

Briefing on food issues from PEN 19/03/14

In February 2014 the Danish Government instituted a ban on 'religious slaughter' on the grounds that animal rights come before religion.

26th February 2014 Danish Agriculture Minister, Dan Jørgensen met Chief Rabbi Bent Lexner, and Mr Finn Schwartz representing the Jewish community and someone from Halal Denmark representing the Muslim community. Mr Jørgensen apologised that he had not met with representatives of the communities before instituting the ban and accepted that he should have done so.

6th March 2014, the president-elect of the British Veterinary Association, John Blackwell, is interviewed on BBC Radio 4's today programme together with Mr Jonathan Arkush, vice president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews Mr Blackwell having said that Muslims and Jews should adopt more humane methods of killing animals. [Listen here](#) (or use <https://audioboo.fm/boos/1970537-reform-needed-on-kosher-and-halal-slaughter-practices>) 6mins

Also 6th March 2014 The Guardian carries an article on the same issues see <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/06/reform-of-kosher-and-halal-slaughter-practices>

9th March the [Joseph Interfaith Foundation](#) issued a statement in response to John Blackwell's comments <http://www.josephinterfaithfoundation.org/joseph-main/previous/attachments/Official%20statement%20on%20Halal%20&%20Kosher-09-03-14.pdf>

13th March article in The Tablet <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/features/2/1758/unkindest-cut-of-all->

Broadly Jews and Muslims argue that the whole point of shechita and dhabiha (the terms for the prescribed form of slaughter in Judaism and Islam respectively) is out of concern for animal welfare and respect for God's creation. They see the mechanised food industry as far less humane.

The debate centres on how much pain an animal experiences during slaughter and whether or not pre stunning is more humane. (Many scientists argue that under shechita, animals do not lose sensation instantly as claimed; Jewish and Muslim groups argue that the percentages of miss-stunning and other aspects of the process make mechanised slaughter far crueller.)

There is genuine belief and widespread teaching that under shechita and dhabiha an animal dies instantly without feeling pain. Hence any criticism may be perceived as an attack on the faith. Even calls for food labelling can be perceived in this way. However, lack of labelling has implications for others; Sikhs are forbidden to eat kosher or halal meat. Hence the advice is to always provide a vegetarian option where several faiths dine together eg events, school dinners, lunch clubs etc.

For more on shechita go to <http://www.shechitauk.org/>

The following RSCA link also gives details of UK law and religious slaughter <http://www.rspca.org.uk/ImageLocator/LocateAsset?asset=document&assetId=1232719611043&mode=prd>

For definition of dhabiha http://www.halalcateringco.com/halal_meat.asp & link to [Halal Food Authority](#)

Also see Christian Muslim Forum statement on Halal

http://www.christianmuslimforum.org/images/documents/halal_statement.pdf