

David Byrne  
Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection  
DG XXIV  
European Commission  
Rue De la Loi 200  
B-1049 Brussels

November 1999

Dear Commissioner Byrne,

I have recently seen a video filmed by investigators from Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) and La Protection Mondiale des Animaux de Ferme at this year's Eid-el-Kabir festival in France.

The film highlights the immense cruelty inflicted on sheep during this festival. It is clear from the video that many of the sheep are ritually slaughtered, i.e. are slaughtered without first being stunned. This is in breach of Council Directive 93/119 on the protection of animals at the time of slaughter or killing. For several years now, Franz Fischler has made it clear that this directive prohibits outdoor religious slaughter, i.e. religious slaughter must be carried out in an abattoir.

I enclose a copy of the video referred to above. I would be grateful if you would watch this. I would also be grateful if you could let me know what steps the Commission proposes to take to ensure that the law prohibiting outdoor religious slaughter is observed at next year's Eid-el-Kabir festival in France.

In addition to this fundamental breach of the Directive in carrying out religious slaughter outdoors, the video shows that the pre-slaughter handling of the sheep is commonly both cruel and illegal. Article 3 of the Directive stipulates that "Animals shall be spared any avoidable excitement, pain or suffering during movement...restraint...slaughter". The film shows that this provision was regularly breached during this year's Eid-el-Kabir festival. In particular:

- a) The animals were often handled in an extremely rough manner as they were taken to the slaughter point.
- b) Some sheep were hog-tied, i.e. their front and back legs were tied together to prevent them from escaping. In some cases they were left tied like this for long periods before being killed.
- c) Much of the slaughter was carried out by untrained people who clearly had little idea of how to slaughter an animal. In many cases they sawed backwards and forwards across the animal's throat, often with a blunt knife. As a result of these inept slaughter methods, in some cases the animals took a long time-even several minutes- to die, often in great distress and agony.

Yours sincerely

Dr Caroline Lucas MEP