

Inspection of Yilkay Mezbahasi slaughterhouse, Bursa (TR) June 12, 2013



SUMMARY:

Since 2010 teams from Animal Welfare Foundation and Eyes on Animals have regularly been at the EU/Turkey border, inspecting cattle and sheep trucks from the EU heading towards slaughterhouses in Turkey. A combination of exporters and transporters cheating and border bureaucracy lead to hours, days and even weeks of animals waiting on board vehicles at the border. Some improvements have been achieved with stricter enforcement and private provisional control posts being set up on the Turkish side. This time we wanted to see what the welfare conditions were like for the animals once they arrived at the slaughterhouses in Turkey. As at the moment the price of EU animals is high, there was little traffic of slaughter animals coming from the EU. Nevertheless we purposefully visited slaughterhouses where many EU animals had ended up slaughtered in the past. Yilkay Mezbahasi was one of them. Conditions inside are very worrisome, with animals slipping and falling and hollering out from pain. The design of the raceway and the chute is not in accordance with the behaviour and welfare of cattle. Conscious animals are suspended and hoisted by one leg.

In this report we describe what we observe and propose several concrete steps the plant should take immediately to alleviate some of the suffering. We also quoted the recommendations of the OIE terrestrial Code and the violations against the EC Regulation No. 1099/2009 at the end of this report. According to these criteria this slaughterhouse would not pass the audit, also because of the method of hoisting and suspending conscious animals by one leg.

Violations to Dzabiha (Halal regulations)

- The animal should be handled gently and individually
- The animal should not be slaughtered in front of other animals and no blood seen so that no stress or discomfort has been caused to the animal
- The knife should not be sharpened in front of any animal before slaughter
- The animals' fur must be clean prior to slaughter and free from faeces, dirt or other unhygienic substances.

1.Observations

Facts

Name and address of plant: Yilkay Mezbahasi, Kurban pazari cad. No: 2, Isabey köyü, Yildirim Bursa

Date and time of visit: June 12 17:45

Animals:

Today bulls of various breeds were being slaughtered. They had Turkish ear tags and weighed approximately 700kg. In the very recent past many EU animals arrived here. Our teams had followed livestock trucks from the EU to this plant before. Approximately 4 years ago Australian animals were also regularly slaughtered here.

Descriptions of pens and raceway:

The outdoor waiting pens with roof are next to the parking lot, at one level lower then where the slaughter takes place inside the building. The raceway from the waiting pens to the entrance to the slaughterhouse runs upwards outside along the side edge of the building. The floor is well grooved and at this point we did not see any cattle slipping. At the end of the raceway there is a 90 degree angle where the bovines have to turn a sharp right to enter the building where they must walk along a very short corridor (approx 2 metres) that brings them into the chute. At this 90 degree angle in the raceway, cattle were observed balking due to the sharp corner and the difference in the bright outdoor light and darkness inside the chute. The fact that inside the slaughterhouse was very noisy with constant clanging of large metal hooks and blood on the floor plus full view of the killing did not help matters. Balking cattle were observed trying to turn around in the narrow raceway leading to them becoming stuck and hit more frequently by workers (see photos below).

The floor of the short corridor before the chute is not the same as the grooved concrete floor in the raceway. It is made out of beige tiles (!) and is extremely slippery. This difference in texture and colour is also something that made the bovines balk; flooring used for livestock should always be anti-slip and the same colour and texture so that they feel safe and do not hesitate. There is a gap of roughly 25cm between the floor of this short corridor and side panel.

Because the floor was slippery, several bulls lost their footing and due to the gap, got their leg caught in the gap when they fell down. From the distance I was at I could not tell if the leg got seriously injured. But in any case it caused the bull to fall down which is something slaughterhouse experts like Dr. Temple Grandin would fail the plant during an audit for. Slippery floors make bovine extremely nervous and falling down is not only painful but also causes panic.



90 degree angle in the raceway



As you can see in the photo above, the bulls would often lose their footing and while falling, one leg would get stuck in the gap, risking serious injury. This gap must be sealed.

Description of slaughter installations and process:

The cattle are placed one by one into a chute/box with again a different flooring – this time it is a shiny slippery metal floor. The back door of the chute is closed so that the bovine can no longer back out. The box has a trip floor that causes the animal to fall down with the use of a slanted floor (once the animal enters, the floor tilts causing the bull to lose his footing and fall down). Depending on the speed of the slaughter line, the fallen bovine is then left on the tilted floor inside the chute/box for 30 seconds to approx. **4 minutes**.

When the slaughterer is ready to proceed, a chain is placed around the back right leg of the bovine in the chute and the side door of the chute then opens, resulting in the bovine falling onto the kill floor, which is covered in a thick layer of blood. The head and shoulder of the bull become covered in blood of animals slaughtered previously.



Bulls head in a thick layer of blood



Bull hoisted up by one leg

The slaughterer then presses a button that hoists the chain upwards. The bovine ends up hanging by just one leg (see photo below) until only one hoof can lightly touch the floor (on this day bulls of around 700kg were being slaughtered).



The bovine is then lowered until the head and neck are in the right position for the slaughterer to reach the neck easily to make the cut (this process of hoisting upwards and slowly releasing downwards is sometimes repeated when the position of the animal is not suitable the first time). The slaughterer would then sharpen the knife in front of the animal (see photo below).



Slaughterer sharpening the knife in front of the animal

The slaughterer was often seen poking the eyeballs of the bovines about to be cut with his fingers, causing excruciating pain (see photo below). The bovines would bellow out loudly. The slaughterer did this to "immobilize" the head during cutting.

Almost immediately (maximum 5 seconds) after having the throat cut, the bovine is hoisted upwards fully by the chain, without any part of the body touching the floor despite still being

conscious.



Slaughterer poking the eyeball of a bull

Interesting additional information:

When Australia was sending cattle to this plant, one of the criteria of the Australians was that the Turkish had to cut the animal while standing up, and never hoist the animal on a chain while still conscious. For this reason you can see a head clench on the chute.



Head clench (see arrow)

They abandoned using the head clench though now because at the moment they do not get any Australian animals. They did not like the head clench, saying that after making the cut the body would fall but the head was still clenched. We discussed the importance however of finding a suitable alternative, because at the moment the welfare is not acceptable when animals are hoisted alive by one leg either.

2. Violations

2.1. Violations to Dzabiha (Halal regulations)

- **The animal should be handled gently and individually** (the bovine was forced to walk on a slippery floor, then purposefully made to fall down via the chute floor that tilts, then the bovine was hoisted on just one leg. During this process the bovine shows signs of terror (vocalizations, wide open eyes, struggling).
- **The animal should not be slaughtered in front of other animals and no blood seen so that no stress or discomfort has been caused to the animal** (as of turning into the slaughterhouse, the bovine can see the entire slaughter process of the previous animals, as well as lots of blood and the hanging carcasses).
- **The knife should not be sharpened in front of any animal before slaughter** (although it is good that the slaughterer regularly sharpened his knife, he did it in full view of the animals).
- **The animals' fur must be clean prior to slaughter and free from faeces, dirt or other unhygienic substances.** (the faces and necks of the cattle were drenched in the blood and wastes of other animals as the drainage of the kill floor was not adequate).

2.2. Non-compliance with OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code (2012), Chapter 7.5. Slaughter of animals

In Chapter 7.5. of the OIE Code you find the following recommendations regarding general conditions and treatment of animals, as well as distractions in the raceway and the chute.

Article 7.5.1.

4. Distractions and their removal

Distractions that may cause approaching *animals* to stop, baulk or turn back should be designed out from new facilities or removed from existing ones. Below are examples of common distractions and methods for eliminating them:

- reflections on shiny metal or wet floors – move a lamp or change lighting;**
- dark entrances to chutes, races, stun boxes or conveyor restrainers – illuminate with indirect lighting** which does not shine directly into the eyes of approaching *animals* or create areas of sharp contrast;
- animals* seeing moving people or equipment up ahead – install solid sides on chutes and races or install shields;
- uneven floors or a sudden drop in floor levels at the entrance to conveyor restrainers – avoid uneven floor surfaces or install a solid false floor under the restrainer to provide an illusion of a solid and continuous walking surface;
- clanging and banging of metal objects – install rubber stops on gates and other devices to reduce metal to metal contact;**

Article 7.5.2.

1. General conditions

e) *Animals* should be handled in such a way as to avoid harm, distress or injury. **Under no circumstances should animal handlers resort to violent acts to move animals, such as crushing or breaking tails of animals, grasping their eyes** or pulling them by the ears. *Animal handlers* should never apply an injurious object or irritant substance to *animals* and especially not to sensitive areas such as eyes, mouth, ears, anogenital region or belly.

4. Provisions relevant to restraining and containing animals

a) Provisions relevant to restraining animals for stunning or slaughter without stunning, to help maintain animal welfare, include:

- provision of a non-slippery floor;**
- avoidance of excessive pressure applied by restraining equipment that causes struggling or vocalisation in animals;**

iv) absence of sharp edges in *restraining* equipment that would harm *animals*;

b) Methods of *restraint* causing avoidable suffering should not be used in conscious *animals* because they cause severe pain and stress:

i) suspending or hoisting *animals* (other than *poultry*) by the feet or legs;

iv) breaking legs, cutting leg tendons or blinding *animals* in order to immobilise them;

2.3. Violations against Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 of 24 September 2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing

Article 15: Handling and restraining operations at slaughterhouses

3. The following methods of restraint shall be prohibited:

(a) suspending or hoisting conscious animals;

(b) mechanical clamping or tying of the legs or feet of animals;

ANNEX II: LAYOUT, CONSTRUCTION AND EQUIPMENT OF SLAUGHTERHOUSES

(as referred to in Article 14)

2. Lairage facilities for animals not delivered in containers:

2.5. Floors shall be built and maintained in such a way as to minimise the risk of animals slipping, falling or injuring their feet.

3. Restraining equipment and facilities

3.1. Restraining equipment and facilities shall be designed, built and maintained to:

(a) ...

(b) prevent injury or contusions to the animals;

(c) minimise struggle and vocalisation when animals are restrained;

(d) minimise the time of restraint.

ANNEX III : OPERATIONAL RULES FOR SLAUGHTERHOUSES (as referred to in Article 15)

1.8. It shall be prohibited to:

(a) strike or kick the animals;

(b) apply pressure to any particularly sensitive part of the body in such a way as to cause animals avoidable pain or suffering;

(c) lift or drag the animals by the head, ears, horns, legs, tail or fleece, or handle them in such a way as to cause them pain or suffering;

(d)

(e) twist, crush or break the tails of animals or grasp the eyes of any animal.

1.11. Animals which are unable to walk shall not be dragged to the place of slaughter, but shall be killed where they lie.

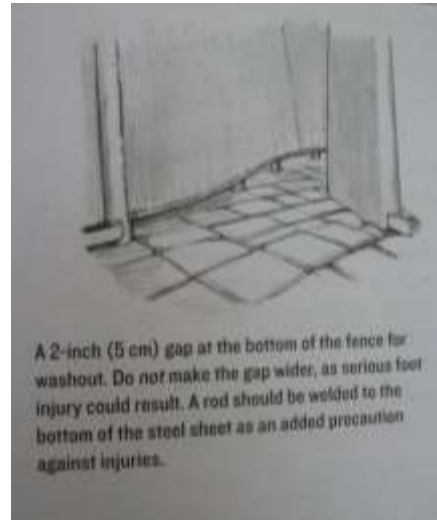
According to the criterias of the OIE and the Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 the method of hoisting and suspending the conscious animals by one leg, is forbidden.

3. Recommendations for quick improvements

Ideally, Eyes on Animals and Animal Welfare Foundation would like to see Turkish slaughterhouses adopt stunning the animals properly before slaughtering them. However, as this is a long on-going debate with many obstacles, we will just focus in this report on improvements that the plant should take immediately to reduce a lot of the suffering that takes place before the cut is made to the throat.

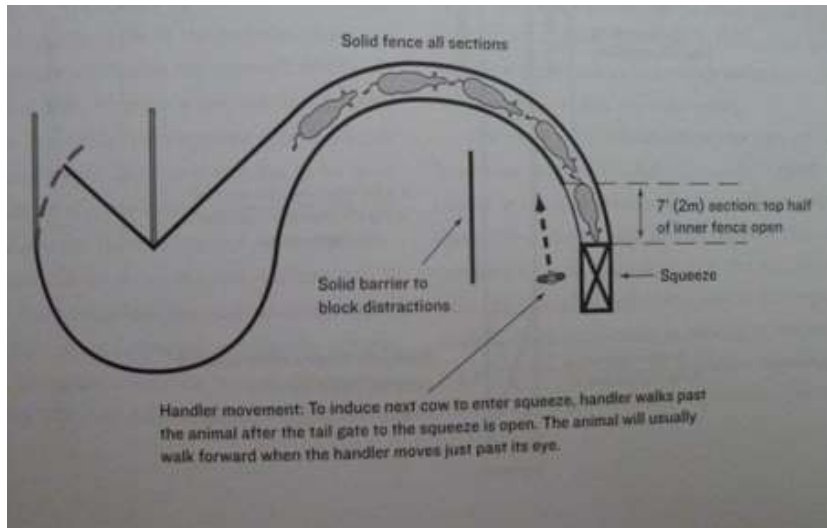
1. Seal the gap between the floor of the short corridor and the side panel to avoid animals losing their footing and risking serious leg injury.

Dr. Temple Grandin recommends that no gap be wider than 5cm to avoid leg injury.



2. Make the floor in the short corridor the same colour, texture and quality of anti-slip as that found in the raceway to avoid that animals balk or fall.
3. Prevent the view of the slaughter process when animals turn the sharp corner into the slaughterhouse (the side panel of the short corridor must be much higher and remain solid).
4. Make the floor of the chute anti-slip (install rubber mat of similar colour to floor).
5. Install more lighting (but non-direct) in the short corridor and chute, to reduce contrast between brightness at the outdoor raceway and darkness once they turn the 90 degree angle into the building. This will ease movement and reduce hesitation.
6. Put a complete ban on the poking of the eyeballs by your workers. This act to immobilize the head of the bovine is completely immoral and cruel.
7. Increase the amount of drainage so kill floor remains cleaner and drier.
8. Consider reducing sharpness of angle into the slaughterplant from raceway by tearing down a piece of the wall and building in a gentle curve in the gate. This will ease movement and also reduce frustration and time needed by your workers to get the bovines to enter the plant.

See Dr. Temple Grandin's design to get an idea of how curves are to be used and never sharp angles to get animals into a squeeze chute:



9. **Never make animals fall on purpose nor hoist conscious animals (particularly heavy cattle) by one leg. This causes all sorts of injury to the hip, leg and joint plus terror in the animals. It is a serious welfare concern but also leads to poor-quality meat.**

We encourage the plant to seek advice from slaughter experts and animal scientists, as to what is the best available alternative restraint system on the market, whereby the animals can be slaughtered without being hoisted alive or made to fall on a trip floor. Here are some websites of experts on animal-welfare during slaughter. You can contact them.

(Feel free to ask us for help with translation if needed as these sites are mostly just in English or English and German. We would be glad to assist).

www.grandin.com in particular see:

<http://www.grandin.com/ritual/evaluation.restraint.methods.kosher.halal.html>

www.hsa.org.uk

<http://www.bsi-schwarzenbek.de>