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The Rt Hon Fiona Mactaggart MP  
House of Commons  
London  
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Our ref: MC398267/GLH

19 February 2016

The Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP  
Secretary of State

Dear Fiona

Thank you for your letter of 15 February on behalf of your constituent, 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.

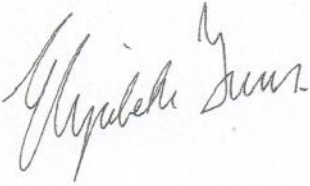
With regard to CCTV in slaughterhouses, the Farm Animal Welfare Committee (FAWC) published, in February 2015, an independent assessment of the use of CCTV in slaughterhouses which concluded that CCTV can offer benefits but that it cannot replace the need for businesses to have proper monitoring procedures in place. FAWC did not recommend legislation. In addition, the FSA estimates that 94% of cattle, 96% of pigs, 90% of sheep and 99% of poultry throughput now comes from premises with CCTV. The Government is therefore unconvinced of the need for further legislation at this time, but will keep the need for CCTV in slaughterhouses 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. We welcomed the findings of last year's European Commission report which looked into the labelling of meat and religious slaughter.

The report is a serious contribution to this debate. We are studying its findings and the Government will look forward to any proposals that come forward from the EU Commission.

Thank you again for your letter.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth Truss', written in a cursive style.

**Elizabeth Truss MP**  
**Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**