



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Agriculture**

**SENATE ECONOMICS COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO THIRD PARTY CERTIFICATION OF FOOD**

**RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE BY THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**4 SEPTEMBER 2015**

**Question 1**

**Senator BERNARDI:** That is obviously where it came from. Can you tell me how many cases there have been where the monthly report [of an Approved Organic Certifying Organisation (AOCO)] has not been complied with?

**Response**

Monthly reporting has been fully complied with by AOCOs.

**Question 2**

**CHAIR:** That list seems like it changes from time to time. I assume some of the [Approved Islamic Organisations] go in and out of business. Have you ever deregistered one of them?

**Response**

The Department of Agriculture has not revoked the accreditation of any Approved Islamic Organisations.

**Question 3**

**Senator BERNARDI:** I just want to know the facts, whether all the livestock are stunned, which is what I understood you said earlier—and I am getting some clarification of it here—and when the stunning takes place, after the ritual cut or the throat is cut. I will tell you why. A lot of people tell me there is just a little nick on the throat, then they are stunning and then they are killed. Other people tell me that they have their throat slashed and then they are stunned. Others tell me that they are stunned and then they are cut. I do not know what the answer is.

**Response**

The overwhelming majority of animals slaughtered for the production of meat in Australia are stunned prior to slaughter. Ritual slaughter of cattle and sheep, where the throat may be cut without prior stunning, can be conducted under very limited and controlled circumstances.

The *Australian Standard for the Hygienic Production and Transportation of Meat and Meat Products for Human Consumption* outlines strict animal welfare standards for the handling and slaughter of animals. Under the standard, all animals must be treated in a way that prevents unnecessary injury, pain and suffering to them and causes them the least practical disturbance. For ritual slaughter, procedures must be described and agreed to within an establishment's Approved Arrangement; and, if an animal is not rendered unconscious as part of ritual slaughter, it must be stunned without delay. Regulatory controls over all slaughter, including the ritual slaughter of sheep and cattle without prior stunning at Australian export registered establishments, are consistent with international World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) guidelines.

Currently, three export registered establishments hold approval to conduct ritual slaughter, with only one operating under the direct supervision of the department. At this establishment, ritual slaughter is overseen by a departmental on-plant veterinarian to ensure compliance with animal welfare requirements, with senior departmental veterinarians undertaking regular compliance checks to verify that procedures are being carried out correctly. This establishment has approval to conduct ritual slaughter of lambs and sheep to supply kosher meat to the domestic and export markets, with animals slaughtered without prior stunning.

The other two establishments are overseen by Primesafe in Victoria:

- One establishment has approval to undertake ritual slaughter for the supply of halal lamb to one export market and kosher lamb, sheepmeat and beef to the domestic market. In the past, it has also supplied kosher lamb meat to the export market. When undertaking ritual slaughter at this establishment, lambs and sheep are slaughtered without prior stunning, while cattle slaughtered for the kosher market are stunned immediately after the throat cut.
- The other establishment has a provision in its approved arrangement to undertake ritual slaughter of sheep and lambs; however it has not done so for many years and has indicated it is highly unlikely to do so again in the future.

In 2007, a moratorium was declared on new licences permitting the ritual slaughter of animals at export registered establishments. This moratorium is still in place and no new approvals for the ritual slaughter of sheep or cattle without stunning have been issued by the department for export registered establishments since August 2007.

The department does not have regulatory oversight of domestic-only meat processing establishments and is unable to provide information about whether ritual slaughter is undertaken at these establishments.