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## Israel's chief rabbi to mark imported beef unkosher if slaughtering process not changed

**By 2011 Metzger might no longer certify more than 80 percent of the meat imported to Israel from slaughterhouses that use shackle-and-hoist methods.**

By **Cnaan Liphshiz**

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Israel's chief rabbi intends to label 80 percent of the meat currently imported into the country as not kosher unless "cruel" slaughter practices are ended, Anglo File has learned. The decision came after pressure from American-Israeli animal welfare activists.



Israel's Chief Rabbinate  
Yona Metzger.

Photo by: Archive

According to Avi Blumenthal, assistant to Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Yona Metzger, by 2011 the Chief Rabbinate will no longer certify meat from slaughterhouses that use shackle-and-hoist - a controversial method employed in almost all South American kosher slaughterhouses, which provide 80 percent of all the meat imported into Israel.

"This is a step in the right direction," said Adam Frank, the rabbi of a Jerusalem Masorti congregation who has been lobbying with the rabbinate since 2007 for a ban on the method, in which conscious animals are chained by the ankle before being hoisted up and allowed to bleed to death from an incision to the neck.

"The chief rabbi believes this method is primitive and causes unnecessary pain and anguish to the animals," Blumenthal said. He added that Metzger has instructed Kashrut Department chief Rabbi Yaakov Sabag to set a deadline after which the rabbinate will revoke its certificate for meat manufactured through shackle-and-hoist. "If the meat factories switch to more humane, kosher methods, we will certify their meat," he added.

Metzger's decision came four weeks after the online dissemination of a hidden-camera video of shackle-and-hoist slaughter in Uruguay's largest kosher slaughterhouse. This video, along with last week's decision by New Zealand's parliament to completely ban kosher slaughter, served to draw attention to the issue, according to Frank, rabbi of the predominantly-Anglo Moreshet Yisrael congregation in the capital's center.

Frank - backed by a group of religious activists from English-speaking countries - sent Metzger a letter reminding him of criticism that Metzger himself made about the shackle-and-hoist method in 2007, following the release of an earlier undercover video of the practice in a South American slaughterhouse.

"When done properly, kosher slaughter is as humane as any other modern method, but we must also make sure the technique used causes the minimum amount of suffering," said Rabbi Danny Schiff, one of Frank's partners in the fight.

Besides Schiff - an Australia-born rabbi ordained by the Reform movement - Frank has enlisted the support of prominent Masorti Rabbi Simcha Roth, a veteran British immigrant from Herzliya. Other supporters include American Israelis Chava Rosenbaum, Doug Greener and Jared Goldfarb, and Nina Natelson from Washington D.C.

"If the Israeli rabbinate bans shackle-and-hoist meat, other rabbinic authorities in the Diaspora will follow suit," Frank said.

The shackle-and-hoist method is prohibited in Israel, the U.S. and the European Union. Kosher slaughter in those countries is done through the use of a box-like holding pen that inverts the animal just before the shechitah, in accordance with the Israel Rabbinate's demand that the lethal cut be delivered in a downward thrust.

Michael Melchior, the Danish-born former chief Orthodox rabbi of Norway, where kosher slaughter is forbidden, said that he supported banning shackle-and-hoist, adding that "lessening an animal's suffering is a religious requirement from the Torah - just like the kosher requirement itself."

Melchior - a resident of Jerusalem and longtime advocate of kosher slaughter in Europe - added that banning techniques like shackle-and-hoist would "help efforts to defend" kosher slaughter, currently banned in Switzerland, Finland, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, as well as New Zealand and Norway.

Through his long involvement in the issue, Melchior has learned that the late former chief rabbi of Jerusalem, Tzvi Pesach Frank (1873-1960 ) even gave the Swedish Jewish community a special permit to sedate animals before the slaughter, but only under certain circumstances. Melchior said this was a "revolutionary" permit which would not conform with the present-day requirements of kosher slaughter. The recently-introduced ban in New Zealand is on any slaughter where animals are not first sedated.

According to the chairman of the Cattle Breeders Association, Efri Reikin, Israel has imported some 72 kilotons of frozen meat in 2009, which translate to an average annual consumption of 14 kilos of beef and lamb per adult Israeli - a one kilo increase from 2005. The average American consumes 42 kilos of meet annually, and the Argentinean eats 58.