

Chicken slaughter by the Halal method in England and Wales.

NB this is an emerging issue; changes will be made to this briefing as new facts come to light.

1. Stunning parameters (mAmps/Hz) reported to be used for Halal lamb and beef are sufficient to ensure effective stunning and are in line with EU regulations.
2. Stunning parameters in use at the moment for Halal broilers are insufficient; the parameters used are likely to result in the bird being immobilized, not stunned. It has been reported to Compassion that the presently used current is 40-70mAmps, with a frequency of 400Hz
3. These parameters are not in line with the latest EU regulations which came into force in January 2013 *EU Regulation 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at time of killing.*
4. Extracts from the regulations:

Article 15

The following methods of restraint shall be prohibited:

d. the use of electric currents to immobilise the animal that do not stun or kill it under controlled circumstances, in particular, any electric current application that does not span the brain.

Table 1 — Minimum currents for head-only electrical stunning

Category of animals	Bovine animals of 6 months or older	Bovine animals less than 6 months	Animals of ovine and caprine species	Animals of porcine species	Chicken	Turkeys
Minimum current	1,28 A	1,25 A	1,00 A	1,30 A	240 mA	400 mA

Table 2 — Electrical requirements for waterbath stunning equipment

(average values per animal)

Frequency (Hz)	Chickens	Turkeys	Ducks and geese	Quails
< 200 Hz	100 mA	250 mA	130 mA	45 mA
From 200 to 400 Hz	150 mA	400 mA	Not permitted	Not permitted
From 400 to 1 500 Hz	200 mA	400 mA	Not permitted	Not permitted

(18) Derogation from stunning in case of religious slaughter taking place in slaughterhouses was granted by Directive 93/119/EC. Since Community provisions applicable to religious slaughter have been transposed differently depending on national contexts and considering that national rules take into account dimensions that go beyond the purpose of this Regulation, it is important that derogation from stunning animals prior to slaughter should be maintained, leaving, however, a certain level of subsidiarity to each Member State. As a consequence, this Regulation respects the freedom of religion and the right to manifest religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance, as enshrined in Article 10 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

Article 30

Entry into force

This Regulation shall enter into force on the 20th day following its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

It shall apply from 1 January 2013.

5. The EU regulations are the law, breaching them is illegal. However, there is a lack of clarity about how they are enforced.
6. The government was poised to introduce new rules *Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing* (known and WATOK) which would have enabled enforcement.
7. However, on 19th May 2014 Defra revoked (19th May 2014) the new WATOK rules in England and Wales. The situation in Scotland and Northern Ireland, in terms of enforcement is less clear.
8. Defra's decision follows a request for a judicial review from the meat industry
http://www.meatinfo.co.uk/news/fullstory.php/aid/16985/Defra_withdraws_stun_legislation_at_11th_hour.html.
9. Not only are the present parameters for Halal slaughter of chicken illegal under EU law but Defra's decision means that there is a question-mark over whether a) they can be and b) will be enforced.
10. We have called for an urgent explanation Defra of their plans to enforce the regulation with a view to making an official complaint to the European Commission. This could be to complain that Defra are not upholding the legislation.

11. For higher frequency stunning up to 1,500 Hz, EU regulations require a minimum current of 200mAmps.
12. The science suggests a current of 200 mAmps effectively stuns birds up to a frequency of 800Hz
13. To be humane, an effective stun must keep an animal unconscious until the time that s/he has died from blood loss. Our understanding is that to be consistent with Halal, the animal must still be alive at the moment of throat cutting. We believe this is interpreted by the Halal Food Authority as requiring all birds to be capable of coming round from the stun and regaining consciousness.
14. A study has been carried out to see what combinations of currents and frequencies within EU regulations can achieve the Halal requirements. <https://peerj.com/preprints/255/>
15. Halal slaughterhouses currently use waterbath stunning. Alternative stunning methods include direct head stunning or gas stunning