

Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR

Telephone 08459 335577
Email helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
Website www.defra.gov.uk

Mr Andrew Copson
Chief Executive
British Humanist Association
1 Gower Street
London
WC1E 6HD

From Jim Paice MP
Minister of State for Agriculture and Food

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20th July 2010

Thank you for your letter of 8 July concerning the recent vote in the European Parliament on the provision of food information to consumers and the proposed requirement to indicate the method of slaughter where an animal has been slaughtered without prior stunning.

We currently have no plans to review our approach to religious slaughter (slaughter without prior stunning) which is allowed in the UK in recognition of the religious beliefs of Muslims and Jews. Views on labelling in the UK are split. The amendment that was voted on in the European Parliament is at present a proposal. It will need to be considered further by the other parties in the process as part of the ongoing negotiations. The EU is currently looking at the introduction of standardised welfare indicators and an EU wide welfare labelling scheme. It is not clear how religious slaughter practices will be reflected in these arrangements or how the recent European Parliament vote will impact on proposals for a welfare labelling scheme. We will continue to work with the Commission on this and will ensure full consultation, including religious groups, on any proposals as they emerge.

More generally we would wish to see religious slaughter issues left to individual Member State discretion as is currently the case in relation to EU regulations on the welfare of animals at slaughter or killing.

JIM PAICE MP