

IS YOUR QURBANI/UDHIYYAH FIT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION?

By Dr Yunes Teinaz,
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At Eid-ul-Adha, more cases of food poisoning are reported than at any other time of year, and more illegal meat sold to the Muslim community, with animals illegally slaughtered for Qurbani without going through public health control.

These can not only spoil the celebrations, but can be potentially life threatening, especially for people who may be particularly vulnerable, such as, young children, pregnant women, the elderly, and anyone whose resistance may be low because they are ill.

Food can get contaminated at any stage in the food chain: buying, shopping, storage, preparation and cooking of food.

Many cases of food poisoning occur because people do not know, or do not put into practice, the basic food safety rules, called 'the four Cs'. These are:

- Cross contamination
- Cleaning
- Cooking
- Cooling

Cross contamination

Avoid contaminating cooked food with germs from raw food. (Cross contamination).

Wash hands before handling food, and especially after going to the toilet or changing a baby's nappy, after handling raw meat, poultry or eggs, after touching pets, after handling refuse, and after blowing your nose.

After preparing raw food, especially raw meat, wash everything that it has touched: knives, equipment, worktops, dishcloths.

Cover septic cuts, wounds and boils with a waterproof plaster.

Keep pets out of the kitchen and off of food preparation surfaces.

Store raw foods in the fridge below cooked food.

Check that the food is in date, especially the 'use by' dates.

Wash raw vegetables and salads, which will not be cooked before eating

Cleaning

Clean as you go.

Wash dishcloths thoroughly and often. Soak them overnight in bleach.

Cooking

Cook turkeys, chickens, and burgers thoroughly, until the juices run clear.

Cook eggs well. Avoid lightly-cooked dishes containing eggs.

Follow cooking instructions, especially the cooking time and temperature.

If reheating any left-over food, make sure it is piping hot before serving.

Cooling

Check the temperature of the fridge. It should be below 8°C.

Don't prepare perishable food too far in advance, and minimise the time food is kept at room temperature.

Cool any left-over food quickly and put it in the fridge. E.g. Put the roast meat in a cold clean place to cool down. Or divide the food into small portions. The safest rule is: "If in doubt – throw it out!"

Eating out

If you have concerns about a restaurant, take-away or food shop report them to your local authority's Environmental Health. They will investigate your concerns and take action where appropriate.

Qurbani/Udhia

The law now permits Qurbani / Udhia to be made:

By a licensed Muslim slaughterman, by the Islamic method, and in a licensed slaughterhouse which is under official veterinary supervision.

Qurbani / Udhia is not permitted in fields or in farm buildings or in domestic or other premises.

Muslims who wish to make Qurbani / Udhia are encouraged to make arrangements with reputable suppliers in good time before Eid-ul-Adha.

Halal Slaughter

Suppliers and consumers of halal meat are reminded that the statute law (The Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations 1995 (Statutory Instrument (SI) No 1995/731 as amended by SI No 1999/400) permits slaughter by the Islamic method to be done without stunning: By a licensed Muslim slaughterman in a licensed abattoir or licensed poultry slaughterhouse which is under official veterinary supervision (or in other officially regulated poultry slaughterhouses)

Slaughter is not permitted in any other place, even for personal consumption.

Only cattle, sheep, goats, turkeys, chickens, hens, guinea-fowl, ducks, geese and quail may be slaughtered using the Islamic method of Al-Dabh (slaughtering).

By being aware of potential risks, and following good hygiene practices, you can effectively minimize the risk of food poisoning - and maximise your chances of a happy holiday.

For additional food safety advice visit the Food Standards Agency's web site at: www.food.gov.uk

If you have any queries about Qurbani/Udhia, please call the Defra Helpline on 08459 33 55 77.