



Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri

NATIONAL BIOETHICS COMMITTEE

RITUAL SLAUGHTERING AND ANIMAL SUFFERING

(19th September 2003)

abstract

The NBC, drawing attention to the ontological and ethical primacy of human dignity and the responsibility that man has towards animals, deals with the inter-cultural and inter-religious issues of ritual slaughtering.

When religious freedom translates into external behaviour, it must respect certain limits deriving from comparison with other values protected by our legal system: in the case of ritual slaughtering, it must stand comparison with the principle of protection of animals and the defence of their well-being. This principle has become increasingly important in our social consciousness.

Therefore, the NBC hopes that:

- a) deliberation and research will be furthered in both scientific and religious fields; aimed at striking a balance between religious practices and the minimization of animal suffering;
- b) more research is conducted on forms of stunning, possibly acceptable by religious regulations, as already seems to occur in some cases;
- c) the legitimate economic needs of slaughter houses do not prejudice the observance of time and techniques required for the proper performance of slaughtering, especially ritual slaughtering.

The need to avoid useless suffering to animals, together with the need to observe elementary health and sanitation regulations and the need not to offend people's sensibility, induce the NBC to regard as unacceptable spontaneous and uncontrolled ritual slaughtering carried out outside authorized abattoirs and without the proper veterinarian control.

This opinion is completed by a series of annexes; some serve as core documentation, while others are critical and thought-provoking and enrich the content placing it on an international level.