

Shechita UK

Thursday 24th June 2004

Ben Bradshaw Esq MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary,
Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR

Dear Ben

I enclose herewith the formal response of the Jewish Community to the Government's Draft Response to the Farm Animal Welfare Council Report on the Welfare of Farmed Animals at Slaughter or Killing, Part 1: Red Meat Animals. Our submission relates to those recommendations included in the draft response that pertain to the Jewish religious humane method of animal slaughter for food, known as *shechita*.

The response is submitted by Shechita UK, an organisation that unites representatives from across the whole Jewish Community including the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Campaign for the Protection of Shechita, the National Council of Shechita Boards, the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations, and incorporates representatives from all the Kashrus Authorities in the UK.

Our submission draws on published scientific literature to establish the humane nature of shechita, and refutes the allegations of FAWC with respect to shechita. We respond to the Government's draft recommendations pertaining to shechita, and we make a number of our own recommendations with respect to actions the Government might take in the light of the points made in the submission.

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Shechita UK

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that Shechita UK welcomes the Government's firm commitment to protect the right of the Jewish community to continue to practise shechita. But as we discussed at our recent meeting, we are deeply concerned that the Government appears to have accepted FAWC's assertions about the subjective experience of animals during shechita, in particular that "*on balance, animals (especially cattle) slaughtered without pre-stunning are likely to experience very significant pain and distress.*" We mentioned then that this false message about shechita and the Jewish approach to the treatment of animals could invite antagonism on the part of extremists against Jews, Jewish communal buildings and Jewish businesses.

I am saddened to let you know that we received notification yesterday that our fears have been realised. I attach herewith a letter (22nd June 2004) forwarded to us by two kosher butchers in London. The letter, from an organisation that calls itself *Protection and Welfare of Animals International*, concludes: "*This really is the end of the road for ritual slaughter in the UK. The Government might wash their hands of it. We wont (sic). You will get nothing but grief until this wretched business is ended. You can do this, but if you do not comply then we will close your abattoirs and butcher shops down our way. You have until the end of July this year to accept humane slaughter methods in your business or close down. It would be most stupid of you to ignore this letter.*" This letter has of course been referred to the Metropolitan Police and the Community Security Trust.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions, or require any further information on the Jewish Community's position on the welfare of farmed red meat animals at slaughter or killing.

Yours sincerely,



Henry Grunwald QC.

Honorary Chairman, Shechita UK

