



FEDERATION OF VETERINARIANS OF EUROPE

Press Release

Welfare at slaughter and killing **FVE: slaughter without stunning is “unacceptable”**

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Brussels, 10 March 2009 - The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) welcomes the draft EU Regulation dealing with the protection of animals at the time of killing. This piece of legislation “*clearly constitutes a step forward for the level of animal welfare in slaughterhouses*”, confirmed Walter Winding, FVE president.

However, to make sure that the new welfare rules are correctly applied, enforcement procedures in case of non-compliance are needed. The FVE recommends that the role of the competent authority in this matter is clearly stated in the Regulation.

The FVE furthermore strongly believes that the Official Veterinarian (OV) has a central role to play in the controls relating to animal welfare in the slaughterhouse. The role of the OV should be specifically stated in the Standard Operating Procedures, urges the FVE. For example, the OV should check the level of staff training, and request retraining if necessary.

Furthermore, the practice of slaughtering animals without prior stunning is “*unacceptable under any circumstances*” from an ethical and animal welfare viewpoint, recalls Walter Winding. And in case derogations for specific religious communities are granted, more transparency is required. “*Consumers have the right to be informed if the meat is derived from an animal not stunned prior to slaughter*”.

The FVE is indeed very concerned by the fact that in certain EU countries a high proportion of animals are killed without stunning – e.g. in 2006, this concerned 92% of sheep and 21% of calves slaughtered in Belgium – while the proportion of consumers of this type of meat is very small (around 3.5% of the whole population). Meat from these animals is sold on the domestic and export market, even to consumers who are unaware of the slaughter conditions.

This is contrary to animal welfare – and to the consumer’s right to be informed. Operators should ensure that only animals destined for a religious market are killed without pre-stunning, the FVE urges. In case slaughter takes place without prior stunning, the animals should be stunned immediately following the cut, while specific information should therefore always be available to consumers if animals were slaughtered according to this procedure.

Finally, the Regulation should permit Member States to implement stricter welfare rules for the slaughter or killing of animals, should they wish to do so.

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Notes for Editors:

1. Data:
Belgium, 2006, 21% of calves, 10% of adult cattle and 92% of sheep were slaughtered without prior stunning. Muslim population around 3.5 %. The degree of self-sufficiency for calves is about 140% and for sheep 12%.

In France, figures differ according to the source.

According to the COPERCI report, 20% of bovines, 80% of sheep, and 20% of poultry are slaughtered without prior stunning.

According to OABA, Oeuvre d'Assistance aux Bêtes d'Abattoire, 40% of calves, 25% of cattle and 55% of sheep and lambs are slaughtered without prior stunning.

According to the French Ministry of Agriculture (DGAL) (2008) 13% of calves, 12% of cattle and 49% of sheep/goats are slaughtered without prior stunning. The Muslim population in France is around 7%. Self sufficiency in France for bovines is about 110%, ovines 50%.

2. FVE position papers on slaughter:
 - a. Specific amendments on draft slaughter Regulation
http://www.fve.org/news/position_papers/animal_welfare/fve_08_085_slaughterwelfareamendments.pdf
 - b. Animal welfare at slaughter and killing (2006) -
http://www.fve.org/news/position_papers/animal_welfare/fve_06_033_aw_slaughter.pdf
 - c. Slaughter without prior stunning (2002)
http://www.fve.org/news/position_papers/animal_welfare/fve_02_104_slaughter_prior_stunning.pdf
3. The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) is an umbrella organisation of 44 veterinary organisations from 38 European countries, representing a total of around 200 000 veterinarians.
4. For further information, consult the FVE website <http://www.fve.org> or contact the FVE Secretariat on tel +32 2 533 70 20 or by e-mail to info@fve.org