

Review of The Mandatory Use of Closed Circuit Television in Slaughterhouses (England) Regulations 2018

Response by Compassion in World Farming

Summary

Compassion in World Farming (Compassion) welcomed the introduction of slaughterhouse CCTV. Clearly, the benefits from it hinge on the extent to which the CCTV is actually viewed. We suggest a combination of announced inspections, unannounced inspection and a whistle-blower facility to enable concerned staff to draw attention to an incident which should be reviewed.

Background

Independent [research](#), published in 2016 concluded that *'the current system of welfare monitoring is failing and that compulsory use of CCTV with independent monitoring is the only robust solution.'* The report, CCTV Monitoring in Slaughterhouses, set out how an independent system of monitoring could be conducted and established the use of CCTV in slaughterhouses to be both 'cost effective and feasible'. Whilst CCTV is now required in slaughterhouses in England, CIWF is not aware of any evidence produced since that would contradict the overall findings of this report and its recommendation for 'independent monitoring'. With such monitoring, we believe that CCTV is likely to be a strong deterrent to slaughterhouse workers using poor welfare practices, and particularly when it comes to capturing the most severe examples of animal abuse.

1. Has requiring CCTV in all slaughterhouses led to benefits in animal welfare?

Compassion in World Farming (Compassion) backs the use of slaughterhouse CCTV and believes its introduction should have led to improved animal welfare standards within abattoirs. However, in order to monitor that standards continue to improve over time, we urge the Government to report on the level of poor behaviour in slaughterhouses, and compare this with previously available data.

Moving forward, we urge the Government to monitor the number of reported incidents. This data should be recorded and published, and should also include the number of reported incidents that result in further action – fines, loss of licence, court case, custodial sentences, etc. If there is no historical data available from which to establish a baseline, we would encourage the Government to begin this recording process immediately, so that progress can be objectively measured in future years.

Compassion also strongly supports the case for more active independent monitoring of CCTV when no incidents have been reported, both pre-planned with the facility and the use of unplanned checks and inspections. We also propose that slaughterhouses should be required to display a notice with a telephone number and email address to which apparently undesirable incidents can be reported, so as to prompt inspection of the relevant CCTV footage.

2. Has requiring CCTV in all slaughterhouses helped provide assurance that all slaughterhouses are operating to high welfare standards?

CCTV is an important step towards making effective monitoring possible. However, a 2022 [report](#) by Animal Equality and the Animal Law Foundation highlights the extent to which the laws which are in place to uphold animal welfare standards are not being enforced. This 'enforcement problem', evidenced in the report with examples, is concerning throughout the process of slaughter and represents a key non-compliance welfare issue, even in situations where CCTV was present. The report cites comments from Professor John Webster MA, Vet MB, PhD, DVM(Hon), FNS, MRCVS about the limitations of CCTV in ensuring best practice: *"frequent inspection by trained, independent assessors is, of course, essential to ensure quality control. It is reasonable to expect that some visits be arranged in advance so that the abattoir staff can ensure that all records, CCTV footage etc. are available for inspection. However, I recommend that, in addition to these routine inspections, assessors should have the right to make unannounced visits to carry out spot checks on any, or all stages in the processes of handling, stunning and slaughter."* Without effective monitoring and accountability, therefore, it is not clear that the use of CCTV in slaughterhouses, as it currently functions, is effective in overcoming the 'enforcement problem'. Since CCTV is not accessible to welfare charities and organisations, monitoring must be carried out by independent inspectors.