



FRIDAY JANUARY 18, 2008
SHEVAT 11, 5768



PETITIONER APOLOGISES FOR SHECHITA WORDING

THE wording of a petition raised at the Scottish Parliament calling for the end to the 'ritual slaughter of animals' has been amended following complaints from the Jewish community.

The original petition, by Josey Rowan of the Scottish Independence Party, called on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to bring forward legislation to ban the ritual slaughter of animals, through methods such as the shechita and the dhabaha and require the stunning of all animals before slaughter.

Concern was raised in the community and representation made through the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities.

As a result, the petitioner immediately agreed to remove the offending words, stating: "Unfortunately I was not aware that the term 'ritual slaughter' was offensive to our Jewish community.

"I would like to apologise unreservedly to the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities and any other body or individual that has expressed offence or concern and ask that my ignorance be excused. The intention of my petition is to promote animal welfare and not an attack on any of Scotland's minorities."

SCOJeC director Ephraim Borowski told the Jewish Telegraph: "We welcome Mr Rowan's unreserved apology, but remain concerned that those who purport to be fighting for animal welfare, campaign ceaselessly about the tiny number of animals that enter the kosher and halal markets, while ignoring the hugely larger number of animals left in severe distress by incompetent stunning, gassing or electrocution. That fact alone is sufficient to call their motives into question."

The petition will be formally presented to the Scottish Parliament in February and is likely to come before the Public Petitions Committee soon afterwards.

Coincidentally, an answer to a written question relating to shechita was published this week.

Labour MSP for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley Cathy Jamieson's question was "to ask the Scottish Executive whether it considers it acceptable for Scottish sheep to be exported for slaughter without pre-stunning".

Richard Lochhead, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment responded: "Although the slaughter of animals without pre-stunning does not take place in Scotland, it would be perfectly legal for this method to be used in Scottish slaughterhouses.

"The slaughter of sheep without pre-stunning for religious reasons is legal throughout the EU and to ban the export of sheep would contravene free trade rules and would be illegal under EU law."

SCOJeC public affairs officer Leah Granat, who along with Ephraim Borowski, has held meetings in Edinburgh to seek reassurance on shechita, said: "We are delighted that ministers have taken this opportunity to reconfirm their support for shechita.

"In our submission, we emphasised that shechita is a humane method of slaughter which meets the legal definition of stunning as it results in the instantaneous loss of consciousness.

"It contrasts with the huge proportion of unsuccessful pre-stunning reported recently by the RSPCA."