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The Rt Hon Andrea Leadsom MP  
From the Secretary of State

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Rt Hon George Howarth MP  
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Dear George,

Thank you for your email of 15 February on behalf of a number of your constituents about welfare at time of slaughter.

The Government encourages the highest standards of welfare at slaughter and would prefer to see all animals stunned before they are slaughtered for food. However, we also respect the rights of the Jewish and Muslim communities to eat meat prepared in accordance with their religious beliefs. Current national regulations on religious slaughter have a long history. The issue was first debated in Parliament in 1875. The Slaughter of Animals Act 1933 introduced a legal requirement for stunning of animals prior to slaughter but contained an exemption where animals were slaughtered for Jews and Muslims. Over the years the national rules governing religious slaughter have developed to provide additional protection to animals that are slaughtered in accordance with religious rites.

With regard to CCTV in slaughterhouses, the Farm Animal Welfare Committee (FAWC) published, in February 2015, an independent assessment of the use of CCTV in slaughterhouses which concluded that CCTV can offer benefits but that it cannot replace the need for businesses to have proper monitoring procedures in place. FAWC did not recommend legislation. The vast majority of animals are already slaughtered in premises with CCTV but the Government is keeping the issue under review.

The Government is aware that there is public concern about meat from animals slaughtered in accordance with religious beliefs being sold to consumers who do not require their meat to be prepared in this way. There are no domestic or European Regulations that require the labelling of Halal or Kosher meat but where any information of this nature is provided, it must be accurate and must not be misleading to the consumer. The Government believes that consumers should have the necessary information available to them to make an informed choice about their food. The Government is studying the findings of the 2015 European Commission report and may take action if this is found to be necessary.

I hope that this reply is helpful.

Best wishes,

**Andrea Leadsom MP**  
**Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**