

## Animal Welfare and Good Governance in Halal Slaughtering

Noriah Ramli

International Institute for Halal Research and Training, IIUM  
Malaysia

### Abstract

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*Halal slaughtering is often associated with cruelty to animal. There has been a long debate on the animal welfare in halal slaughtering and certain countries have gone way too far by prohibiting halal slaughtering and labelled it as inhumane practice. Why is it regarded as inhumane and cruelty to animals? The attitude of certain countries is sometimes unacceptable to the Muslim communities. Denmark for instance being very rigid to the extend they banned halal slaughtering and even kosher slaughtering. Denmark's government has brought in a ban on the religious slaughter of animals for the production of halal and kosher meat, after years of campaigning from welfare activists. The reason is simply accusing halal slaughtering as cruelty to animal. Several questions we need to ask the so called animal activists: (1).What do they know about halal slaughtering? (2) do they know enough about halal slaughtering before advocating their ideas? (3) are they merely being emotional or perhaps being bias to the other segment of the community? (4) are they not sensitive enough to other religious requirements? In view of these, this paper aims at pointing and presenting to the readers the underlying good governance and best practices in halal slaughtering which will eradicate the negative thinking and perception that surrounds halal slaughtering.*

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**Key words:** halal slaughtering, good governance, best practices, animal welfare, inhumane

### Introduction

Islam is not just a belief system but a way of life, an identity, rights, and most importantly the way the Muslim lives their life. For this world we live in now, we practice our rights to be Muslim without interfering with any other religious belief. The life of a Muslim is highly regulated from the food that we eat, the clothes that we are wearing, the words that we said, and the moment we get into bed and to the very moment we open our eyes in the morning. Every act done is a form of worship and to be taken as fulfilment of one religious obligation. Similarly, eating halal food is *wajib* (obligatory) upon every Muslim and will be rewarded in this world and the hereafter and eating haram food is prohibited. For a Muslim to eat animal meat and animal meat based products it has to be slaughtered in the halal manner.

The world we live in is a home to several religious community, the Christian, Muslim, Hindus, Buddhist, and Judaism. We have to admit that this world is not populated by just one community with one religious belief, one lifestyle, and one religious practice. It is thus important to realise that it requires respect and tolerance in order to maintain peace and harmony amongst the various religious communities and to make this world a safe and harmonious place to live in. In this context one must be ready to acknowledge the presence of the other community and to learn to respect their belief system, religious practices and most importantly to tolerate their religious requirements. The second Preamble to the UN Declaration of Human Rights reads:

*“Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people.”*

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance. (Article 18, UN, Universal Declaration of Human Rights). To respect, to tolerate, and to understand the needs of other people are the key elements to this declaration of human rights.

### **Cruelty to Animal under the Malaysian Law**

Malaysia has in place a clear legal injunction that provides that provides for animal welfare. Section 43 of the Animal Act 1953 (Revised 2006) (Malaysia) define animal as any living creature other than a human being and includes any beast, bird, fish, reptile or insect, whether wild or tame. Section 44 of the Act 1953 provides that one is guilty of cruelty to animal and shall be subjected to fine or imprisonment if:

- (a) Cruelly beats, kicks, ill-treats, overrides, overdrives, overloads, tortures, infuriates or terrifies any animal;
- (b) Causes or procures or, being the owner, permits any animal to be so used;
- (c) being in charge of any animal in confinement or in course of transport from one place to another neglects to supply such animal with sufficient food or water;
- (d) by want only or unreasonably doing or omitting to do any act, causes any unnecessary pain or suffering, or, being the owner, permits any unnecessary pain or suffering to any animal;
- (e) causes, procures or, being the owner, permits to be confined, conveyed, lifted or carried any animal in such manner or position as to subject it to unnecessary pain or suffering;
- (f) employs or causes or procures or, being the owner, permits to be employed in any work or labour, any animal which in consequence of any disease, infirmity, wound or sore, or otherwise is unfit to be so employed; or
- (g) causes, procures or assists at the fighting or baiting of any animal, or keeps, uses, manages, or acts or assists in the management of any premises or place for the purpose, or partly for the purpose, of fighting or baiting any animal, or permits any premises or place to be so kept, managed or used, or receives or causes or procures any person to receive, money for the admission of any person to such premises or place.

However, section 44 (3) provides that commission or omission of any act in the course of the destruction, or the preparation for destruction, of any animal as food for mankind shall not be apply to cruelty to animals, unless such destruction or such preparation was accompanied by the infliction of unnecessary suffering. Hence, the act of halal slaughtering in Malaysia whether for religious, commercial, personal consumption or any festive season is not an offence and non-cruelty to animal. In a multi-racial and multi religious country like Malaysia respect to one religious practice is very important. This is very much in line with Article 18 United nation Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Thus for someone to simply say or making a remark that halal slaughtering is cruelty to animal is merely about being emotional and disrespect to the practice of the Muslim.

### **Good Animal Husbandry Practices and Animal Welfare**

The Department of Veterinary Services (DVS) Malaysia has been practicing Good Animal Husbandry at the farm level. This scheme is to ensure that the animals are raised in fulfilment of certain standard that ensures animals welfare at along the production line. Besides, it is also the aims to monitor safety and quality of the animal produce and thus fit for human consumption. Among others the Animal Husbandry Practices (GAHP) emphasised on the following components:

1. Adequate facilities to protect and shelter animals from weather extreme while protecting air and water quality in the natural environment;
2. Well-kept facilities to allow safe, humane, and efficient movement of animals;
3. Qualified and well trained personnel to care and handle each stage of production with no tolerance for mistreatment;
4. Access to good quality water and nutritionally balanced diet for each class of animals;
5. Making sure basic needs for food and water are being met and to detect illness or injury;
6. Developing herd health programme with veterinary advice;
7. Prompt veterinary medical attention whenever required;
8. Use humane method to euthanize sick or injured animals not responding to treatment and to dispose them properly;

9. To avoid undue stress during transportation caused by overcrowding, excess time in transit or improper handling during loading and unloading.

### **Good Governance in Halal Slaughtering**

Halal Slaughtering process of animal involves restraining, stunning (if used) and severing of trachea (*halqum*), oesophagus (*mari*) and both the carotid arteries and jugular veins (*wadajain*). It is a requirement that (i) it is the fundamental requirement for halal slaughtering that the slaughterman shall be a practicing Muslim who is sound mind, full age, fully understands the fundamental of halal slaughtering and conditions related to the slaughter of animals; be registered, trained and supervised by the Halal Certification Body; and competent in slaughtering the animal according to Shariah; (ii) the animal to be slaughtered shall be alive or deemed to be alive, healthy and have been approved by the competent authority. Unhealthy animal or unfit for slaughter shall be removed from halal slaughter line; (3). to ensure the slaughtering is smoothly done the slaughtering knife shall be sharp and clean, and the slaughtering shall be done only once. The “sawing action” of the slaughtering is permitted as long as the slaughtering knife is not lifted off the animal during the slaughtering; (4). for effective slaughtering operation the number of slaughter men shall be adequate to ensure that the act of halal slaughter is conducted properly on each animal; (5). It must be ensured that the animal is completely dead prior to dressing operation; and (6) carcass dressing operations can only be conducted once the animal is confirmed dead at the ‘determination of death.’ (Malaysia Standard MS 1500:2009 Halal Food-Production, Preparation, Handling, and Storage-General Guidelines).

### **Good Governance for Slaughtering of Livestock for *Qurban***

The Department of Veterinary Services (DVS) Malaysia has launched its Animal Slaughter (*Qurban*) Guidelines. These guidelines were formulated and introduced with an objective to coordinate, standardize, and harmonize the rules and requirements of slaughtering (*Qurban*) animals, so that worship could be performed in a more organized and structured. The guidelines were developed based on the existing regulations (Animal Act 1953 (Revised 2006); Animal Rules 2009; State Enactments and Government Gazette; and Local Authority By Laws) that focus on the animal welfare, slaughtering process, slaughtering method, animal waste management, transportation, storage, personal hygiene, and slaughter premise/house. The Guidelines emphasize on the importance of protecting the rights and welfare of animals prior to slaughtering to the points of distribution. Among others it emphasizes on the ethic (manners) when dealing with animals such as follows:

1. Water should be offered to the animal before slaughter, and it should not be slaughtered when hungry.
2. The knife should be hidden from the animal, and slaughtering should be done out of sight of other animals waiting to be slaughtered.
3. The animal must be slaughtered by the use of a sharp knife.
4. The slaughtering must be done in one stroke without lifting the knife. The knife should not be placed and lifted when slaughtering the animal.
5. Not to sharpen the knife in front of the animals;
6. Skinning or cutting any part of the animal is not allowed before the animal is completely dead.

### **Use of Stunning**

Stunning is not encouraged. However, if stunning is to be conducted it must be done in a manner prescribed by the Malaysia Standard. The standard prescribed the good practices to be followed in a way to ensure the animals are well taken care of or rather given the full respect at the point of death. Among others the act of stunning must be done in the following manner; (i). the use of other stunning methods is subject to approval by the Malaysian Fatwa Council decree; (ii). the method used shall be reversible stunning and shall not kill or cause permanent physical injury to the animal; (iii). if stunning is to be carried out the conditions specified in Annex A of the Malaysia Standard (MS) shall be complied with (Annex A1 for Electrical Stunning and Annex A2 for Pneumatic); (iv). the person who is responsible for the stunning operation (operation, control and monitoring) shall be trained in its use; (v). in order to ensure that the meat is fit for Muslim consumption the Muslim halal checker shall verify that the stunning operation is conducted according to the approved methods; and (vi). the slaughter men must ensure that the animals to be slaughtered are still alive for halal slaughter. (MS 1500:2009 Halal Food-Production, Preparation, Handling, and Storage-General Guidelines).

## Conclusion

The previous discussion suggests that halal slaughtering is not cruelty to animals. Animal welfare is indeed the underlying principles of halal slaughtering. A closer look at the law and the good governance in the halal slaughtering suggests that it is a highly regulated practice. The best practices also highlights that safety and quality are embedded in the halal slaughtering and thus produce something that fit and suitable for human consumption.

**MS 1500:2009**

### **Annex A** (normative)

#### **Requirements on the use of stunning in slaughter of ruminant and poultry**

##### **A1 General requirements**

- A1.1** Slaughtering shall be carried out according to the requirements related to the slaughter of animals in Islam.
- A1.2** The animal shall be alive or deemed to be alive (*hayat al-mustaqirrah*) at the time of slaughter.
- A1.3** Stunning is not recommended, however if stunning has to be carried out, the permitted methods are electrical or pneumatic percussive stunning.
- A1.4** The use of stunning equipment shall be under the supervision of a trained muslim and periodically monitored by competent authority.
- A1.5** The stunning shall not kill or cause permanent physical injury to the animal.
- A1.6** Stunners which are used to stun the animals under *mughallazah najs* category shall not be used to stun animals for *halal* slaughter.

##### **A2 Electrical stunning**

- A2.1** The electrical stunner shall be of the type allowed by the competent authority in charge of slaughter.
- A2.2** The type of stunner used for slaughter of *halal* animals shall be 'head only stunner' type, where both electrodes are placed on the head region.
- A2.3** Electrical stunning of poultry is allowed using "water bath stunner" only.
- A2.4** The strength of current used shall be supervised by a trained muslim and monitored by competent authority. The guidelines on stunning parameters are as specified in Tables A1 and A2.

**MS 1500:2009****Table A1. Guideline parameters for electrical stunning of chicken and bull**

Type of stock	Weight (kg)	Current (A)	Voltage (V)	Duration (s)
Chicken	2.40 - 2.70	0.20 - 0.60	2.50 - 10.50	3.00 - 5.00
Bull	300 - 400	2.50 - 3.50	300 - 310	3.00 - 5.00

NOTE: Electrical current, voltage and duration to be determined and validated by the organisation, taking into account the type and weight of the animal and other varying factors.

**Table A2. Guideline parameters for electrical stunning of other animals**

Type of stock	Current (A)	Duration (s)
Lamb	0.50 - 0.90	2.00 - 3.00
Goat	0.70 - 1.00	2.00 - 3.00
Sheep	0.70 - 1.20	2.00 - 3.00
Calf	0.50 - 1.50	3.00
Steer	1.50 - 2.50	2.00 - 3.00
Cow	2.00 - 3.00	2.50 - 3.50
Buffalo	2.50 - 3.50	3.00 - 4.00
Ostrich	0.75	10.00

NOTE: Electrical current and duration to be determined and validated by the organisation, taking into account the type and weight of the animal and other varying factors.

**A3 Pneumatic percussive stunner**

**A3.1** Pneumatic percussive stunning is only suitable for all bovine animals.

**A3.2** The air pressure that powers the stunner should not be more than 225 psi and should be kept to the minimum required to stun the animal.

**A3.3** The head of the stunner shall be flat or slightly convex.

**A3.4** There shall be a protective collar around head of the stunner so that it shouldn't protrude more than 3 mm beyond it.

## ***References***

Adam Withnall, Tuesday, 18 February 2014

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