

Control of SARS-CoV-2 during ritual animal slaughter

There is yet no evidence that livestock or poultry can become infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus causing COVID-19. Likewise, food has not been reported route of transmission of the disease. Thus, the transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from sheep or other livestock to humans is likely not expected. Nevertheless, care should be taken to follow appropriate slaughter, processing, storage, and food preparation practices to ensure food safety and quality, animal welfare and workers' safety. Notably, the use of facial covering and physical distancing among individuals during the slaughter or sacrifice of sheep, and during the steps preparing them to be consumed, will reduce the person-to-person transmission of SARS-CoV-2, a problem that has occurred in large slaughter facilities in Europe and North America where employees work in close proximity (Dyal 2020). Personal and slaughter hygiene, as well as environmental sanitation, are essential to limit disease transmission associated with animal handling and slaughter. Increases in human cases of Crimea-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever, Rift Valley Fever, and orf, a self-limiting skin disease, have been associated with the slaughter of sheep around the time of Eid-al-Adha (Davies 2006, Veraldi, Esposito et al. 2019, Ahmed, Tahir et al. 2020). Likewise, an increase of almost 20% in diarrheal disease among Muslim children in a number of developing countries following this festival has been attributed to food safety lapses in slaughter facilities that have exceeded capacity and the extensive slaughter of sheep at home (Schwab and Armah 2019). Following basic principles of food hygiene can reduce the likelihood of disease transmission and allow for a safe and healthy holiday celebration.

Resources

Code of Hygienic Practices for Meat (CAC/RCP 58-2005)

http://www.fao.org/input/download/standards/10196/CXP_058e.pdf

General Principles of Food Hygiene (CAC/RCP 1-2003)

http://www.fao.org/input/download/standards/23/CXP_001e.pdf

Exposure of humans or animals to SARS-CoV-2 from wild, livestock, companion and aquatic animals
Qualitative exposure assessment <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9959en/ca9959en.pdf>

Food Safety in the time of COVID-19 <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca8623en>

COVID-19 and Food Safety: Guidance for competent authorities responsible for national food safety control systems <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca8842en>

COVID-19 and Food Safety: Guidance for Food Businesses

<https://apps.who.int/iris/rest/bitstreams/1274400/retrieve>

Citations

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