



Municipal Slaughterhouse or Abattoir

Slaughterhouses have existed as long as there have been settlements too large for individuals to rear their own stock for personal digestion and consumption.

Early maps of London show numerous stockyards in the periphery of the city, where slaughter occurred in the open air. A term for such open-air slaughterhouse is a shambles. There are streets named "The Shambles" in some English towns (e.g. Worcester, York) which got their name from having been the site on which butchers killed and prepared animals for consumption.

A "private slaughterhouse" is unregulated and can exist on private property, such as a backyard or butcher's shed.

In the eighteenth century, reformers argued that "public slaughterhouses" would be preferable. Because they would be regulated, they could be monitored and more hygienic, more spacious, and they would remove the sight of animal slaughter from the general public.

"By accident, I found the first mention of the Eveleth abattoir. The date is January 18, 1916. I wonder if it was built in 1915." Correspondence from Kathleen Bergan at the Iron Range Historical society 7/23/2012. jkbergan@cpinternet.com

The standards and regulations governing slaughterhouses vary considerably around the world. In many countries the slaughter of animals is regulated by custom and tradition rather than by law. In the non-Western world, including the Arab world, the Indian sub-continent, etc., both forms of meat are available: one which is produced in modern mechanized slaughterhouses, and the other from local butcher shops.

In some communities animal slaughter may be controlled by religious laws, most notably halal for Muslims and kashrut for Jewish communities. These both require that the animals being slaughtered should be conscious at the point of death, and as such animals cannot be stunned prior to killing. This can cause conflicts with national regulations when a slaughterhouse adhering to the rules of religious preparation is located in some Western countries. In Islamic and Jewish law, captive bolts and other methods of pre-slaughter paralysis are generally not permissible, due to it being forbidden for an animal to be killed prior to slaughter. Various halal food authorities have more recently permitted the use of a recently developed fail-safe system of head-only stunning where the shock is less painful and non-fatal, and where it is possible to reverse the procedure and revive the animal after the shock.

In many societies' traditional cultural and religious aversion to slaughter led to prejudice against the people involved. In Japan, where the ban on slaughter of livestock for food was lifted only in the late 19th century, the newly found slaughter industry drew workers primarily from villages of *burakumin*, who traditionally worked in occupations relating to death (such as executioners and undertakers). In some parts of western Japan, prejudice faced by current and former residents of such areas (*burakumin* "hamlet people") is still a sensitive issue. Because of this, even the Japanese word for "slaughter" (屠殺 *tosatsu*) is deemed politically incorrect by some pressure groups as its inclusion of the kanji for "kill" (殺) supposedly portrays those who practice it in a negative manner.

Some countries have laws that exclude specific animal species or grades of animal from being slaughtered for human consumption, especially those that are taboo food. The former Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee suggested in 2004 introducing legislation banning the slaughter of cows throughout India, as Hinduism holds cows as sacred and considers their slaughter unthinkable and offensive. This was often opposed on grounds of religious freedom. The slaughter of cows and the importation of beef into the nation of Nepal are strictly forbidden.