

# Rules and Requirements for Shechita

Ari Z. Zivotofsky

Bar Ilan University, Israel

March 15, 2010

Istanbul, Turkey

EU funded DIALREL –  
Encouraging Dialogue on  
Issues of Religious Slaughter

WP1. Religion, Legislation  
and Animal Welfare:  
Conflicting Standards

# Shechita

- The means by which an animal (mammals and fowl; not fish or grasshoppers) must be killed so that its meat is permitted for consumption according to Jewish law.

# Historically

- Carried out on a local level and tightly regulated by communal rabbinic court with a view to total picture of Jewish law that encompasses a concern for all living beings.

# The object

- Only ruminants with fully split hooves. This includes cow, sheep, deer, and giraffe; excludes pig, camel, and rabbit
- Only non-predatory fowl for which there is a tradition. Includes chicken, turkey, pigeon; excludes ostrich.

# The practitioner

- In theory, any adult Jew may shecht
- In reality, for well over 1000 years only those who receive a “license” from the community.
- Years of training; respected

# The implement

- A perfectly smooth knife that is twice the length of the intended animal's neck.



# The method

- Death by exsanguination as a result of the severing of the principal vessels of the neck in a continuous cutting motion.

# Post-cut inspection

- Inspecting for and rejection of treifot
- removal of prohibited sections





# Renegade practitioners

- May have been officially licensed, but if found to deviate from accepted practice will face sanctions – and does not represent normative standards.

# Principle of Actual Rather than Desired Effect

- The ethics of a decision must be based on the most accurate assessment of what its actual effect will be, rather than on what the principals would like the effect to be.

# Principle of Probability

- The ethics of a decision must include an assessment of the ethical risks inherent in not carrying it out weighed against the effort and ethical consequences of taking the action.

# Thank yous

- To DIALREL, Mara, and Haluk for the opportunity to participate in this group.