

Demonstration of Life Protocol – Factsheet

What is the Demonstration of Life protocol?

The Demonstration of Life (DOL) protocol is a government-supported independent Halal assurance framework which permits participating abattoirs to validate that the small ruminants they handle are alive at the point of slaughter through demonstrating the recoverability of the electrical head-only stun.

The demonstration can provide assurance to domestic and international Muslim consumers/customers through participating Halal assurance bodies that stunned small ruminant slaughter is aligned with their beliefs. Research in 2017 indicated that the majority of Muslim scholars would accept stunning if it could be demonstrated that the animals are alive at the point of slaughter. Indeed globally, similar assurance schemes exist to great effect, most prominently in New Zealand, facilitating access of stunned Halal sheepmeat to 180 markets across the world.

The DOL protocol presents an unprecedented opportunity to move towards greater assurance in the Halal sector, working with the major Halal certification bodies to widen acceptability of stunned Halal and expand access to international Halal markets which are seeing 50% increase year-on-year.

When did this happen?

Ministers and DEFRA launched the protocol on 22nd April 2021. The three-year development process has involved the partnership-working of many representatives across the food and farming sector, including Lord Trees, NFU, AHDB, University of Bristol, British Veterinary Association, independent experts and the major Halal certification bodies – Halal Food Authority, Halal Monitoring Committee and Halal Consultation Organisation. The group has worked together with DEFRA, FSA and their advisors to establish the DOL protocol within existing legal framework.

How does this fit within existing welfare at slaughter legislation?

The DOL protocol has a very specific application, limited to a small number of animals in a controlled and pre-planned demonstration. Senior FSA Field Veterinary Leads directly supervise the demonstrations and the abattoir Animal Welfare Officers (AWO), whose legal mandate it is to protect welfare.

Crucially, the animals are not allowed to fully recover, but are allowed only to demonstrate the earliest signs of recoverability, before being immediately re-stunned and slaughtered. For these reasons, the protocol is considered to sit within the spirit of the legislation, under strict control and with minimal potential for welfare compromise.

Key Points of the Protocol

- Small ruminants (sheep and goats **only**)
- Max. two demonstrations per year
- Max. two animals (either species) per demonstration
- Signs of recoverability – rhythmic breathing, with or without detectable heartbeat
- Max. two rhythmic breaths observed before re-stun and slaughter
- Protocol halted as unsuccessful after 60s observation without signs
- Prior training, planning and FSA approval required before demonstration can be arranged
- Cost of FSA supervision £550.32 for demonstration
- Protocol must be attended by the FSA, AWO and Halal certification body representative but can also be observed by others at the discretion of the participating Abattoir

Who can I contact?

AHDB is the industry first point of contact for the protocol. For further information, please contact awal.fuseini@ahdb.org.uk.

How do I apply?

You can download a copy of the application form by visiting the following website: www.ahdb.org.uk/halal. The form contains details of the pre-requisites of the assurance scheme