

COMMENT



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NEW EU SLAUGHTER LAW WILL SEE SOME IMPROVEMENTS TO ANIMAL WELFARE

A proposed new EU Regulation on the welfare of animals at slaughter, published today by the European Commission, is largely good news for animal welfare but misses key reform for pigs, chickens and religious slaughter says Compassion in World Farming.

Commenting on the Regulation Peter Stevenson, Chief Policy Advisor of Compassion in World Farming said:

“Overall this Regulation will lead to some much needed improvements in slaughter – all slaughterhouses will have written standard operating procedures and have to appoint animal welfare officers and all slaughtermen will need certificates of competence.

“These are great steps forward, but we are disappointed that the EU has shied away from tackling some crucial issues.

“Carbon dioxide gas is used to kill millions of pigs every year despite scientific research showing that this method causes “severe respiratory distress” and pigs can be seen gasping and hyperventilating. The Regulation should have banned the use of high levels of carbon dioxide, but instead it has given the green light to the continued use of this unacceptable method.

”The Regulation will also do nothing to encourage a move away from electrical stunning for chickens – even though it is widely accepted that this system can lead to pain and distress and should be replaced by the use of non-aversive gases such as argon or nitrogen.

”Lastly the Regulation will continue to allow animals to be killed without prior stunning for religious slaughter. This means that animals have their throat cut while fully conscious - scientific research shows that this causes great suffering. Whilst we fully respect religious beliefs, this should not extend to permitting a slaughter method that causes pain and distress.”

“Pigs are hustled through modern abattoirs at the rate of 300 an hour and chickens at 8,000 an hour. At these speeds it’s difficult to safeguard the well being of individual animals. The proposed new Regulation will introduce real reforms though we hope that the European Parliament will vote to strengthen its areas of weakness,” concludes Peter Stevenson.

Notes

EU Press Release:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/1371&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Each year around 360 million pigs, cattle, sheep and goats are slaughtered in the EU – that’s around one million every day. In the UK around 27 million pigs, sheep and cattle are slaughtered each year. In addition about 5 billion chickens are slaughtered annually in the EU, of which over 800 million a year are slaughtered in the UK.

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