

## **IS ISLAMIC SLAUGHTERING CRUEL TO ANIMALS?**

By Dr. Aisha EI-Awady - 02/02/2003

Islam's stance on what is permissible to eat and what is not is clear. There are strict rules when it comes to meat regarding what is allowed and what is forbidden. In Surat Al-Maida (The Table) Allah says:

**"Forbidden to you (for food) are: AI-Maytatah (the dead animals -cattle-beasts not slaughtered), blood, the flesh of swine and the meat of that which has been slaughtered as a sacrifice for others than Allah or has been slaughtered for idols etc, or on which Allah's Name has not been mentioned while slaughtering and that which has been killed by strangling or by a violent blow or by a headlong fall or by the goring of horns - and that which has been (partly) eaten by a wild animal - unless you are able to slaughter it(before its death) and that which is sacrificed (slaughtered) on AnNusub (stone altars). [Forbidden] also is to use arrows seeking luck or decision, [all] that is Fisqun (disobedience of Allah and sin). This day, those who disbelieved have given up all hope of your religion, so fear them not (but fear Me. This day, I have perfected your religion for you completed My Favor upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion. But as for him who is forced by severe hunger, with no inclination to sin [such can eat these above-mentioned meats], then surely, Allah is All Forgiving, Most Merciful".**

The Islamic practice of slaughtering animals by means of a sharp cut to the front of the neck has frequently come under attack by some animal rights activists as being a form of animal cruelty, the claim being that it is a painful inhumane method of killing animals. In the West, it is required by law to stun the animals with a shot to the head before the slaughter, supposedly to render the animal unconscious and to prevent it from reviving before it is killed so as not to slow down the movement of the processing line. It is also used to prevent the animal from feeling pain before it dies.

### **German Research Studies Pain**

It therefore may come as a surprise to those who have made such acclimations to learn of the results of a- study carried out by Professor Wilhelm-Schulze and his colleague Dr. Hazim at the School of Veterinary Medicine, Hannover University in Germany. The study: 'Attempts to Objectify Pain and Consciousness in

Conventional (captive bolt pistol stunning) and Ritual (Halal, knife) Methods of Slaughtering Sheep and Calves' concludes that Islamic slaughtering is the most humane method of slaughter and that captive bolt stunning, practiced in the West, causes severe pain to the animal.

In the study, several electrodes were surgically implanted at various points of the skull of all animals, touching the surface of the brain. The animals were allowed to recover for several weeks. Some animals were then slaughtered by making a swift, deep incision with a sharp knife on the neck cutting the jugular veins and the carotid arteries as well as the trachea and esophagus (Islamic method). Other animals were stunned using a Captive Bolt Pistol (CBP). During the experiment, an electroencephalograph (EEG) and an electrocardiogram (ECG) recorded the condition of the brain and the heart of all animals during the course of slaughter and stunning.

The results were as follows:

#### I - ISLAMIC METHOD

The first three seconds from the time of Islamic slaughter as recorded on the EEG did not show any change from the graph before slaughter, thus indicating that the animal did not feel any pain during or immediately after the incision.

For the following 3 seconds, the EEG recorded a condition of deep sleep - unconsciousness. This is due to the large quantity of blood gushing out from the body.

After the above-mentioned 6 seconds, the EEG recorded zero level, showing no feeling of pain at all.

As the brain message (EEG) dropped to zero level, the heart was still pounding and the body convulsing vigorously (a reflex action of the spinal cord) driving a maximum amount of blood from the body thus resulting in hygienic meat-for the consumer.

#### II - WESTERN METHOD BY C.B.P. STUNNING

The animals were apparently unconscious soon after stunning.

EEG showed severe pain immediately after stunning.

The hearts of animals stunned by C.B.P. stopped beating earlier as compared to those of the animals slaughtered according to the Islamic method resulting in the retention of more blood in the meat. This in turn is unhygienic for the consumer.

#### Western-Style Slaughtering and Mad Cow's Disease

**Not only is this method** of stunning animals before the slaughter severely painful as shown by the previous experiment, but there is

also a rising concern that this method may be a factor in the spread of mad cow's disease from cattle to humans as it was discovered in recent research carried out at Texas A&M University and by Canada's Food Inspection Agency, that a method called pneumatic stunning (which is the firing of a metal bolt into the cow's brain followed by a pulverizing burst of 150 pounds of air pressure) delivered a force so explosive that it scattered brain tissue throughout the animal. This news is disturbing since the brain tissue and spinal cord are the most infectious parts of an animal with mad cow disease, which causes fatal Swiss cheese like holes in the brain of the infected animal. It is more disturbing to find out that around 30 to 40 percent of American cattle are stunned by pneumatic guns.

### Islamic Regulations for the Slaughter

As one can see from the previous studies, Islamic slaughtering of animals is a blessing to both the animal and to humans alike. In order for the slaughtering to be lawful, several measures must be taken by the one performing the deed. This is to ensure the highest benefit to both the animal and the consumer. In this regard, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "God calls for mercy in everything, so be merciful when you kill and when you slaughter: sharpen your blade to relieve its pain".

The object used to slaughter the animal should be sharp and used swiftly. The swift cutting of vessels of the neck disconnects the flow of blood to the nerves in the brain responsible for pain. Thus the animal does not feel pain. The movements and withering that happen to the animal after the cut is made are not due to pain, but due to the contraction and relaxation of the muscles deficient in blood. The prophet (peace be upon him) also taught Muslims neither to sharpen the blade of the knife in front of the animal nor to slaughter an animal in front of others of its own kind.

The cut should involve the windpipe (trachea), gullet (esophagus), and the two jugular veins without cutting the spinal cord. This method results in the rapid gush of blood draining most of it from the animal's body. If the spinal cord is cut, the nerve fibers to the heart might be damaged leading to cardiac arrest thus resulting in stagnation of blood in the blood vessels. The blood must be drained completely before the head is removed. This purifies the meat by removing most of the blood that acts as a medium for microorganisms; meat also remains fresh longer as compared to other methods of slaughtering.

Therefore accusations of animal cruelty should very rightly be focused on those who do not use the Islamic way of slaughtering but prefer to use those methods which cause pain and agony to the

animal and could also very well cause harm to those consuming the meat.