The answer to this question is that it will not be Halal if it has died because of stunning and not because of cutting throat and the blood flowing from its veins. However, if the animal has been slaughtered in the correct Shar'i way (and its death is caused by the blood flowing from its veins and not caused by stunning), then its meat is Halal and administering an electrical current after this will not affect its permissibility."

Q3) Is it permitted to slaughter a pregnant animal, and can the meat of such an animal be certified Halal?

A3. If the animal is pregnant and close to giving birth, it is Makrooh (disapproved) to slaughter it. If it is not close to giving birth, it is permissible to slaughter it without any Karahah (disapproval). Nevertheless, the meat of such an animal will be Halal in all cases.

Q4) Some Halal meat supplying companies operating in the Halal meat industry in the UK abuse the law and voluntarily liquidate their companies after operating for some time, and by doing so free themselves of their accumulated debt, and then without paying their govt. taxes and debts owed to the farmers etc. they open another company under another name and start operating again. In this way they undercut other law abiding companies engaged in providing Halal meat. These people are a source of disrepute to the whole Halal meat industry, and they are one of the main reasons why many shortcuts and bad practices aimed at cost cutting have been introduced into the industry. Would Muslim certification bodies be justified in denying certification to these companies?

A4. If a Muslim person is violating the laws of a country and is engaged in dishonest behaviour, he is a sinner, and it is not permissible to intentionally help and support him in this action. Therefore, in the situation described in your question, the Muslim institutions have the right to deny certification (of the meat) to such people. Moreover, when such actions carry the risk of tarnishing the whole Muslim community, it is necessary to exercise extra care. In addition, it is obligatory according to the Shari'ah for these people to pay off and settle the debts that remain outstanding against them, and failure to do so will entail accountability in the hereafter.

Q5) In the situation where the animal is rendered unconscious before slaughtering by being administered an electrical current, if the animals are checked and proved alive according to a fixed percentage (e.g. 20% or 40% of the animals), and the rest of the animals are not checked, in this case what is the ruling for the meat of the animals that have been checked, and what is the ruling for those that have not been checked?

A5. In the described situation, it is necessary to ascertain individually about each animal that it was alive at the time of slaughter. It is not correct to check some animals and (finding them to be alive at the time of slaughter) deduce from this that the rest were also alive. In such a situation the meat of those animals about which it is known with certainty or beyond reasonable doubt that they were alive at the time of slaughter, and they were correctly slaughtered, will be considered Halal. And the meat of those animals about which it is known (or there is a strong possibility) that they were dead at the time of slaughter, or those animals about which it is not possible to ascertain if they were dead or alive at the time of slaughter, will not be considered Halal, and it is not permissible to use such meat.

Q6) What sort of proof is considered valid in Shari'ah for proving an animal alive at the time of slaughter? If some time after applying the electrical current, some slight movement is observed in the animal and it is declared alive and slaughtered, would this be correct? If after applying the electrical current, the animals pulse and heartbeat is ascertained through some means (e.g. by means of a scanner detecting the pulse or heartbeat etc.) would it be permissible to slaughter the animal in this case? What would be the ruling regarding its meat?

A6. The jurists have mentioned many signs that can be taken as proof of an animal being alive at the time of slaughter, for example if the animal bleeds at the time of slaughter

like a living animal, or closes its mouth or eyes, or pulls together its legs, or shows any kind of movement, etc. Therefore, if the fact that the animal was alive can be established in any way, it will be permissible to slaughter it, and its meat will be considered Halal. The observation of movement in the animal, or establishing the fact that a pulse exists is sufficient to prove an animal alive.

Q7) What is the ruling regarding the slaughtering of animals in front of one another?

A7. It is Makrooh to unnecessarily slaughter animals in front of one other, and this should be avoided.

Q8) What is the minimum amount of words to be recited at the time of slaughtering an animal and what are those words?

A8. It is necessary to invoke the name of Allah Most High at the time of slaughter. It is Mustahab (recommended) to say 'Bismillahi Allahu Akbar'.

Q9) What is the minimum part of the neck that must be cut at the time of slaughter for the animal to be considered Halal?

A9. For the animal to be Halal, it is necessary that all four or at least three of the four channels (of food, air, and two of blood,) in the throat must be cut.

Q10) In many slaughterhouses the workers and the people employed for slaughtering are Muslims in the name but do not practice good personal hygiene, do not remain in a state of ritual purity, and do not pray Salah, some don't even pray their Jumu'ah Salah. What is the ruling regarding animals slaughtered by such people? Should the slaughterhouses employ such people for this work, especially for slaughtering?

A10. If the person carrying out the slaughter is a Muslim, then even if he is a Fasiq (non-practicing Muslim), the animal slaughtered by him will be considered Halal, provided that it is slaughtered in the correct way and the other conditions (for correct Shar'i slaughter) are present. However, pious and practicing Muslims should be employed for this purpose as far as possible, and it is not correct to unnecessarily employ non-practicing Muslims.

Q11) If the slaughterhouse is owned by non-Muslims, and the slaughter man is a Muslim but all the rest of the staff and workers are non-Muslim, and when the meat is delivered to the shops the drivers and workers are not Muslims, can the meat supplied by these people be considered Halal?

A11. If it is certain that the meat is that of an animal slaughtered correctly by a Muslim, then it is Halal. In this situation the fact that the owners of the company or the staff are not Muslims will not have any effect on the permissibility of the meat. However, if it is known with certainty, or beyond reasonable doubt, that the meat is not Halal; or there is merely the claim of a non-Muslim that it is Halal, and there is no Shar'i evidence to support this claim; or the particular supplier or seller is known to mix Halal and Haraam, then in all these cases the meat will be Haraam and it must be avoided.

Q12) What is the ruling regarding the meat and chicken imported from countries such as Australia and Holland etc, which carries a 'Halal' label?

A12. If the meat is imported from a Muslim country, then it will be Halal and permissible to use. And if it is imported from a non-Muslim country, then unless a dependable Muslim person certifies that it was slaughtered in accordance with all the Shar'i conditions, it will not be permissible to eat this meat, even if it carries a statement that it is 'slaughtered according the Islamic method' (or any other such statement), because it has been established that such declarations are not reliable, and (where there is doubt) the original ruling for meat is that of impermissibility.

Q13)Some people say that it is Makrooh to eat the meat of an animal that has been stunned before slaughtering. Is this correct? If it is correct then what is the ruling regarding the regular consumption of such meat?

A13. Due to the points mentioned above in answer No. 1, the meat of an animal that is rendered unconscious before slaughtering has many objectionable elements and doubts in it, and it is therefore advisable for Muslims to avoid such meat as far as possible, without genuine need. Nevertheless, if responsible Muslim persons are appointed to undertake or oversee the action of slaughter, and they certify that the meat is Halal, i.e. that the animal was alive at the time of slaughter and the other conditions of Shar'i slaughter were also present, then the meat of such animals will be considered Halal and its use will be permissible.

And Allah knows best,
Muhammad Usman,
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29 / 02 / 1426 AH

The answer is correct
(Mufti) Mahmood Ashraf Usmani
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The above answers are correct, and it has now been established through scientific research as well that the practice of making animals unconscious before slaughtering, as carried out in western countries, is more painful for the animal. Therefore, it is necessary for Muslims to make every effort to obtain exemption from this practice.

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The answer is correct
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