



What is Religious slaughter.

- ▶ UK legislation has permitted the act of religious slaughter without prior stunning for many years.
- ▶ The current WATOK legislation for England and Wales permits this and sets out the requirements in Schedule 3.
- ▶ There is similar legislation in Scotland and N Ireland.
- ▶ Previously WASK (came into force in 1995), also permitted the act of slaughter by religious rites without prior stunning in the UK.
- ▶ Prior to 1995 UK legislation had permitted the act of religious slaughter.
- ▶ REUL 1099/2009 at Article 4, (4) permits slaughter without prior stunning provided that it only takes place in an approved slaughterhouse.

What is Religious slaughter.

- ▶ WATOK Schedule 3 states:
- ▶ “killing in accordance with religious rites” means killing without the infliction of unnecessary suffering:
- ▶ by the Jewish method (Shechita) for the food of Jews by a Jew who is licensed by the Rabbinical Commission and holds a certificate for that purpose, or
- ▶ by the Muslim method (Halal) for the food of Muslims by a Muslim who holds a certificate for that purpose.
- ▶ Whilst we normally think of religious slaughter as slaughter without prior stunning many Muslims accept prior stunning where it can be shown not to kill the animal.
- ▶ BVA and divisions have worked with Muslim / Halal bodies to improve understanding of stunning.

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- ▶ The FSA carried out a survey of slaughter methods on behalf of Defra and Welsh Government in 2018 and again in 2022. The survey ran for one week from 7-13 March 2022. Link below.
- ▶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farm-animals-slaughter-sector-survey-2022>
- The key findings on slaughter by religious rites were:
- The levels of slaughter without stunning are similar to 2018.
- 2% of meat chickens (423,701) were slaughtered by non-stun methods, down from 3% (611,469) in 2018; and meat chickens stunned with higher electric frequency to meet religious slaughter specifications fell from 6% (1,082,586) in 2018 to 3% (568,933) in 2022.

What is Religious slaughter: Halal.

- ▶ Muslims are significant consumers in the UK population and there are a number of Halal certification bodies who verify that meat has been produced by Halal compliant methods.
- ▶ Some of these bodies accept meat from stunned animals where the method used is recoverable, whilst others will only accept animals slaughtered without prior stunning.
- ▶ Chaired by Lord Trees a number of organisations developed and introduced the Demonstration of Life protocol which verifies that sheep and goats head only stunned show signs of recovery with a heart beat and return to rhythmic breathing to help Muslim consumers better understand the process of electrical stunning and recoverability.
- ▶ Discussions are taking place about how a similar process could be used for poultry slaughter.

What is Religious slaughter: Halal.

- ▶ In the 2022 survey 14% of poultry were stunned by a waterbath method and considered Halal compliant with 2% slaughtered without prior stunning by a Halal method.
- ▶ The Muslim bodies do not recognise gas stun systems as Halal compliant in the UK.
- ▶ This is in part due to UK legislation requiring that gas stun systems kill the birds rather than stun them.
- ▶ In Europe I understand that some Muslim accreditation bodies accept gas stunning as compliant with Halal principles where the bird is not killed.
- ▶ Anecdotally I am told that the Muslim accreditation bodies in Europe are less strict on the principles of life for Halal slaughter.

What is Religious slaughter: Shechita.

- ▶ Jewish consumers require that meat is “Kosher” and do not accept prior stunning even where it is considered to be a recoverable method.
- ▶ For meat to be labelled as Kosher it must be killed by a Shochet and then subjected to a number of checks to ensure that it is Kosher.
- ▶ In the 2022 survey no stunned chicken or Turkeys were considered to be Kosher.
- ▶ 0.3% of chicken were killed without prior stunning.
- ▶ 0.5% of Turkeys were killed without prior stunning.
- ▶ 0.6% of other poultry species were killed without prior stunning as Kosher.

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- ▶ In England and Wales all persons handling, stunning or killing animals in a slaughterhouse must have a Certificate of Competence (CoC).
- ▶ For Halal slaughtermen they must first apply for a temporary CoC and then after training and assessment through “Food and Drink Qualifications” (FDQ) can apply for a full CoC.
- ▶ In order to carry out slaughter without prior stunning they will have to obtain activity 61, Slaughtering in accordance with Article 4 (4) of Regulation EC 1099/2009.
- ▶ Schochet will register with the Rabbinical Commission and obtain a Temporary CoC and on completion of their training can apply for a full CoC.
- ▶ Normally they will only apply for activity 61, Slaughtering in accordance with Article 4 (4) of Regulation EC 1099/2009.

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- ▶ In England and Wales legislation requires that animals subject to slaughter in accordance with Article 4(4) without prior stunning are individually restrained; ruminants shall be mechanically restrained.
- ▶ For poultry a shackle line or cone system is normally used and a Turkey or Goose must not be moved for 2 minutes and other poultry for 90 seconds or until unconscious.
- ▶ WATOK only permits certain species to be subject to religious slaughter without prior stunning, they are:
- ▶ Turkey, domestic fowl, guinea-fowl, duck, goose or quail.

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- ▶ Whilst non stun slaughter is often thought to be the only form of religious slaughter there are a number of Halal accreditation bodies that accept prior stunning when the bird is rendered unconscious rather than killed.
- ▶ Many of the premises using a waterbath stunner produce Halal product and will use higher electrical frequencies in the stun bath intended to stun not kill.
- ▶ A higher frequency will normally render the bird unconscious without killing it.
- ▶ REUL 1099/2009 Annex I sets out the permitted Amps and Frequency for poultry in a waterbath stunner.
- ▶ The table is on the next slide.

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Table 2 — Electrical requirements for waterbath stunning equipment (average values per animal).

Frequency (Hz)	Chickens	Turkeys	Ducks and geese	Quails
< 200 Hz	100 mA	250 mA	130 mA	45 mA
From 200 to 400 Hz	150 mA	400 mA	Not permitted	Not permitted
From 400 to 1500 Hz	200 mA	400 mA	Not permitted	Not permitted

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- ▶ Normally Halal producers will use the higher frequency permitted as they try to ensure that the birds are not killed by the process.
- ▶ Waterbath stunners are however unreliable in delivering a consistent Amperage to the birds and so even if the current delivered is say 2.0 Amps for 10 birds it is very likely that some will get less than 200 mA and others more.
- ▶ Small birds can sometimes miss contact with the water and so receive no current.
- ▶ The premises SOP should detail actions to be taken in the event of an animal not being stunned and often in Halal premises this will be a neck cut without prior stunning.

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- ▶ Halal producers are reluctant to use cervical dislocation, where permitted, as a backup method as it will render the bird non Halal.
- ▶ Kosher slaughterers do not use waterbath stunners and normally the birds are restrained in a cone.
- ▶ The birds may be hand held which will comply with the requirement that they are individually restrained.
- ▶ “Article 15 (2) Business operators shall ensure that all animals that are killed in accordance with Article 4(4) without prior stunning are individually restrained; ruminants shall be mechanically restrained.”

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- ▶ In every case when poultry are being slaughtered without prior stunning checks must be made regularly for signs of consciousness before release from restraint.
- ▶ REUL 1099/2009 Article 5, (2) Where, for the purpose of Article 4 (4), animals are killed without prior stunning, persons responsible for slaughtering shall carry out systematic checks to ensure that the animals do not present any signs of consciousness or sensibility before being released from restraint and do not present any sign of life before undergoing dressing or scalding.

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- ▶ Research carried out by Steve Wotton and Colleagues (Bristol University) in Catalonia looked at the possibility of recovery after waterbath stunning.
<https://peerj.com/preprints/255/>
- ▶ A total of 12 birds were selected for the trial between 2.0 and 2.8 Kg liveweight.
- ▶ All the birds were stunned at 200mA per bird.
- ▶ A group of 3 were stunned using a frequency of 600 Hz and 2 of the 3 birds were dead after stunning.
- ▶ A further 9 were stunned at 1,000Hz and all the birds recovered within 1 minute.
- ▶ Based on this data it should be possible to stun birds in a waterbath stunner using 200mA and 1,000Hz with a degree of confidence that the birds will remain alive but stunned.
- ▶ It should be noted that in the UK a recovery trial is not permitted.

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- ▶ There are a small number of poultry premises in England that use frequencies higher than 1,500 Hz.
- ▶ Whilst REUL 1099/2009 Annex I does not permit this, in England WATOK does not specifically prohibit the use of frequencies not specified.
- ▶ WATOK (Wales) 2014 in Schedule 3, (2) states:
- ▶ Nothing in this Schedule applies to the killing of animals in accordance with religious rites which are stunned before killing, but in such cases an animal must be restrained and stunned in accordance with the EU Regulation and Schedule 1.
- ▶ This paragraph does not appear in WATOK (England) 2015.

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- ▶ As a result of the missing wording in the England version of WATOK premises in England using higher frequencies than 1,500 Hz can do so legally.
- ▶ All the expert opinions I have heard agree that at such high frequencies the effect is that of immobilisation rather than stunning.
- ▶ An opinion from researchers at Bristol University Vet School is that unless you have access to an EEG trace it is not possible to tell the difference between a stunned bird and an immobilised bird.
- ▶ For the OV this is an impossible task as they would be unable to determine if there is an effective stun and as a result unable to take any formal action.

Religious slaughter.

**Thank you for listening, any
questions?**