

CCTV in Slaughterhouses

Following its investigation into nine randomly chosen abattoirs, Animal Aid is calling for the compulsory installation of CCTV cameras in all British slaughterhouses.

In eight of the nine slaughterhouses filmed using covert fly-on-the-wall cameras, Animal Aid found breaches of the welfare laws. That is an 89 per cent failure rate. This is despite the fact that Official Veterinarians, who are supplied by the Food Standards Agency (FSA), and paid for jointly by industry and taxpayers, are present in all slaughterhouses in order to uphold laws and protect animals.

Our investigations show that the current system utterly fails to protect animals.

Legal Breaches and Animal Suffering

Animal Aid secretly filmed: pigs burnt with cigarettes; animals punched, kicked, goaded, beaten, dragged by their ears and tails, and picked up by their fleeces and thrown into the stun pen; animals being deliberately given electric shocks through their tails, legs, ears, snouts and open mouths; animals going to the knife without adequate stunning; animals stunned and then allowed to come round again; bodged and multiple stuns; ewes being stunned while a lamb suckled them; ewes watching as their lambs were killed; a sheep too sick to stand – or possibly already dead – being brought to slaughter in a wheelbarrow; seriously injured pigs forced to drag themselves through the slaughterhouse; pigs falling from slaughter lines into blood pits and being dragged out and re-shackled while other pigs looked on; an inadequately stunned calf kicking on the floor while the stun operator stood on him to keep him still; animals screaming and struggling to escape; animals being kicked in the face, slapped and thrown to the floor; sheep being decapitated while still alive; a bovine stunning pen without the compulsory head shelf fitted, which caused misplaced stuns and additional suffering; and animals left in the stunning pens for up to three hours before being stunned.

System Failure

It is legitimate to ask the question: *If the FSA's vets are in all slaughterhouses whenever animals are being stunned and killed, why were such legal breaches, bad practice and additional suffering not detected and stopped?*

One reason is that vets do not see these failures because they are not actually present at the time of stunning and slaughter. By law, the vet must only be



A calf continues to thrash about after stunning

on the premises, not necessarily where the animals are being 'processed'. However, any reasonable person would expect that the vet would spend part of every day in the stunning pen and on the slaughter line to monitor these activities. In 240 hours of film taken by Animal Aid throughout entire days in nine slaughterhouses, we have seen only one vet once, checking three dead animals. We have never seen a vet anywhere near live animals.

It is clear that they either do not know what is going on, or they are turning a blind eye to breaches and abuses.

Barrier to Enforcement: Bullying and Intimidation

There are significant stresses and tensions between vets and slaughterhouse staff. Workers resent being watched over, corrected, reprimanded and recommended for retraining or prosecution. We know of cases where FSA workers have been bullied and threatened, and have had to endure 'pranks' such as their boots being filled with blood or offal thrown at them.

According to a 2008 survey by the union UNISON, bullying of FSA workers (then part of the Meat Hygiene Service – MHS) is rife. Of the 367 responses, 83 per cent came from meat hygiene inspectors, another five per cent from senior meat hygiene inspectors and one per cent from Official Veterinarians working in abattoirs.



A very sick, or already dead, sheep is stunned

The survey asked:

Have you witnessed bullying or harassment at work?

Yes	73%
No	27%

Have you been bullied or subject to harassment at work?

Yes	57%
No	43%

How confident are you that the MHS would deal fairly with a complaint about bullying?

Very	8%
Not very	41%
Not at all	40%

When asked who was bullying them, 52 per cent of those questioned said it was abattoir owners and workers.

In 2008, a BBC *Week In Week Out* special filmed undercover at three Welsh abattoirs and exposed a high rate of faecal contamination of meat, which was passed as 'fit for human consumption'. In that programme, a slaughterhouse vet, not knowing that he was being recorded, said: 'We have the right to recommend somebody for prosecution, maybe the lairage man, maybe the manager, maybe whoever we want... but basically we don't. We talk and that's it because we don't want enemies... We are hated in many plants, very hated.'

The Case for CCTV

Animal Aid's cameras filmed the same events that CCTV cameras would have filmed, and without our monitoring the many widespread and serious breaches of welfare laws would have gone undetected. The slaughterhouses we visited were randomly chosen. We were not directed to them because they were the worst. In fact, two were approved by the Soil Association and another by the RSPCA's Freedom Food scheme and should, therefore, have had higher standards than most. Because of the random sampling, we feel that what we have filmed is not out

of the ordinary and that such complacency, illegality and cruelty are commonplace in UK slaughterhouses.

Installing CCTV cameras would allow consistent monitoring of slaughtermen without the problems associated with FSA vets and inspectors being present at all times. It would mean that any and every slaughterhouse could be assessed at any time.

If workers knew they were being filmed, it would encourage them to adhere to the law, and the film would provide evidence for the prosecution of those who didn't. It would also help with training and retraining, not just of abattoir workers, but of vets as well. In fact, Animal Aid's undercover footage is already being used by Bristol University to train slaughterhouse staff and vets.

It is obviously not possible for every minute of every film inside every slaughterhouse to be viewed but if specified independent bodies and agencies could request to see a randomly chosen segment, this could significantly reduce wanton cruelty and bad practice.

Who Would See the Film?

On-site vets should be allowed to request sections of the film but since they have been shown to be deficient, access to the films must not stop with them. The films should be made available to an independent panel, including a welfare representative and an independent vet, as well as to the FSA's management and legal teams.



A sheep is dragged to slaughter by her fleece

The Campaign for CCTV

In February 2010, Animal Aid approached Defra – the government department responsible for welfare in slaughterhouses – to request that it makes CCTV mandatory. It said that it cannot do this under the new EU Regulation, which is due to come into effect in January 2013, and also strongly implied that it is similarly not possible under the current law.

Animal Aid has discovered that this is not the case. In June 2011, Animal Aid asked the European Commission whether the new law (EC 1099/2009) precludes Member States from requiring abattoirs to install CCTV cameras.

The Commission replied that, although the law does not require CCTV, '[i]t is in the domain of the competent authorities of the Member States to take



A pig is given a painful electric shock

the necessary measures in order to ensure compliance with the requirements of EU legislation.' In other words, the UK government can take whatever steps it deems necessary to ensure slaughterhouses comply with the new law. It can demand the installation of CCTV if it so chooses.

CCTV Installation to Date

After the government refused to take action on CCTV, Animal Aid called upon the major supermarkets to insist that their slaughterhouse suppliers all have independently monitored CCTV. They saw the benefit of such a move and now ten major supermarkets – Asda, Aldi, the Co-operative, Iceland, Lidl, Marks & Spencer, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose – along with wholesalers Booker, have all signed up. We estimate that this leaves around 20 per cent of slaughterhouses without CCTV.

Support for CCTV

Animal Aid is not alone in calling for CCTV to be installed in slaughterhouses. Since our campaign began, we have gathered support from:

- * The Food Standards Agency
- * The RSPCA
- * Compassion in World Farming
- * The Soil Association
- * Many vets, MPs and members of the public
- * ... as well as all leading supermarkets

CCTV in the Workplace

CCTV is commonly found in places of work, for the protection of workers and the public, and to deter crime. While some people will advance an argument that it infringes an individuals' rights to privacy, we feel its use is justifiable – indeed, essential – to protect animals from avoidable suffering in abattoirs, especially in light of the routine breaches of the law that Animal Aid has uncovered. As we have seen, an estimated 80 per cent of slaughterhouses have already committed to installing CCTV.

The Law

In its 2008 CCTV Code of Practice, the Information Commission states: 'In some cases, it may be appropriate to install CCTV specifically for workforce monitoring.'

Before installing CCTV, the Information Commission suggests employers ask themselves:

- *Is CCTV limited to areas which workers would not expect to be private?*
- *Are workers made aware that the CCTV is for staff monitoring, and of how it will be used?*
- *If CCTV is used to enforce internal policies, are workers fully aware of these policies and have they had sufficient training?*

CCTV Restrictions

Cameras and listening devices should not be installed in private areas such as toilets and private offices, except in the most exceptional circumstances where serious crime is suspected.

While there are guidelines to be taken into consideration, there are no legal reasons why CCTV cannot be installed in slaughterhouses.



A pig is punched in the head