



AB 3159 – Humane Poultry Slaughter

IN BRIEF

AB 3159 will require that poultry be rendered insensitive to pain before being shackled for slaughter, bringing the poultry slaughter practice in line with existing regulations for all other livestock.

BACKGROUND

Current law requires that livestock including cattle, calves, horses, mules, sheep, swine, and goats be rendered insensitive to pain before being slaughtered. Poultry, however, are exempt from that requirement. As a result, it is legal to shackle a chicken for slaughter while they can be fully conscious and can experience pain.

Poultry can experience pain due to the traumatic and stressful experience of shackling, which can involve the dislocation of their joints or breaking of their bones due to vigorous wing flapping during the shackling. Additionally, shackling can be more painful for poultry suffering from diseases or abnormalities of their leg joints or leg bones.

Chickens are typically stunned after shackling by being conveyed through an electrified water-bath; but this does not stun all chickens. Those that are not properly stunned then enter the remainder of the slaughter process fully conscious. This process also misses some chickens, which then must be killed manually by workers.

Fortunately, the poultry industry has already begun to move to more humane slaughter practices. Perdue Farms has committed to converting 100 percent of its operations away from shackling conscious birds and has committed more than \$15 million to convert the country's largest organic poultry plant to a more humane system. McDonald's, one of the nation's largest purchasers of poultry, has also announced plans requiring its suppliers to render chickens unconscious before they are shackled for slaughter. More than 80 other major poultry buyers have done the same.

SOLUTION

AB 3159 will require that poultry shackled prior to slaughter are rendered unconscious to ensure that they do not experience unnecessary pain.

Alternative methods exist that allow for stunning or killing of poultry before they are shackled with greater accuracy than electrified water-bath stunning methods, such as Controlled Atmosphere Stunning (CAS) and Controlled Atmosphere Killing (CAK) systems. Additionally, a stunner which renders the animal insensitive to pain can cost as little as \$127.

By removing the current exemption from humane slaughter practices for poultry, AB 3159 will extend existing humane slaughter rules for livestock to poultry, creating parity throughout the industry and positioning California as a leader in humane slaughter practices nationwide.

SUPPORT

Social Compassion in Legislation (sponsor)
The Humane Society of the United States
Mercy for Animals

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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