



SHORT COMMUNICATION

HALAL CERTIFICATION PROCESSES FOR BEEF AND LAMB ABATTOIRS IN SOUTH AFRICA: A COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This summarizes presentations at International Halal Conferences, which examines the halal certification processes for beef and lamb abattoirs in South Africa, providing a comprehensive overview of the procedures, challenges, and best practices involved. The study explores key components of the certification process, including pre-audit procedures, animal welfare considerations, slaughter techniques, and post-slaughter handling. It highlights the critical role of Muslim personnel, the complexities of stunning practices within halal guidelines, and the importance of maintaining halal integrity throughout the supply chain. The research also addresses the significance of proper documentation, traceability measures, and the implementation of regular audits. Furthermore, the paper emphasizes the importance of continuous improvement through ongoing training and education programs for personnel involved in halal meat production. By detailing these processes, the study offers valuable insights into how South African abattoirs integrate religious requirements with modern food safety and animal welfare standards, potentially serving as a model for halal certification in other regions.

Keywords: *Halal Certification, Abattoir Practices, Islamic Slaughter, Food Safety, Animal Welfare*



Introduction

The halal food industry has experienced significant growth globally, with increasing demand for certified halal products. In South Africa, a country with a diverse population including a substantial Muslim community, the halal certification of meat products, particularly from beef and lamb abattoirs, plays a crucial role in the food industry. This paper aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the halal certification processes for beef and lamb abattoirs in South Africa, highlighting the key aspects, challenges, and best practices in ensuring halal compliance.

Pre-Audit Procedures

Documentation Review

The halal certification process begins with a thorough review of existing procedures at the abattoir. This comprehensive review encompasses examining protocols for animal reception, transportation methods, and rest periods for animals upon arrival at the facility. Additionally, the assessment includes an evaluation of the facilities provided for animal welfare, with particular attention paid to the availability and quality of water sources for the animals.

Facility Inspection

During the pre-audit phase, inspectors conduct a meticulous evaluation of the abattoir's infrastructure. This inspection focuses on several key areas of the facility. First, the storage facilities and chillers are assessed for their capacity and suitability for halal meat storage, ensuring that they meet the necessary standards for maintaining the integrity of halal products. Next, the transportation vehicles are examined, with inspectors determining whether they are owned by the company or outsourced, as this can impact the level of control over halal compliance during transport. Finally, the layout of the slaughter floor and the overall facility design are scrutinized to ensure they meet halal requirements and facilitate efficient, compliant operations.

Animal Welfare and Pre-Slaughter Handling

Transportation and Rest Periods

The certification process places significant emphasis on animal welfare during transportation and upon arrival at the abattoir. This focus includes ensuring that proper rest periods are mandated and adhered to, allowing animals to recover from the stress of transportation. The goal is to minimize undue stress on the animals before slaughter, as this not only aligns with Islamic principles of animal welfare but also contributes to the quality of the meat produced.

Emergency Slaughter Protocols

Procedures for emergency slaughter situations are carefully evaluated as part of the certification process. These protocols come into play when animals arrive at the abattoir injured or in distress,



requiring immediate attention. In such cases, a collaborative approach is essential, involving the chief meat inspector, halal supervisor, and Muslim slaughterer. This team works together to ensure that even in emergency situations, halal principles are adhered to as much as possible. The process involves a careful assessment of the animal's condition, a decision on the appropriate course of action, and the implementation of slaughter techniques that maintain halal compliance while addressing the animal's immediate welfare needs.

Slaughter Processes

Personnel Requirements

A critical aspect of halal slaughter is the requirement for Muslim slaughtermen. These individuals must be practicing Muslims with a good understanding of Islamic principles. The certification process emphasizes that these slaughtermen should view their role not only as a job but as a duty to the Muslim community. This perspective ensures a higher level of commitment to maintaining halal standards and the integrity of the slaughter process. The slaughtermen are expected to have a deep understanding of the religious significance of their work and to conduct themselves in a manner that upholds Islamic values throughout the slaughter process.

Stunning Practices

The paper addresses the contentious issue of stunning in halal slaughter, recognizing the mandatory nature of stunning in South Africa. The certification process ensures that only reversible stunning methods are employed, striking a balance between legal requirements and halal principles. For sheep, this involves head-only electrical stunning with specific voltage and electrode placement requirements. The process mandates precise application techniques, including the use of constant current and visible current sensors. For cattle, non-penetrative mushroom stunning is employed, with strict guidelines for the placement and application of the stunner. In both cases, the stunning process is closely monitored to ensure it remains reversible and does not cause death prior to the actual slaughter.

Slaughter Technique

The actual slaughter process involves several critical elements to ensure halal compliance. First and foremost is the recitation of the tasmiyah (invocation) by the Muslim slaughterman at the moment of slaughter. This verbal affirmation is a crucial component of the halal slaughter process. The physical technique involves ensuring proper cutting of the windpipe and at least one of the neck veins, performed with a sharp, clean knife. The paper emphasizes the importance of proper knife handling and sterilization between slaughters to maintain hygiene standards and prevent cross-contamination. The slaughter must be swift and precise, minimizing animal suffering while ensuring complete exsanguination.



Post-Slaughter Procedures

Bleeding Times

Specific bleeding times are mandated before further processing can occur, in accordance with South African meat safety regulations. For lamb and ostrich, a minimum bleeding time of 5 minutes is required, while beef carcasses must be allowed to bleed for at least 8 minutes. These prescribed times ensure complete exsanguination of the carcass, which is crucial for both halal compliance and meat quality. During this period, no further processing of the carcass is permitted, allowing for the maximum removal of blood from the animal's body.

Carcass Identification

The paper discusses the importance of proper carcass identification as a crucial element in maintaining the integrity of halal meat products. This process involves the use of halal roller markings, which are applied to the carcass under the strict supervision of the halal supervisor. These markings serve as a visual indicator of the meat's halal status throughout the processing and distribution chain. Additionally, comprehensive traceability measures are implemented, including the use of tags and serial numbers that allow each carcass to be traced back to its origin, including the specific batch and feedlot. This level of detail in carcass identification ensures transparency and accountability in the halal meat production process.

Transportation and Distribution

Vehicle Cleanliness

Strict protocols are in place for the cleanliness of vehicles used to transport halal meat. These protocols require thorough cleaning and inspection of transport vehicles before they are loaded with halal carcasses. The halal supervisor is responsible for conducting these inspections, ensuring that the vehicles meet the necessary standards of cleanliness and are free from any non-halal contaminants. This rigorous approach to vehicle cleanliness is essential in maintaining the halal status of the meat during transportation, preventing any cross-contamination that could compromise the product's integrity.

Documentation

The certification process requires comprehensive documentation for meat transportation, emphasizing the importance of traceability throughout the supply chain. This documentation includes transport certificates and intake letters that accompany each shipment of halal meat. These documents provide a detailed record of the meat's journey from the abattoir to its final destination, including information on the origin, quantity, and halal status of the products. The halal supervisors at both the dispatching and receiving ends of the supply chain are required to communicate and verify this documentation, ensuring that what is received matches exactly what was dispatched. This meticulous approach to documentation and verification helps



maintain the integrity of the halal supply chain and provides assurance to consumers about the authenticity of the halal meat products.

Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

Regular Audits

The paper highlights the importance of regular audits as a key component of the halal certification process. Abattoirs are subject to inspections at least monthly by qualified halal auditors. These audits are conducted in addition to the daily oversight provided by on-site halal supervisors. The auditing process involves a comprehensive review of all aspects of the abattoir's operations, from animal handling to slaughter techniques, post-slaughter processing, and documentation. These regular audits serve to ensure ongoing compliance with halal standards and provide opportunities for identifying areas for improvement in the halal certification process.

Training and Education

Continuous improvement is emphasized through ongoing training and education programs for slaughtermen and supervisors. These programs are designed to ensure that all personnel involved in the halal meat production process remain updated on halal requirements and best practices. The training covers various aspects, including Islamic principles related to animal welfare and slaughter, proper stunning and slaughter techniques, hygiene practices, and the importance of maintaining halal integrity throughout the production process. By investing in the continuous education of its workforce, the halal certification system in South Africa aims to maintain high standards of compliance and adapt to evolving industry practices and consumer expectations.

Conclusion

The halal certification process for beef and lamb abattoirs in South Africa is a comprehensive system that integrates religious requirements with modern food safety and animal welfare standards. By maintaining strict controls over personnel, slaughter techniques, and post-slaughter handling, the certification process ensures the integrity of halal meat products. The emphasis on proper documentation, traceability, and regular audits further strengthens the credibility of the halal certification system. The continuous focus on training and education demonstrates a commitment to maintaining and improving standards over time. As the halal industry continues to grow globally, the rigorous certification processes implemented in South African abattoirs serve as a model for maintaining halal integrity while meeting the demands of modern meat production and distribution. This comprehensive approach not only ensures compliance with Islamic dietary laws but also contributes to overall food quality and safety standards, benefiting both Muslim consumers and the wider market.



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