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PRESSRELEASE

The National Union of the Swedish Sami People (SSR) reacts on the accusations from WSPA about unacceptable levels of pre-slaughter stress for reindeer

The National TV news show Rapport recently presented an investigation from the animal rights organisation WSPA. In the program it is stated that the Swedish reindeer industry uses illegal methods to slaughter reindeer. In addition, the story claims that reindeer are exposed to high levels of pre-slaughter stress in connection with transport and slaughter.

SSR and the Swedish reindeer industry have always had a good relationship with responsible authorities regarding the regulations for animal welfare and slaughter. The use of a captive bolt for stunning reindeer at slaughter, a technique that is mentioned as illegal in the WSPA report, is in fact the recommended legal method according to the regulations for reindeer slaughter. To use a knife for stunning the reindeer is not allowed for any kind of controlled slaughter, but may be used in emergency situations e.g. to minimize the suffering of an injured animal that quickly has to be put down.

"We don't accept any slaughter methods that are not approved by the authorities. If individual reindeer herders use a knife to stun the reindeer during organised slaughter we certainly disagree with that" says Jörgen Jonsson Chairman of SSR.

In the WSPA report it is claimed that reindeer are exposed to significant pre-slaughter stress in connection with transport. According to the Swedish regulations reindeer are slaughtered at approved stationary slaughter facilities which means they have to be transported by lorries to these facilities. All transports are also performed in accordance with legal regulations. If the transport and other pre-slaughter handling expose the reindeer to stress is a topic investigated by the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) in collaboration with SSR. This slaughter season SSR is conducting their own survey led by the reindeer meat expert Dr Eva Wiklund to study the stress levels of slaughtered reindeer, so far 1,900 reindeer have been measured. By recording the pH values in the meat and compare with earlier studies we can conclude that the overall pre-slaughter stress levels for reindeer have decreased over the last 10 years.

"From the industry's point of view we are very concerned that our reindeer should be handled in the best possible way and not be exposed to unnecessary stress in connection with slaughter. Our own survey is now indicating that we have a controlled situation in this regard" says Anders Blom, CEO of SSR.

Reindeer husbandry has evolved over a long time period and is based on using pasture resources for meat production. Most reindeer herders have a close relationship to their animals and care about their well-being. If the reindeer do well the reindeer herder will also do well. The reindeer industry therefore continuously strives to improve handling conditions even in connection with slaughter.

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