

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT

Second Delegated Legislation Committee

DRAFT MANDATORY USE OF CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION IN SLAUGHTERHOUSES (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2018

Monday 30 April 2018

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Friday 4 May 2018

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The Committee consisted of the following Members:

Chair: STEWART HOSIE

- | | |
|---|---|
| † Bacon, Mr Richard (<i>South Norfolk</i>) (Con) | † Hill, Mike (<i>Hartlepool</i>) (Lab) |
| † Badenoch, Mrs Kemi (<i>Saffron Walden</i>) (Con) | † McCarthy, Kerry (<i>Bristol East</i>) (Lab) |
| † Davies, Mims (<i>Eastleigh</i>) (Con) | Pollard, Luke (<i>Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport</i>) (Lab/
Co-op) |
| † Debbonaire, Thangam (<i>Bristol West</i>) (Lab) | † Pow, Rebecca (<i>Taunton Deane</i>) (Con) |
| † Donelan, Michelle (<i>Chippenham</i>) (Con) | † Sobel, Alex (<i>Leeds North West</i>) (Lab/Co-op) |
| † Doughty, Stephen (<i>Cardiff South and Penarth</i>) (Lab/
Co-op) | † Stevenson, John (<i>Carlisle</i>) (Con) |
| † Drew, Dr David (<i>Stroud</i>) (Lab/Co-op) | † Watling, Giles (<i>Clacton</i>) (Con) |
| Eagle, Maria (<i>Garston and Halewood</i>) (Lab) | |
| † Eustice, George (<i>Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries
and Food</i>) | Sean Kinsey, Daniel Schlappa, <i>Committee Clerks</i> |
| † Grant, Mrs Helen (<i>Maidstone and The Weald</i>)
(Con) | † attended the Committee |

Second Delegated Legislation Committee

Monday 30 April 2018

[STEWART HOSIE *in the Chair*]

Draft Mandatory Use of Closed Circuit Television in Slaughterhouses (England) Regulations 2018

6 pm

The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (George Eustice): I beg to move,

That the Committee has considered the draft Mandatory Use of Closed Circuit Television in Slaughterhouses (England) Regulations 2018.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hosie. I am delighted to introduce these important regulations, which meet the Government's manifesto commitment to make CCTV recording in slaughterhouses mandatory in England. Our manifesto commitment reflected widespread public concern about animal welfare in slaughterhouses. The regulations are made under powers in section 12 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

At the outset, I would like to emphasise that although certain provisions of the regulations—which require operators to install a CCTV system—come into force on 4 May, the regulations are drafted so that there is a transition period of six months before the offences and enforcement provisions come into force. That means that slaughterhouses have until 5 November to install a suitable CCTV system and become compliant with the regulations.

The Government have encouraged the voluntary uptake of CCTV in slaughterhouses for several years, but recently the number of slaughterhouses installing CCTV has stalled. In 2016, only 50% of red meat slaughterhouses and 70% of white meat slaughterhouses had some level of CCTV for animal welfare purposes, which is a similar level to the 2013 Food Standards Agency survey.

Slaughterhouses that had installed CCTV had not always done so in a comprehensive manner. In 2016, only 46% of slaughterhouses with CCTV had coverage in the unloading area. The level of CCTV coverage was even lower in the stun area, with less than 40% of slaughterhouses having CCTV in that area or in the bleed area. Even in slaughterhouses where CCTV is installed, key areas are not always covered by cameras.

In February 2015, the Farm Animal Welfare Committee—FAWC—produced an independent assessment of the benefits of CCTV in slaughterhouses. It identified that CCTV offers real benefits as an important and complementary aid to the official inspection of slaughterhouse practices and as an evidential method of recording animal welfare abuses.

FAWC also identified significant benefits of CCTV systems to slaughterhouse operators, from in-house review of their operations and effective staff training to providing evidence of due diligence. That can increase public confidence in the meat industry and its adherence to the UK's high animal welfare standards.

FAWC's report provided a useful basis for the Government's proposals on mandatory CCTV that we published last summer. We received nearly 4,000 responses to that public consultation, with more than 99% in favour of mandatory CCTV recording in all slaughterhouses.

The regulations will require all slaughterhouse operators to install and operate a CCTV system that provides a clear and complete picture of areas where live animals are present. That will include areas where animals are unloaded, lairaged, handled, restrained, stunned and killed. We expect CCTV installations and their use to be proportionate to the size of premises and their throughput.

An official veterinarian is still required in every slaughterhouse when in operation. Slaughterhouse operators will be required to provide access to CCTV recordings for the FSA's official veterinarian and other authorised inspectors. Access to CCTV recordings for monitoring, verification and enforcement purposes is essential, and will be especially useful where the official veterinarian undertakes other duties in the slaughterhouse and does not directly witness all incidents.

We expect OV's to carry out a timely review of CCTV to address any immediate welfare incidents, and to take advisory or enforcement action. None the less, the slaughterhouse operator will need to retain recorded images and information for 90 days. That is in line with the requirements of some farm assurance schemes, and was the duration we arrived at following our consultation.

Although CCTV will not replace, reduce or be considered a substitute for current inspection and controls of slaughterhouse practices by official veterinarians, access to CCTV recordings will provide more opportunities to assess compliance with animal welfare requirements on a proactive and reactive basis.

I turn now to why we are applying this to all slaughterhouses. We believe that the requirements for mandatory CCTV recording should be applied to all approved slaughterhouses, regardless of size, on the basis that all animals should be offered the same level of protection at the time of killing. Some 95% of our meat is killed in abattoirs that already have CCTV in some form, because the larger abattoirs tend to have CCTV. The regulations ensure that all slaughterhouses of whatever size must now have CCTV at all stages of the process. Slaughterhouses that supply the main supermarkets already have CCTV, but we want to ensure there is comprehensive coverage.

We are conscious that some of the businesses affected by this legislation are small, so we thought it appropriate in these regulations to allow six months for businesses to become compliant. In view of the considerable gains to animal welfare and the many other benefits identified, particularly for the slaughterhouse operator, the Government consider that the benefits justify the costs involved and do not deem direct financial support to the sector for CCTV to be something that should be borne by the taxpayer, although grant funding is available to slaughterhouses under a number of schemes.

The regulations will introduce mandatory CCTV recording in all 270 slaughterhouses in England, as an additional monitoring and enforcement measure to ensure that animals are spared avoidable pain, distress or suffering during the slaughter process. They form part of an important package of reforms that the Government are

delivering to improve animal welfare, such as the new system of local authority licensing of activities involving animals and the publication of updated animal welfare codes of practice. The regulations are proportionate and targeted, and will help to improve animal welfare at slaughter.

In conclusion, the regulations have been widely welcomed by many organisations, such as the British Veterinary Association, and will greatly assist the Food Standards Agency, which has been most supportive of the Government's proposals. I also appreciate that this issue has received support from many Members from all parties in the House. For those reasons, I commend the regulations to the Committee.

6.7 pm

Dr David Drew (Stroud) (Lab/Co-op): I am delighted to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hosie, and I welcome the Minister to his place. He will be pleased to hear that we will not oppose these regulations; in fact, we greatly welcome them. However, as always with the official Opposition, we have a number of questions. I will give the Minister plenty of chance to answer them, although he may want to send some answers in a more detailed form subsequently.

As the Minister says, this is a manifesto commitment, and it is clear that it is overwhelmingly popular. I am glad we are making some progress; I only wish we were making as much progress on circus animals, the ivory trade ban and live exports, all of which are within the area of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. We need to make progress on those as well. The Minister rightly says that these regulations have been properly consulted on, both within Government and externally. The Farm Animal Welfare Committee is a committee chosen by Government, so in a sense we would be surprised if it came up with anything that was not helpful to the Government, but most of the proposals put forward are laudable in their own way.

I start by saying that this is not a replacement for the way in which slaughterhouses are currently overseen. We feel strongly that this is an addition to the work of official veterinarians and indeed the FSA. I will make some points about that in the questions I put to the Minister at the end. We are worried about some of the cost implications, because over a long period of time there has been an argument for keeping slaughter close to where animals are reared, which will be difficult if we are to lose even more of our smaller abattoirs. The Minister talked about a grant regime. Some of the smaller slaughterhouses will potentially suffer because of the relative speed with which these regulations are being introduced and, although the objective behind the regulations is a good one, they will further threaten some of the smaller abattoirs. We lost something like 187 abattoirs in the period from 2001 to 2017, under both Labour and Conservative Governments. So, although we see the benefits of these regulations, there will be some issues.

Of course, these regulations come on the back of what is a pretty awful situation. It took some of the filming that Animal Aid did inside slaughterhouses to show the abuse that has gone on. At the top end of the trade, we may have a very good voluntary agreement, whereby those abattoirs have brought CCTV into use,

but it has come on the back of a number of filmed reports showing the very poor nature of what goes on at the bottom end of the trade.

Nevertheless, we very much welcome these regulations. We look forward to seeing how they will be implemented and to seeing this work being done in a comprehensive way. I would be interested to know why the de minimis figure of 200 has now moved on to CCTV coming into every slaughterhouse; it would be interesting to know how the Government came to that conclusion.

There was not a huge response from the industry itself to the consultation, although the public had a view; indeed, many of the voluntary animal welfare organisations had a very strong view. As for the industry itself, however, I have the figure of 257, although the Minister has the figure of 270; we will not argue over 13. The reality is that the industry and slaughterhouses were not really that clued into the consultation. Maybe those slaughterhouses that responded were the ones who expected this change to happen, because they already had CCTV. Nevertheless, there was a disappointing response from those involved in the slaughter process.

I will move on quickly to my 10 questions. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Well, they are very important questions. I have used the terms "abattoir" and "slaughterhouse" as interchangeable terms. Can the Minister explain what the difference is between an "abattoir" and a "slaughterhouse", because abattoirs have traditionally been at the public end and slaughterhouses have included private slaughterhouses? It would be helpful to know the legal definitions of "abattoir" and "slaughterhouse".

Secondly, it would be interesting to know who has the final say-so on where CCTV will be placed. Will it be the industry, through self-regulation, or will it be the FSA or local authorities? In fact, that is my third question: where is the border between what local authorities have traditionally done, by going in and looking at some of the issues related to how these particular businesses have been run, and the work of the Meat Hygiene Service, which of course is now under the FSA? Where is the line between those two?

That question is particularly appropriate, because today's report of a 40% cut in the number of meat hygiene inspectors was quite dramatic. I do not know where people will come from to do this work, because that body already has a shortage of people overseeing what is happening at the moment. Also, with the addition of CCTV, somebody has to look at all the tapes, otherwise installing CCTV will be a meaningless exercise.

That leads into the issue of the worry that some of us have about primary agency, with local authorities now less likely to inspect their own abattoirs and slaughterhouses; instead, that work will be passed on to some specialist local authority. In the past, that has caused some difficulties. So, could the Minister say how we will boost local authorities, because if they are going to do this job properly they will need to build it into their cost structure?

My fifth question relates to cost, which I have already touched on, and the help that may be available to smaller bodies. The 2006 Act is interesting with regard to who has access to the videos. Will the Minister explain categorically what access the public will get, given that it is they who have driven this change? It would be good to know what access the Royal Society

[Dr David Drew]

for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and other animal welfare agencies that may suspect malpractice, will get alongside the statutory authorities.

Religious slaughter is a difficult area and it has not been touched on. How will those slaughterhouses that specialise in halal and shechita slaughter, or that sometimes turn their lines over to it, handle public interest in the manner of the slaughter? The proposed secondary legislation does not mention religious slaughter. Will it apply or will religious slaughter be exempt? Will such slaughterhouses be treated the same as or differently from others?

I have almost reached the end of my comments, so Members can relax. I have touched on the industry's relative, and surprising, lack of interest. I will touch on it quickly. It is expected to keep a record for 90 days. Who will oversee that to make sure that the information is appropriately stored? That is a long time to keep a video record and it must be done properly. If there is any abuse, it will clearly lead to people believing that the situation is less easy to control than some of us wanted.

Finally, sadly some of the problems with the meat trade as a whole come after slaughter has occurred. We are discussing installing CCTV only in live animal areas. Given problems with and allegations of contaminated meat sometimes being dealt with inappropriately, what evidence would the Government seek in order to put CCTV at the other end so that we could look not just at the live animal trade but at the way in which meat is handled in general? That matters because it is where some of the problems come from.

I have asked 10 questions, including some that ran into each other. I hope that the Minister will allay our fears that this measure is not as great a change as some of us want it to be. It is, nevertheless, a welcome development, and the Government should be congratulated on introducing it at this early stage.

6.18 pm

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab): It is a pleasure to see you in the Chair, Mr Hosie. Obviously, I welcome the measure. I have pushed for it for a long time. The fact that the Government have legislated demonstrates their recognition that, as in so many instances, the voluntary approach does not always work to the extent that we would like. As I understand it, all the major supermarkets source meat from slaughterhouses with CCTV, but that is only one end of the market. Supermarkets are concerned about their public reputation and are susceptible to public opinion. There are others, however, that are not so bothered, that go to the smaller slaughterhouses and whose selling practices are far less scrutinised. They do not care about CCTV installation and we are not likely to be able to persuade them to take the voluntary approach. It is only those that are at the top end of the chain that will choose to do that, so it is important that we are resorting to making it mandatory.

Some 900 million farm animals are killed for food each year in this country. People who are aware of my beliefs will know that I do not accept that there is such a thing as humane slaughter, but that does not mean that I do not think that we should not argue for conditions to be as humane as possible, if that is not a contradiction

in terms. Animal welfare standards need to be improved, and the food safety element of that is incredibly important. CCTV will go some way towards ensuring that standards are much higher, although as my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud said, unless there is enforcement and scrutiny, with someone watching the CCTV and coming in to check it, it will be meaningless.

There have been several undercover investigations and exposés. Animal Aid and Animal Equality have been mentioned, and I have seen some horrible virtual reality footage of what has happened to pigs in slaughterhouses. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism has also done some very good work. In August 2016, through freedom of information requests, it found that there had been more than 4,000 severe breaches of animal welfare regulations in the previous two years in British slaughterhouses. In fact, there had been 9,500 animal welfare breaches, of which nearly half were category 4, which is the most serious. A single breach can include hundreds of animals, so we are not just talking about 4,500 animals that were treated appallingly; we could be talking about many more. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism highlighted instances of cruelty and neglect, and equipment failure, which can all lead to animals being slaughtered in a horrendous way.

I recently asked a series of parliamentary questions about enforcing current standards and following-up where breaches have been identified. The information I got back was shocking. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs stated in its answers that out of the 467 slaughterhouses that the FSA has audited since 2010, 65 received one unsatisfactory audit result and another 70 received multiple, successive unsatisfactory audit results. That means that nearly a third of slaughterhouses have failed their audit in some way in the past seven years, but in that time, only four slaughterhouses have had their approval withdrawn: S Bagshaw and Sons and Simply Halal for “welfare abuses”, and the Cleveland Meat Company and Summers Poultry Products for “serious deficiencies in operational hygiene procedure”. That is two approvals withdrawn for animal welfare and two for food safety.

It seems as though no action is being taken against the dozens of slaughterhouses that have received unsatisfactory audit results. They have not had their approval withdrawn, but have been allowed to carry on with business as usual. They need to be forced to make improvements, but the fact that they seem to be able to fail the audit process multiple times without action being taken suggests that failing once would not be a deterrent to them. There seems to be no suggestion that their approval would be suspended until improvements are made.

The FSA says that it will prevent a slaughterhouse from continuing to operate only if there is an imminent risk to public health or if there are serious breaches in animal welfare. Those are obviously low bars to have set, which means that an awful lot of breaches will be allowed to pass without any action being taken. Numerous potential violations would be of concern to the public if they knew about them, whether or not they cared about animal welfare. Most people would also be concerned if food hygiene was not up to scratch, and we have seen many reports about such failings, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud said. The 2 Sisters investigation is

not just about conditions in slaughterhouses or animal welfare; it is about the way the carcasses are treated as they are processed for sale.

DEFRA admitted to me that the receipt of an unsatisfactory audit result determines only the frequency of future audits and unannounced inspections. In other words, if a slaughterhouse fails an audit once, they are more likely to get checked again. As I have said, however, that does not lead to any action being taken. Certainly for weeks, but potentially for months, the slaughterhouse would be allowed to continue operating and putting out meat that has been produced in deficient circumstances.

Installing CCTV in all slaughterhouses will go some way to preventing lapses in hygiene standards and animal welfare abuses, but it partly depends on where the cameras are positioned and, above all, whether there is important action at the end of it. There is still a hands-off, light-touch approach to audits and inspections at the moment, which the Government have constructed. We need to rethink how we monitor food safety and animal welfare standards before another scandal occurs.

I just want to mention one more thing in passing—as we always expect, Brexit rears its ugly head. I am concerned by reports that I have read—last month in *The Guardian*, for example—about the growth in the number of high-speed slaughterhouses in the US, where 21 pigs a minute are slaughtered. Sixty Members of Congress wrote a letter saying that

“rapid line speeds present some of the greatest risks of inhumane treatment as workers are often pressured to take violent shortcuts to keep up.”

The undercover investigation of the slaughterhouse where so many pigs were being killed said not only that pigs were covered in abscesses and faeces and other fairly disgusting things, but also that there were workers beating, dragging and prodding the pigs towards slaughter, because they had to keep up with that incredibly fast pace. As I have said, I do not particularly subscribe to the idea of humane slaughter, but certainly that is inhumane slaughter, taken to the nth degree. I should hope that with Brexit, as we open our doors to US trade deals, we will stand firm against that.

Finally—the Minister will know that this is something we have discussed in the past—I think 95% of vets in our abattoirs are EU nationals. There is an issue about what happens if we cannot get the vets to operate in abattoirs and inspect them because they are not allowed into the country. I think at the moment most of them will be allowed to stay and get their five years and residency, but what if we do not attract those vets post-Brexit? I think there is a vet training school in Spain that specifically trains vets to work in abattoirs. Vets in this country do not particularly want to work in them, and we can understand why, as their job is about saving animals' lives. This is an important issue, which goes to the heart of our debate. There is no point in having cameras recording what goes on if we cannot get our house in order in the first place, and then follow up and make sure that the rules are followed.

6.27 pm

George Eustice: I shall try to cover as many points as possible. I am grateful for the support of the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Stroud, on the regulations. There has truly been cross-party support on this issue

for a number of years. I want to address some of the legitimate concerns that he raised, on which I think I shall be able to give him the reassurance he wants.

First, we are absolutely clear that the introduction of CCTV in slaughterhouses is not a replacement for the current inspection regime. It does not mean we are going to change the requirement for full-time official veterinarians on hand in the abattoirs. We are not planning to change any of the existing requirements. The CCTV is in addition to, rather than a replacement for, OVs and other inspections.

The hon. Gentleman raised the issue of cost. Like him, I would not want to damage some of the smaller abattoirs, whose existence means animals do not have to travel so far. If we close down more abattoirs, more animals will have to travel further. However, the cost is quite modest: the cost of CCTV systems has been coming down a lot in recent years. We estimate that the average cost for most smaller abattoirs will be in the region of £2,500. As I said in my opening remarks, we do not envisage paying the cost directly, because it is fairly modest even for small abattoirs.

The other thing to notice is that, as the report by FAWC identified, there are commercial benefits for food business operators in having CCTV in place, because it can help them to manage their lairage facilities. For instance, in its report FAWC highlighted the fact that it is easier to spot lameness or other problems in sheep with CCTV than when someone comes and perhaps spooks the animals. We believe there are advantages and cost savings to small businesses from putting in CCTV.

The hon. Gentleman highlighted the work that organisations such as Animal Aid have done. I agree with him. In fact, one thing that a couple of years ago made me determined to make changes was that I frankly did not think it was good enough that we seemed all too often to have to rely on activists making surreptitious recordings. After the event we would inspect and carry out enforcement on the basis of the footage that had been surreptitiously collected. That is not the right way to run things. If it is the case that some of our official veterinarians were unable to spot bad practice and malpractice in those abattoirs, it is right that we make it a legal requirement to have CCTV in slaughterhouses.

The hon. Gentleman asked why we believe it is necessary to require this of all abattoirs, given that, as I said in my opening remarks, some 95% of animals are currently slaughtered in abattoirs that have CCTV. For me, there are a couple of reasons why we need to do that. First, some of the problems we have experienced are in those smaller or medium-sized abattoirs that do not always have CCTV in place. Secondly, the larger abattoirs tend to have it, but even in the larger abattoirs we have seen problems. The hon. Member for Bristol East raised a couple of cases where enforcements were brought; in those cases, sometimes there was CCTV in place but they were not adequately monitoring it or recording all areas, so even with CCTV they were not picking up those problems. Therefore, having legal clarity about CCTV covering all areas where there are live animals is the right approach to take.

The hon. Member for Stroud highlighted the fact that, of all the responses, only a small number were from the industry. To be fair to the industry, as he pointed out, we have lost a lot of abattoirs, so they are

[George Eustice]

small in number, and we had thousands of responses to the consultation because it is an issue the public care about deeply. My conversations with the industry and representative bodies on this issue have shown that their view has broadly come round to the idea. Rather than have voluntary codes and chivvy people to join such schemes and voluntarily adopt CCTV, the industry has increasingly got to the point where it would rather have a level playing field and, if we want to bring in regulations, have them applied across the board so that everybody is treated the same. It is fair to say that the industry recognises that there could be some value in this and that there is an advantage in having a level playing field.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the difference between abattoirs and slaughterhouses. I was not aware of that distinction, but I will check. However, I am reliably informed by my officials that in law, commercial slaughterhouses and abattoirs are interchangeable terms. In most of the EU regulations that I see, the term slaughterhouse tends to be used, and in some of the older domestic legislation the term abattoir is sometimes used, but these regulations apply to all commercial slaughterhouses or abattoirs.

The hon. Gentleman asked where cameras will be placed. We have deliberately kept that open, for the important reason that a small abattoir, killing a small number of animals, might be able to cover all areas where there are live animals with just a couple of cameras. A larger abattoir, slaughtering thousands and thousands of animals per day, may need multiple cameras to ensure it is covering all areas. We are clear that it will need to cover all areas, including unloading areas, areas where there is lairage, areas where stunning takes place and the bleed areas. Right up until the point that the animal is dead, there must be a clear CCTV recording.

The hon. Gentleman asked who will decide where the cameras should be placed. The FSA is currently working with the Department to put together guidance on that. Ultimately, the Food Standards Agency and the official veterinarians employed by the FSA in each abattoir will be the final adjudicators on where cameras should go. We envisage it being a discussion with the food business operator, which will need to satisfy the local FSA inspector that the areas where it plans to locate cameras are adequate to satisfy the legislation.

Dr Drew: The Minister has visited slaughterhouses, as I have, so he knows it is not an easy job. If there is a dispute, will the final say-so be with the FSA or DEFRA?

George Eustice: We have designed it in such a way that we will trust the FSA official veterinarian to make that final judgment call and to ensure that the abattoirs that they are responsible for inspecting comply with the legislation. Will I potentially end up with letters from people complaining? Quite possibly. Will I have to get involved? Quite likely. But the intention is that the FSA OVs will lead on that.

The hon. Gentleman asked who would be responsible for inspecting the recordings. Again, that will be the official veterinarians. He referred to local authorities, but it is important to recognise that the FSA is responsible for food safety policy and, in abattoirs, also responsible

for enforcing animal welfare policy, although it is not responsible for animal welfare policy. So DEFRA is responsible for animal welfare policy, but the FSA is responsible for implementing in the abattoirs the policy that we set for it.

The hon. Gentleman asked about public access. We do not intend there to be public access to the recordings. I shall explain why. The Farm Animal Welfare Committee looked at the issue in depth and made a very sensible point: used properly, CCTV in slaughterhouses can be an important aid to food business operators. He made the point that a job in an abattoir is not an easy one, and sometimes things go wrong. Most of the time when things go wrong, it is not deliberate—sometimes errors are made. The argument made by FAWC therefore is that we need to create a space where those recordings can be used to help educate and train staff and to pull people up where mistakes might have been made. It might not always be appropriate for that to be publicly available or for there to be a prosecution in every instance.

The hon. Gentleman asked about religious slaughter and slaughterhouses engaged in that. I confirm that yes, the requirements in the draft regulations will apply to religious slaughter, just as they will to any slaughterhouse. There is no exemption for religious slaughter when it comes to the requirement to have CCTV. That is important to enforce existing provisions in national legislation on things such as standstill times and the additional requirements for animals slaughtered in accordance with religious requirements.

The hon. Member for Stroud also asked who will enforce the provision that recordings be kept for 90 days. Again, we will expect that of the official veterinarians. They are full time in the slaughterhouses, and we believe that they can enforce that provision because if they are there every day, they would have a pretty good idea if recordings started to go missing or there were any type of fraud.

The hon. Gentleman asked finally about CCTV after slaughter, but the purpose of the draft regulations is narrow: to protect animal welfare. He is right that there have been some instances in the news recently of wider problems and other types of food fraud being committed, but we have introduced these regulations to protect animal welfare.

I now turn briefly to some of the points made by the hon. Member for Bristol East. She talked about her concern that things were not always followed up and that there is not always enforcement. I would say, however, that just because decisions are made not to withdraw an operator's licence, that does not mean that action has not been taken. Indeed, the WATOK regulations, which govern the welfare of animals at the time of killing, create the powers—though we had similar provisions under the Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations 1995—to issue stop notices, for example, so an OV can stop a line or any production until something is sorted out. We also take regular action to reduce or remove the licences of individual slaughtermen, where there has been abuse, although we might stop short of reducing or removing the operator's licence. Other facilities such as improvement notices and so on are also included under the WATOK regulations. Lots can be done short of closing a facility down, which is obviously a severe sanction that we rightly reserve for those activities with which we have the greatest problem.

The hon. Lady mentioned the development in the United States of—as she put it—high-speed slaughter. We have a very different animal welfare culture in the UK from the US, and we have been absolutely clear that we will not reduce our animal welfare standards—far from it; indeed, we would like to enhance them. We are working with a number of organisations on issues such as improving the slaughter of pigs, in particular the gas mixture used, and we have no intention of taking the US route.

On EU nationals, finally, the hon. Lady is right: we have a lot of EU nationals in our slaughterhouses. The Prime Minister has been very clear that we will protect

the rights of those who are here and, as a number of hon. Members will know, the Migration Advisory Committee is looking closely at our labour needs after we leave the EU.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Committee has considered the draft Mandatory Use of Closed Circuit Television in Slaughterhouses (England) Regulations 2018.

6.40 pm

Committee rose.

