

Reports and Comments

Animal welfare and non-stun slaughter

The document entitled 'Animal Welfare and Non-stun Slaughter – Key Facts' by Professor the Lord Trees and Hannah Jordan is published by the Veterinary Policy Research Foundation (VPRF) Factfile and dated 22/07/14. It is aimed at the public, politicians and professionals and presents a factual and up-to-date account of the current information on non-stun slaughter. The aim of the document is to provide an unbiased review, but both authors declare an interest that they would wish to see all animals stunned prior to slaughter.

The document opens with a comprehensive review of the current slaughter legislation — Regulation (EC) 1099/2009 — and how it is implemented in UK law, and the Protection of Animals at the Time of Killing (PATOK), explaining the current anomalies that exist between England and the rest of the UK. It goes on to highlight and quote those parts of the regulation relating to non-stun slaughter. This is followed by a section on definitions and terminology.

The stun-slaughter process is then detailed, with a table of all the methods listed in PATOK and the species to which they are applicable. Details of non-stun slaughter are then outlined, with the section being divided into Shechita (the Jewish method) and Dhabihah, or Halal, (the Muslim method). This section describes the requirements of the respective methods and explains how meat from non-stunned animals may come to be sold on the open market and consumed by others than Jews and Muslims. A section on mis-stunning and mis-cutting is followed by details of the numbers of animals involved: these are presented in three tables and the figures are from data collected by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in September 2011.

Following this are sections covering: the religious proscription of stunning; time to unconsciousness; and evidence and opinion on pain and suffering at slaughter. This last subject is covered in some depth and is well-referenced, quoting evidence from, among others, the Farm animal Welfare Committee (FAWC) and the European Commission's DIALREL Project, which ran from 2006 to 2010. The opinion is well-balanced with contributions from Islamic certification bodies and Shechita UK. The document concludes with a section on non-stun slaughter and labelling, with contributions from welfare groups (including the Humane Slaughter Association), assurance bodies and UK supermarkets.

Animal Welfare and Non-stun Slaughter: Key Facts
Professor the Lord Trees BVM&S, PhD, MRCVS; Hannah Jordan BSc (Hons), BVetMed (Hons), MRCVS (July 2014). A4, 18 pages. Available from the Veterinary Policy Research Foundation website: <http://vprf.wordpress.com/2014/07/18/animal-welfare-and-non-stun-slaughter/>.

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Online database centralises 3Rs resources

There are many thousands of resources available that seek to help individuals implement the Replacement, Reduction and Refinement (3Rs) of the use of animals in research. To assist with navigating this wealth of information, the Norwegian Reference Centre for Laboratory Animal Science and Alternatives (NORECOPA) and the Animal Welfare Information Centre, USA, have teamed together to release the 3R Guide.

The 3R Guide is an online, searchable database which allows users to look for suitable 3Rs tools via a specific category (26 categories are currently available, eg anaesthesia and analgesia, humane killing, toxicology), or through choosing the type of information required (six available: Database, Discussion forum, Guidelines, Information centres, Journals, Regulations and policies), via text (Title, Author, Supplier, Record number), or 3Rs relevance (Reduction, Refinement, Replacement) and/or plain text.

Searches within the 3R Guide will also return results from both NORINA and Textbase (two other databases available within the laboratory animal science field). NORINA focuses on providing audiovisual aids for those wishing to replace or supplement the use of animals during teaching or training and Textbase provides information on textbooks within the field of laboratory animal science.

For example, if you wished to search within the category 'blood sampling', and specify 'rat' in the plain text box, then this would yield three results within the 3R guide directly: a paper that describes how to take a saphenous vein blood sample; DIGIRES (Digital Resources for veterinary trainers) which hosts a collection of videos and photographs designed to assist with teaching laboratory animal procedures; and a blood sampling microsite. Each option has a brief description describing what the resource is, and on clicking on the main heading, you are taken to a fuller description which contains a link through to the website of the actual resource. As well as the three 3R Guide results which are brought up, there is also an option to 'Refine the search' which brings up hits from other parts of the website (eg NORINA, Textbase, Classic AVs).

The 3R Guide is very much a work in progress and a specific button is available to view the latest products that have been added to the website (this does not necessarily correlate with how 'new' these products are). It is hoped that the website will assist users with finding and accessing the best global 3Rs' resources, which will, in turn improve the welfare of animals.

3RGuide (2014). Developed by Norecopa in collaboration with the Animal Welfare Information Center in Beltsville, USA. Website available at: www.3RGuide.info.

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