



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إن الحمد لله نحمده ونستعينه ونستغفره ونعوذ بالله من شرور أنفسنا و من سيئات أعمالنا من يهده الله فلا مضل له ومن يضل فلا هادي وأشهد أن لا إله إلا الله وحده لا شريك له وأشهد أن محمدا عبده ورسوله.

أما بعد

This book has been produced with the sole intention of seeking the pleasure of Allah (swt). It is hoped that it will provide clarification to an issue which affects the Muslim community.

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THE ISSUE OF HALAL MEAT

Contents

	Page Number
Preface	1
Introduction	3
Islamic Ruling	4
Terminology	4
The Islamic practice is to slaughter the animal	4
What are the conditions for Halal Slaughtering?	5
Other points related to halal slaughtering	6
Stunning is not a halal method of slaughtering!	7
A comparison of slaughtering methods	7
Other methods of killing an animal	8
The types of meat which are Haram	9
The types of meat which are Halal	10
The Consequences of not eating Halal	11
Conclusion	11



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THE ISSUE OF HALAL MEAT

INTRODUCTION

The issue of halal meat is one of importance in Islam, however in recent times with the advent of modernisation Muslims have gone away from tradition methods of slaughtering. This has now caused much confusion, with differing opinions as to what is considered halal meat.

When there is confusion on any Islamic matter, we should always refer back to Allah and His Messenger, as Allah (swt) says,

فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ

(And) if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger [Surah An Nisa' 4:59]

There are numerous verses (ayaat) and prophetic narrations (ahadith) commanding Muslims to eat that which is lawful (halal) and to leave that which is unlawful (haram).

Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا

O mankind! Eat of that which is lawful and good on the earth [Surah Al Baqarah 2:168]

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُلُوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ

O you who believe! Eat of the lawful things that We have provided you with [Surah Al Baqarah 2:172]

يَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا أُحِلَّ لَهُمْ قُلْ أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ الطَّيِّبَاتُ

They ask you (O Muhammad SAW) what is lawful for them (as food). Say: "Lawful unto you are At-Tayyibaat (all kind of Halal foods) [Surah Al Maidah 5:4]

The Messenger (saw) said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ طَيِّبٌ لَا يَقْبَلُ إِلَّا طَيِّبًا

"Allah is pure and only accepts that which is pure" [Sahih Muslim] #2393

الْحَلَالُ بَيِّنٌ وَالْحَرَامُ بَيِّنٌ

"That which is lawful is clear and that which is unlawful is clear" [Sahih Muslim] #4178

So it is common knowledge that Muslims only eat or drink that which is halal, to the point even the disbelievers (kuffar) have come to know that alcohol and pork is prohibited for a Muslim. As this is one of the topics known by necessity;

Many food types are halal in their original state such as fruits, vegetables, and sea food, other food type such as meat from chicken, sheep or cattle are only lawful if killed or slaughtered in the right manner.

ISLAMIC RULING

TERMINOLOGY

Halal mean lawful in Arabic, and used to describe objects rather than an action. Normally when describing an action that is allowed we would say it is obligatory (fard/wajib), recommended (mandoub) or permissible (mubah).

Haram means prohibited or unlawful, this term is both used for objects as well as actions. When describing an action that is not allowed we would say it is prohibited (haram) or disliked (makrouh)

Dhabh (ذبح) The meaning of the word ‘dhabh’ can be found in Bukhari

Ata said “Dhabh means the cutting of the carotid and jugular blood vein” when asked if it was allowed to cut the spinal cord Ata replied “Ibn Umar forbade An-Nakh (to cut the neck up to the spinal cord and to leave the animal to die)” [Sahih Bukhari]

This method is used for birds, cattle, sheep and goats, whereby the animal is laid down on its right side and the blood carrying veins are cut.

Nahr (نحر) This method of is used for slaughtering camels and is done by cutting the carotid arteries at the root of the camels neck. The camel’s front legs are bent at the knee and thereafter tied.

THE ISLAMIC PRACTICE IS TO SLAUGHTER THE ANIMAL

The practice of slaughtering in Islam has always been to apply a sharp blade to the neck of the animal.

Abu Yaala Shaddad bin Aws (ra) reported that the Messenger (saw) said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَتَبَ الْإِحْسَانَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَإِذَا قَتَلْتُمْ فَأَحْسِنُوا الْقِتْلَةَ وَإِذَا ذَبَحْتُمْ فَأَحْسِنُوا الذَّبْحَ وَلْيُحِدِّ أَحَدُكُمْ شَفْرَتَهُ فَلْيُرِحْ ذَبِيحَتَهُ

“Verily Allah has prescribed proficiency in all things. Thus, if you kill, kill well; and if you slaughter, slaughter well. Let each one of you sharpen his blade and let him spare suffering to the animal he slaughters.” [Sahih Muslim] #5167

And Allah (swt) says,

فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَأَنْحِرْ

Therefore turn in prayer to your Lord and sacrifice (to Him only) [Surah Al Kawthar 108:2]

In the above verse Allah (swt) has twinned slaughtering with prayer, both are ritual acts. The ritual act in Islam has a set form which must be done in accordance with the example of the Messenger Muhammad (saw), who said

خُذُوا عَنِّي مَنَاسِكَكُمْ

“Take (learn) your ritual acts from me” [Musnad Ahmed] #14793

WHAT ARE THE CONDITIONS FOR HALAL SLAUGHTERING?

There are six main conditions for Halal Slaughtering (dhabh), as follows:

1. The one that slaughters must be a Muslim
2. The one that slaughters must pray

The evidence for the above points can be found in the sayings of Allah (swt)

فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَأَنْحِرْ

Therefore turn in prayer to your Lord and sacrifice. [Surah Al Kawthar 108:2]

Ibn Kathir in the tafsir of the above verse quoted the following hadith. It was reported by Abdullah ibn Umar (ra) The Messenger (saw) said, *“The slaughtered meat of the one (slaughterer) who leaves the Salah for three nights is dead meat.”*

3. The tool used to slaughter must be sharp

The object used to slaughter the animal should be sharp and used swiftly. The Messenger (saw) said *“and if you slaughter, slaughter well. Let each one of you sharpen his blade”*

The swift cutting of vessels of the neck disconnects the flow of blood to the nerves in the brain responsible for pain. Thus the animal does not feel pain. The movements and withering that happen to the animal after the cut is made are not due to pain, but due to the contraction and relaxation of the muscles deficient in blood. The blood must be drained completely before the head is removed. This purifies the meat by removing most of the blood

4. The slaughtering must be merciful

As well as ensuring the slaughtering is done swiftly, one must ensure the animal is not distressed before being slaughtered. To avoid undue distress to the animal, the animal waiting to be slaughtered should not be in view of others being slaughtered. Nor should the knife used for slaughtering be sharpened in view of the animal waiting to be slaughtered. The Messenger (saw) said *“and let him spare suffering to the animal he slaughters”*

5. The person slaughtering must mention the name of Allah (swt)

‘Tasmiyyah’ this is the verbal pronouncement of the name of Allah, when making dhabh or commencing any good deed.

The slaughterer should face the qiblah, and he must utter the words, ‘Bismillah Allahu Akbar’ as he slaughters. These words are an important confirmation that the animal is being killed in the name of Allah, but the words are not just for us; the animal has the right to know that it has been slaughtered in the name of Allah. Allah (swt) says,

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنْسَكًا لِيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِّنْ بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ فَإِلَيْهِمْ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ فَلَهُ أَسْلِمُوا وَبَشِّرِ الْمُخْبِتِينَ

And for every nation We have appointed religious ceremonies, that they may mention the Name of Allah over the beast of cattle that He has given them for food. [Surah Al Hajj 22:34]

6. Must ensure the blood is spilt from the animal

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَذْبِحُوا بِقَرَّةٍ

And (remember) when Musa (Moses) said to his people: *“Verily, Allah commands you that you slaughter (tadhabu) a cow.” [Surah Al Baqarah 2:67]*

OTHER POINTS RELATING TO HALAL SLAUGHTERING

As well as the fore mentioned conditions of slaughtering, the following should also be considered.

1. The animal can be slaughtered by a woman

لَكَعْبِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ عَنْ أَبِيهِ أَنَّ امْرَأَةً ذَبَحَتْ شَاةً بِحَجَرٍ ، فَسُئِلَ النَّبِيُّ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - عَنْ ذَلِكَ ، فَأَمَرَ بِأَكْلِهَا

Narrated by Ka'b bin Malik (ra): A woman slaughtered a sheep with a stone, and the Prophet (saw) was asked about it. He permitted it to be eaten. [Sahih Bukhari] #5504

2. The slaughtering should take place in a slaughter house

ابْنُ جُرَيْجٍ عَنْ عَطَاءٍ لَا ذَبْحَ وَلَا مَنْحَرَ إِلَّا فِي الْمَذْبَحِ وَالْمَنْحَرِ

Ibn Juraij said Ata said "neither dhabh nor Nahr is to be done except in a slaughter house" [Sahih Bukhari]

3. The slaughter house must be free from contamination

Often slaughter houses are shared by Muslims and non-Muslims, where they may sometimes use the same machines, utensils, benches etc. We are not allowed to share utensils, and if we do we must clean them before hand.

The Prophet (saw) was asked regarding this issue, he (saw) replied as follows.

أَمَّا مَا ذَكَرْتَ أَنَّكَ بَارِضٍ أَهْلِ كِتَابٍ فَلَا تَأْكُلُوا فِي آيَاتِهِمْ ، إِلَّا أَنْ لَا تَجِدُوا بُدًّا ، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَجِدُوا بُدًّا فَاعْسَلُوهَا وَكُلُوا

The Prophet (saw) said "As for your saying that you are in the land of the people of the book, you should not eat in their utensils unless you have no alternative, in which case you must wash the utensils and then eat in them" [Sahih Bukhari] #5496

Non-Muslims are not allowed to do the actual slaughtering; however they may skin the hide, package, carry and load the carcasses.

4. Do not harm the animal

It is Haram to harm the animal before slaughter using methods such as stunning, striking it or giving it an electric shock.

Jabir ibn Abdullah (ra) said: "The Messenger (saw) forbade tormenting any kind of animal to death" [Sahih Muslim]

STUNNING IS NOT A HALAL METHOD OF SLAUGHTER!

In the west it has become common practice for the slaughtering houses to stun the animal first before slaughtering with a knife. There are many types of stunning techniques used today such as,

- The captive bolt pistol (used for cows/cattle)
- Electric stunning (used for sheep)
- Electrified water bath (used for poultry)
- Carbon dioxide (co2) gas (used for pigs)



The basic assumption being that by stunning the animal prior to cutting the throat it is less painful. This has been disproved by recent scientific finding, yet the practice continues.

Stunning is not allowed as an Islamic method of slaughtering as it causes harm the animal as well restricts spilling of the blood from the animal once the blade is applied to it blood vessels.

The Islamic method of slaughtering does not touch the nervous system at all; rather it allows the brain to function and thereby keeps the heart working expelling as much blood as possible.

A COMPARISON OF SLAUGHTERING METHODS

Experimental studies in Europe have deduced the following.

Islamic Method of slaughtering

1. The first three seconds from the time of dhabh as recorded on the EEG did not show any change from the graph before slaughter,
2. Thus indicating that the animal did not feel any pain during or immediately after the incision
3. For the following 3 seconds, the EEG recorded a condition of deep sleep - unconsciousness. This is due to the large quantity of blood gushing out from the body.
4. After the above-mentioned 6 seconds, the EEG recorded zero level, showing no feeling of pain at all.
5. As the brain message (EEG) dropped to zero level, the heart was still pounding and the body convulsing vigorously (a reflex action of the spinal cord) driving a maximum amount of blood from the body thus resulting in hygienic meat-for the consumer.

Non-Islamic Method of slaughtering (i.e. Bolt)

1. The animals were apparently unconscious soon after stunning.
2. EEG showed severe pain immediately after stunning.
3. The hearts of animals stunned by C.B.P. stopped beating earlier as compared to the Islamic Method
4. Resulting in the retention of more blood in the meat. This in turn is unhygienic for the consumer.

Study conclusion:

The Islamic slaughtering is the most humane method of slaughter and that captive bolt stunning, practiced in the West, causes severe pain to the animal.

OTHER METHODS OF KILLING AN ANIMAL

Killing by choking, beating, falling or gorging

Ibn Abbas (ra) whilst giving tafsir of the verses related to lawful meat said “the animal killed by choking, beating or falling is not lawful. The animal gorged by another’s horn is lawful as long as you slaughter it whilst it is alive (i.e. its eyes and tail is moving)”. [Sahih Bukhari]

Slaughtering using a tooth or nail

The Messenger (saw) said: “do not slaughter with a tooth or a nail...a tooth is a bone and the nail is the knife of the Ethiopians” [Sahih Bukhari] #5503

Ethiopia (Abyssinia) was the land of the Christians at the time of the Messenger (saw).

Shooting tied and confined animals

Anas (ra) said, “The Messenger (saw) has forbidden the shooting of tied and confined animals” [Sahih Bukhari]

Game killed by Mi’raad معراض

This is when game is killed by a tool which is a sharp wood with a blunt shaft. The Messenger (saw) said “It is lawful to eat as long as it was killed by the sharp edge” [Sahih Bukhari] #5476

Game killed by Bunduqa بندقة

This is when game is killed by a shooting a ball through a hollow tube. Ibn Umar (ra) said “it is unlawful as it is like killing an animal with a blunt instrument” [Sahih Bukhari]

Game killed by Arrow

The Messenger (saw) said “if you hunt a game with your bow after mentioning Allah (swt) name, eat of it” [Sahih Bukhari] #5478

Game killed by a Hound

The Messenger (saw) said “If you let loose your trained hound after a game and you mentioned the name of Allah (swt) then you can eat what the hound catches for you, even if it kills the game. But you should not eat if the hound has eaten from it, as it has caught the game for itself” [Sahih Bukhari] #5476

And on the issue of keeping a dog as a pet the Messenger (saw) said “whoever keeps a dog which is neither a watch dog nor a hunting dog, will get a daily reduction of two qeeraat from his good deed” [Sahih Bukhari] # 5480



THE TYPES OF MEAT WHICH ARE HARAM

- Animals that die naturally (Al-Maytah المَيْتَة)
- The blood of the animal (Ad Dam الدَّم)
- The flesh of swine (Al-Khinzeer الخنزير)
- Meat slaughtered in other than Allah (swt) name (Dhabh lighairallah ذَبَحَ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ)
- Animal killed by strangling (Al-Munkhaniqa المتخنقة)
- Animal killed by a blow (Al-Mauquodhah الموقوذة)
- That which died by falling from a height Al-Mutaraddiya (المتردية)
- Animal gored (An-Nateeha النطيحة) or partially eaten - unless you can slaughter it whilst it is still alive
- Animals killed on a stone altar (An-Nusub النصب)
- That you raffle by arrows (Al-Azlaam الأزلام)

The evidence for the above points can be found in the following verse

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ الْمَيْتَةُ وَالْدَّمُ وَلَحْمُ الْخِنْزِيرِ وَمَا أُهْلَ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ وَالْمُنْخَنِقَةُ وَالْمَوْقُوذَةُ وَالْمُتَرَدِّيَةُ وَالنَّطِيحَةُ وَمَا أَكَلَ السَّبُعُ إِلَّا مَا ذَكَّيْتُمْ وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى النُّصُبِ وَأَنْ تَسْتَقْسِمُوا بِالْأَزْلَامِ ذَلِكُمْ فِسْقٌ

Forbidden to you (for food) are: Al-Maytatah (the dead animals - cattle-beast not slaughtered), blood, the flesh of swine, and the meat of that which has been slaughtered as a sacrifice for others than Allah, or has been slaughtered for idols, etc., or on which Allah’s Name has not been mentioned while slaughtering, and that which has been killed by strangling, or by a violent blow, or by a headlong fall, or by the goring of horns - and that which has been (partly) eaten by a wild animal - unless you are able to slaughter it (before its death) and that which is sacrificed (slaughtered) on An-Nusub (stone altars). (Forbidden) also is to use arrows seeking luck or decision, (all) that is Fisqun (disobedience and sin). [Surah Al Maidah 5:4]

Donkey Meat

عَنْ ابْنِ عُمَرَ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا - نَهَى النَّبِيُّ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - عَنْ لَحْمِ الْحُمْرِ الْأَهْلِيَّةِ يَوْمَ خَيْبَرَ

Ibn Umar (ra) said Allah (swt) Prophet (saw) made the meat of donkeys unlawful on the day of the battle of Khaibar [Sahih Bukhari] #5521

Beast of Prey with Fangs

عَنْ الزُّهْرِيِّ نَهَى النَّبِيُّ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - عَنْ كُلِّ ذِي نَابٍ مِنَ السَّبَاعِ

Narrated by Az-Zhuri: The Prophet (saw) forbade the eating of the meat of beasts of prey having fangs [Sahih Bukhari] #5527

Birds with Talons

Ibn Abbas said on the Day of Khaibar the Messenger (saw) prohibited eating every beast of prey, and every bird with a talon. [Sunan Abu Dawud]

Carrion

Carrion is the carcass of a dead animal that becomes food for other scavenging animals. This is haram (forbidden) to eat.

Bones

The reason for this forbiddance has been mentioned in Sahih Muslim from the hadith of Ibn Masud in that the bones are the food of the Jinn. (By the time the bone reaches them), Allah (swt) will cover it for them with more meat than it had before. And as for the dung (feces), then it is the food of their riding animals.

THE TYPES OF MEAT WHICH ARE HALAL

The Meat of Chicken

عَنْ أَبِي مُوسَى - يُعْنِي الْأَشْعَرِيَّ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - قَالَ رَأَيْتُ النَّبِيَّ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - يَأْكُلُ دَجَاجًا

Narrated by Abu Musa al Ashari (ra): I saw the Prophet (saw) eating chicken [Sahih Bukhari] #5517

The Meat of Rabbit

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - قَالَ أَنْفَجْنَا أَرْتَبًا بِمَرِّ الظَّهْرَانِ ، فَسَعَوْا عَلَيْهَا حَتَّى لَعَبُوا ، فَسَعَيْتُ عَلَيْهَا حَتَّى أَخَذْتُهَا ، فَجِئْتُ بِهَا إِلَى أَبِي طَلْحَةَ ، فَبَعَثَ إِلَيَّ النَّبِيَّ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - بِوَرِكَيْهَا وَفَخَذِيهَا فَقَبِلَهُ

Narrated by Anas bin Malik (ra): We provoked a rabbit at Mar Zahran, it started jumping. My companions chased it till they got tired. But I alone ran after it and caught it and brought it to Abu Talha. He sent both its legs to the Prophet (saw) who accepted them. [Sahih Bukhari] #5489

The Meat of Horse

عَنْ أَسْمَاءَ قَالَتْ ذَبَحْنَا عَلَى عَهْدِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - فَرَسًا وَنَحْنُ بِالْمَدِينَةِ فَأَكَلْنَاهُ

Narrated by Asma bint Abu Bakr (ra): We slaughtered a horse (by dhabh) during the lifetime of the Prophet (saw) while we were at Madinah, and we ate it [Sahih Bukhari] #5511

The Meat of Fish

Allah (swt) says,

وَهُوَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ لِتَأْكُلُوا مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا

And He it is Who has subjected the sea (to you), that you eat thereof fresh tender meat (i.e. fish) [Surah An Nahl 16:14]

It should be noted that the above lists of haram and halal meat types are not an extensive list, but a brief introduction to the categories.



THE CONSEQUENCE OF NOT EATING HALAL

1. Your Supplication (Dua') may not be answered

Abu Hurairah narrated,

ذَكَرَ الرَّجُلُ يُطِيلُ السَّفَرَ أَشْعَثَ أَغْبَرَ يَمُدُّ يَدَيْهِ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ يَا رَبَّ يَا رَبَّ وَمَطْعَمُهُ حَرَامٌ وَمَشْرَبُهُ حَرَامٌ وَمَلْبَسُهُ حَرَامٌ وَغَدِيَّ بِالْحَرَامِ فَأَنَّى يُسْتَجَابَ لِذَلِكَ

The Messenger (saw) mentioned the case of a man who, having journeyed far, is disheveled and dusty and who spreads out his hands to the sky [saying]: "O Lord! O Lord!" While his food is unlawful, his drink is unlawful, his clothing is unlawful, and he is nourished unlawfully, so how can he be answered?" [Sahih Muslim] #2393

2. You will incur the wrath of Allah (swt) if you slaughter in the name of others

Ali bin Abu Talib (ra) narrated the Messenger (saw) said,

وَلَعَنَ اللَّهُ مَنْ ذَبَحَ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ

"And Allah curses him who sacrifices for anyone besides Allah" [Sahih Muslim] #5239

3. If you agree with the Mushrik (idolaters) that dead meat is halal, it will render you a Mushrik

Allah (swt) says,

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا لَمْ يُذَكَرْ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَإِنَّهُ لَفِسْقٌ وَإِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ لَيُوحُونَ إِلَيْكُمْ لِيُجَادِلُوكُمْ وَإِنْ أَطَعْتُمُوهُمْ إِنَّكُمْ لَمُشْرِكُونَ

'Eat not, Oh believers, of that meat on which Allah (swt)'s name has not been pronounced at the time of slaughtering the animal, for surely it is Fisq (a sin and disobedience of Allah) and certainly the evil do inspire their friends to dispute with you and if you were to obey them by making a dead (un-slaughtered) animal lawful and eating it, then you would indeed be Mushrikoun (polytheists)' [Surah Al Anam 6:121]

CONCLUSION

It is imperative that we ensure the meat we eat is halal to the best of our abilities. It is sinful to eat meat which is not slaughtered or cooked in accordance to Islam. Haram meat is void of any blessings from Allah (swt) and this will have consequences on our subsequent actions.

Normally it is not allowed to doubt Muslims (i.e. our butchers), as the issue of halal slaughtering is one known by necessity. However due to the society we live in and the fact that the common practice is to stun animals first, we must ask our butchers whether the meat we have is un-stunned. It is not enough to accept that if the butcher says it is halal, that it necessarily is so, or to agree with the butcher's opinion that to stun first and slaughter after is lawful. We cannot plead ignorance on this issue when the text on the issue is so clear cut and the practice of Muslims for centuries was to adhere vehemently to the ways of the Messenger (saw) and his companions (ra).

Recently halal monitoring groups have appeared highlighting the issue of un-stunned meat. These groups should only be taken as reference point if they strictly adhere to the conditions stipulated by Islam for slaughtering as well as the slaughterer. No concessions should be made, because a Muslim does not pray, or that only a non-Muslim is available to work in the slaughter house, or that it is more convenient to have a taping of "Bismillah Allahu Akbar" playing in the background rather than to say it aloud each time before the slaughter. It is important we read what these groups stipulate in their conditions regarding halal meat.

We trust this short treatise explained the key points related to the issue of Halal Meat, and Allah (swt) knows best.