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יהודי אוסטרליה

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18 September 2009

Richard Bolt
Secretary
Department of Primary Industries
GPO Box 4440
Melbourne Victoria 3001

By email: richard.bolt@dpi.vic.gov.au

Dear Mr Bolt

Re: Kosher Slaughter

Thank you for your letter of 11 September 2009 the contents of which have been noted.

Dealing with the recent NZ research (dated 14 July 2009) upon which you rely, we make the following observations:

No Sheep

- 1) None of the NZ research was conducted on sheep.
- 2) The research appears to have been conducted on (bovine) calves weighing 125-178 kilograms (the Gibson et al 2007 Study); or 109-162 kilograms (the Gibson et al 2009 Sticking Without Prior Stunning Study); or 109-144 kilograms (the Gibson et al 2009 Stunning Study); or 134-207 kilograms (the Gibson et al 2009 Sticking and Stunning Study).
- 3) Ovine *shechita* is performed in Australia on lambs/hoggets generally of 16-26 kilograms dressed weight (see our 6 February 2009 letter to Nicole Hinder).

Pain

- 4) The study does not conclude that neck-cut slaughter of conscious animals (let alone sheep) would cause “**considerable pain during the period before the animal becomes insensible**”, as stated in your letter, rather it states: that is “*likely to cause pain*” (page 2 of the Executive Summary); “*pain may be experienced after the neck cut*” (paragraph 2); and “*is likely to cause pain*” (Overall Conclusions).
- 5) The fact that neck cut slaughter in non-stunned sheep may cause some pain, is not controversial. The real issue is the type and intensity of pain and whether it causes significant distress. The NZ research does not shed light on that issue.
- 6) The degree or intensity of pain is vitally important and there appears to be a connection between the degree of pain and the amount and type of tissue injury.
- 7) There is a difference in “*morphology*”, or the exact structure of these tissues, between sheep and cattle. Skin is one major difference. The haired skin of cattle is thick, tough and relatively hard to cut. The skin of sheep bears wool and is thin, soft and relatively easy to cut. The extent of damage to tissue is likely to be proportional to the ease with which that tissue is cut.
- 8) Additionally in *shechita*, the lamb’s neck area is shaved or clipped prior to cutting to remove wool from the site to facilitate the act of cutting (see Nicola Hinder email 29 January 2009).
- 9) Another important difference may be the layout of the blood supply to the brain through the carotid arteries and the vertebral arteries. The vertebral arteries are not transected during throat cutting of sheep and cattle. The blood supply via the vertebral arteries of cattle, but not sheep, can sustain consciousness for a relatively long period in animals where the carotid arteries have been cut.

Time to Insensibility

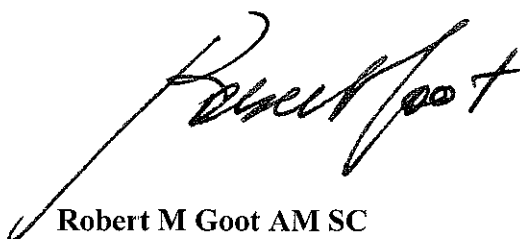
- 10) The NZ research does not appear to bear out the conclusion that “*a significant proportion of non-stunned ovines will experience this period of pain for **at least 8 seconds** following neck cut*”, as stated in your letter, rather it states that: the shortest estimate (for calves, not ovine) is “*2-8 seconds*” (page 1 of the Executive Summary); “*at least 2-8 seconds*” (page 2 of the Executive Summary); and “*at least 2-8 seconds*” (Overall Conclusions).
- 11) The NZ research itself indicates that there can be “*no unequivocal estimate of the interval to insensibility*” (page 1 of the Executive Summary), and “*the duration of this period of risk is not currently known with certainty*” (Overall Conclusions).

General

- 12) In your letter you advise that the neck cut was made with an “*exceptionally sharp, long bladed knife, cutting the neck with a swift even stroke, followed by a free bleed-out*”. That information (which we note does not appear in either of the two Gibson et al studies involving cutting), is nevertheless insufficient to determine whether the process was the same as the *shechita* process.
- 13) However, even assuming that the approach adopted in the NZ research was, as you state in your letter, we wish to record that neither the ECAJ nor the ORA accept that the slaughter of sheep by people (who may or may not use the *shechita* method), but who are not experienced *shochetim*, can in any way form a scientific basis for evaluating the physiological effects on sheep which are slaughtered by persons who are experienced *shochetim*.
- 14) The only proper scientific basis for evaluating those effects on sheep by *shechita* method, is to time the period between neck cut and insensibility for sheep that are slaughtered by experienced *shochetim*. All such research to date has confirmed the practical experience that, the period is considerably shorter than the “*at least 8 seconds*” period to which you refer.
- 15) We reiterate the recognition of an alternative view in the NZ research, that “*significant pain may be avoided with the use of an extremely sharp knife with a swift, clean incision followed by a free bleed out*”. In that respect we maintain the view that, as Professor Temple Grandin concludes, from an animal welfare stand point, *shechita* of ovine without post neck cut stunning, is acceptable.

We request that this letter be made available to members of the Animal Welfare and Product Integrity Task Force, before it next meets.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert M Goot', written in a cursive style.

Robert M Goot AM SC
President