



ROYAL NORWEGIAN
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

The Minister

Mrs Francesca Martini
Undersecretary for the veterinary topics

Your ref

Our ref
200701887

Date
26.05.2009

Dear colleague,

Proposal for a Council Regulation on the protection of animals at the time of killing - Norwegian Animal welfare law

Animal welfare is a very important issue, and the way we treat our animals reflects the ethical standard of the society. I am pleased that this is widely recognised in Europe, and that together we strive for continual improvement of the welfare of our animals.

In light of the ongoing discussions in the Council of the proposal for a new regulation on the protection of animals at the time of killing, I would like to share with you the Norwegian position on some issues relevant to the proposal.

Possibility to maintain stricter national regulations

Norway adopted its first Animal Protection Act as early as 1935, and has since introduced a large number of detailed regulations to protect the animals' welfare.

The Norwegian Parliament (the Storting) has this spring adopted a new Animal Welfare Act. The Act gives the revised legal framework for animal welfare in Norway. The Act was adopted nearly unanimously by the members of the Parliament, which demonstrates the massive support for continual improvement of animal welfare. The Act will enter into force by decision of the King, and it is expected that the date of entry into force will be in the beginning of 2010. Regulations under the current Act will still be valid, some revised and some new regulations will be introduced.

It is stated in the Act that animals have an intrinsic value. This term contributes to the clarification of the animals' status and that their welfare must be prioritised irrespective of the value they may have for people. It is important that we continue to improve the standards of animal welfare. We must make sure not to reverse this development by

introducing obligatory regulations that are more lenient than existing national regulations, or discouraging national movement towards stricter welfare measures.

Absolute requirement for stunning

The Norwegian national legislation has banned the slaughtering of animals without prior stunning for almost 80 years. This ban is based on the principle that animals shall not be subjected to the risk of unnecessary suffering. The current requirement for stunning prior to slaughter is maintained in the new Act. Based on the scientific assessment that cutting the animal's throat while it is still conscious causes severe stress and pain, the Norwegian legislation has no grounds for derogation from the stunning requirement.

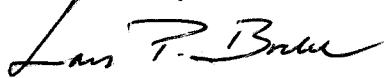
Norway would like to point out that with respect to the serious animal welfare concerns related to slaughtering without prior stunning, we find it necessary to express our expectation that the new regulation keeps it optional for national authorities to decide whether or not to derogate from the requirement in the case of ritual slaughtering. At the same time, we would like to express our strong opinion that national authorities should not allow such slaughtering to take place to a larger extent than what is required to supply the demand for products from ritually slaughtered animals.

You may find more information on the Norwegian Animal Welfare Action Plan and the new Animal Welfare Act here:

<http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/lmd/Subjects/animal.html?id=1294>

I look forward to continuing our good cooperation in this field.

Yours sincerely,



Lars Peder Brekk