Walking the talk: taking OIE guidelines into slaughterhouses

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Eyes on Animals and Animal Welfare Foundation focus their efforts on field-work and direct dialogue with industry. We send, regularly and unannounced, our international teams of animal-scientists and veterinarians directly into slaughterhouses in OIE-member countries to check on conditions of the animals. We provide friendly but firm advice and counselling. Employees are motivated to carry out improvements on the spot with us: e.g. cleaning slippery floors, spraying oil on fear-inducing squeaky gates, installing distraction-reducing panelling on raceways, hanging extra lighting to encourage natural animal movement. We explain suffering caused by inhumane trip-floor boxes and the alternative restraint options available on the market. Furthermore, we sit down with slaughterhouse directors and veterinarians to watch the OIE educational slaughter-video and discuss steps towards better compliance with OIE standards. We remain in regular contact thereafter.

Recently we have concentrated on a dozen slaughterhouses in an OIE-member-country, Turkey. Most of their slaughterhouses still use the trip-floor box, where cattle are forced to fall down in order for one leg to be chained, and then hoisted alive off the floor. This is an unacceptably cruel practice that has continued despite science-based OIE standards strictly forbidding its use. Continuation of this practice is often due to lack of effective communication in Turkish to both slaughterhouses and companies manufacturing slaughterhouse equipment in Turkey. Our Turkish-speaking experts have offered two-day training courses to slaughter personnel. We have written and distributed a brochure illustrating practical solutions and created a bilingual Turkish/English website: www.halal-slaughter-watch.org. We have held seminars for officials working at the Turkish Ministry of Agriculture, making recommendations for their upcoming draft of Turkey’s first-ever legislation protecting welfare of animals during slaughter.

Two of the largest manufacturing companies of slaughter equipment have now stopped producing trip-floor boxes, one slaughterhouse now pre-stuns cattle and 4 have improved their raceway design and restraint technique.

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