

13 FEB 2019



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

David Rutley MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
for Food and Animal Welfare

T 03459 335577
defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/defra

Jo Swinson MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Your ref: JS5990
Our ref: MC2019/02359/FA

6 February 2019

Dear Jo,

Thank you for your email of 1 February to the Secretary of State on behalf of your constituent, about meat labelling. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

The Government encourages the highest standards of welfare at slaughter and would prefer to see all animals stunned before slaughter, but respects the rights of the Jewish and Muslim communities to eat meat prepared in accordance with their religious beliefs. There are no domestic or European Regulations that require the labelling of the method of slaughter, including whether meat is from animals that were stunned before slaughter or not, but where any information of this nature is provided on a voluntary basis, it must be accurate and must not be misleading to the consumer. The regulations that govern the clear labelling of food produce are: the General Food Law Regulation (EC) 178/2002; and the Food Information for Consumers Regulation (EU) 1169/2011.

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. The current legislation in England: The Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015 requires religious slaughter to be carried out by Muslims or Jews for the food of Muslims or Jews respectively. It is not a legal requirement that the meat from such animals can ultimately only be sold to, or consumed by, Muslims or Jews. The Government believes that consumers should have the necessary information available to them to make an informed choice about their food. This is an issue we shall be considering once we leave the EU.

Thank you once again for taking the time to contact me about this important issue.

With best wishes,

DAVID RUTLEY MP