

IN RESPONSE TO: "SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON KOSHER SLAUGHTER"

We at PETA agree with Rabbi Genack that shechitah, done correctly, is less cruel than other slaughter methods in the U.S. ("Setting the Record Straight on Kosher Slaughter"). This is precisely our point in stating that what had been happening at AgriProcessors for years was not properly conducted shechitah, as is clear to anyone who reviews our investigative documents and video (which readers can do for themselves at GoVeg.com).

To echo the words of Rabbi Barry Schwartz of the Central Conference of American Rabbis' Task Force on Kashrut, "The suffering of these animals during slaughter is sickening. Death is neither quick nor merciful. If this is kosher, then we have a big problem."

Over the seven weeks that our investigator worked at AgriProcessors, one-quarter of the animals in our sample were still conscious after they had been dumped from the restraint and roughly one minute after their throats had been cut. Extrapolated to the 18,000 animals killed during this time, any statistician will tell you that thousands of animals suffered the same fate during this brief period at AgriProcessors. We have eyewitness testimony going back almost 10 years confirming that the abuse we documented has been the norm at AgriProcessors.

AgriProcessors has not been able to find one scientist, animal welfare expert, or veterinarian willing to defend the shoddy slaughter practices that we documented. To reiterate: One hundred percent of animal welfare scientists, veterinarians, and animal welfare experts who have reviewed this investigation have condemned AgriProcessors for cruelty.

As just two examples: Dr. Temple Grandin, consultant to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the American Meat Institute, stated, "[I]t was the most disgusting thing I'd ever seen." Dr. Lester Friedlander, a former USDA kosher slaughter inspector, wrote, "The footage captured by PETA represents the most egregious violation of the USDA Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (HMSA) I have ever witnessed."

A growing number of rabbis are also weighing in, including the president of The Rabbinical Assembly, Rabbi Perry Raphael Rank, who wrote, "When a company purporting to be kosher violates the prohibition against *tza'ar ba'alei hayyim*, causing pain to one of God's living creatures, that company must answer to the Jewish community, and ultimately, to God."

Yes, AgriProcessors has made some improvements that have allowed the workers to kill animals properly while being watched. We are encouraged by these changes. However, they only prove our point: AgriProcessors can do shechitah correctly but chose not to.

In order to ensure that AgriProcessors and other plants certified by the OU and KAJ are operating at the laudable levels expected by these organizations, comprehensive and publicly available guidelines should be implemented and enforced. Working with scientists, rather than against them, seems the wisest course of action for any person or organization dedicated to ensuring the kindest treatment possible.

We encourage readers to learn more about our investigation, watch the video, and read our full replies to AgriProcessors and the OU, at GoVeg.com. For information on Judaism and vegetarianism, please visit the Web site run by the Jewish Vegetarians of North America at www.JewishVeg.com.

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