

OPINION

It's time to require CCTV in Canadian slaughter plants

By STEPHANIE BROWN AND CLAIRE BRUNER-PRIME ([HTTPS://WWW.HILLTIMES.COM/AUTHOR/STEPHANIE-BROWN-AND-CLAIRE-BRUNER-PRIME](https://www.hilltimes.com/author/stephanie-brown-and-claire-bruner-prime)) JUN. 29, 2018

The U.K.'s legislation is intended to demonstrate to consumers around the world that U.K. food is produced to the highest standards.



U.K. legislation was passed in February this year, and went into effect in May, with six months for businesses to comply. *Photograph courtesy of Max Pixel*

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Use of closed-circuit television (CCTV) in slaughter plants is evolving globally. In preparation for Brexit, the U.K. passed legislation in May (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cctv-becomes-mandatory-in-all-abattoirs-in-england>) requiring CCTV in all British slaughter plants.

Both countries and corporations recognize CCTV as an effective tool to ensure better treatment of animals. For example, Cargill, a multi-national slaughter company, adopted CCTV as policy, seeing its use, and third-party auditing, as effective tools to quantify and verify humane treatment of animals before and during slaughter.

Over the years, pressure has been increasing to install CCTV in all Australian slaughterhouses. The country's meat industry (https://www.animalsaustralia.org/media/press_releases.php?release=234) faces a growing global movement (<https://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/calls-for-cctv-cameras-in-abattoirs-to-prevent-animal-cruelty/news-story/1acd6399909ca2d37c07abf211cc3aa6>) towards cameras, following the shuttering of some Australian abattoirs for animal abuse.

Dr. Temple Grandin, a well-known animal-behaviour expert (https://munchies.vice.com/en_us/article/qkn383/would-video-surveillance-in-slaughterhouses-actually-stop-animal-abuse), says cameras have stopped false reporting by slaughter plant supervisors. Stunning and sensibility in animals can be observed, and it has stopped use of electric prods on animals. She is a big fan of video systems, noting they must be independently monitored by third-party auditors outside the plant over the internet, and be 24-7 continuous, not 24-7 sampling, from multiple areas in abattoirs. She also believes one day the public will be able to see what goes on in kill plants.

Cameras are not perfect, but they are an effective tool to promote humaneness on the ground.

The American Meat Institute, a trade association (<https://www.meatinstitute.org/ht/display/ReleaseDetails/i/121524>) representing the majority of U.S. meat plants, has a video series (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BoB3tf9Q2AA>) hosted by Dr. Grandin that explain CCTV. Evidence suggests workers may be less likely to abuse animals with cameras present.

U.K. legislation was passed in February this year, and went into effect in May, with six months (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cctv-becomes-mandatory-in-all-abattoirs-in-england>) for businesses to comply. All slaughterhouses in the U.K. will have compulsory CCTV cameras to safeguard against deliberate violence toward animals. The legislation is intended to demonstrate to consumers around the world that U.K. food is produced to the highest standards.

U.K. supermarkets backed compulsory CCTV, as did the Farm Animal Welfare Committee, British Veterinary Association, the Food Standards Agency, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and British Meat Processors Association. U.K. Environment Secretary Michael Gove noted, the government wants to “cement our status (<https://www.hsa.org.uk/news-events/news/post/55--cctv-in-slaughterhouses-a-an-update>) as a global leader by continuing to raise the bar.”

Israel and France have both introduced mandatory CCTV following undercover exposés. Similar exposés by an animal rights organization of grievous cruelty in Canadian slaughter plants were reported on CTV (<https://www.ctvnews.ca/w5/hidden-camera-investigation-reveals-chicken-slaughterhouse-practices-1.2299278>).

A consideration is cost of cameras and monitoring. The U.K. environment minister, Michael Gove, stated the cost of installing cameras is relatively modest, proposing the cost be split between industry and the consumer.

In Canada, government oversight of slaughter leaves too much to chance.

In a bid to reduce spending, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)—the agency responsible for federal slaughter oversight—filed a business plan with Parliament outlining “planned failure rates” with “90% compliance” considered acceptable for various programs, including meat and poultry inspections. CFIA’s program is to decrease overall spending from \$710 million to \$608.8 million for fiscal years 2017 – 2020.

Canadians care about animals during slaughter. More than 7,000 Canadians signed a federal e-petition requesting CCTV cameras (<https://openparliament.ca/debates/2018/2/7/nathaniel-erskine-smith-3/>) in our slaughter plants, according to Liberal MP Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Ont.), who sponsored it.

Canada’s regulations for meat inspection acknowledge CCTV: “The CFIA encourages federal establishments to use appropriate video or electronic monitoring, however video surveillance alone does not assure effective evaluation and monitoring of the sensibility of animals.” It further notes: “The electronic monitoring system must be designed, maintained, cleaned and operated

(<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/meat-and-poultry-products/manual-of-procedures/chapter-12/animal-welfare-requirements/eng/1392144659190/1392144660111?chap=0>) to permit a continuous view of animals from unloading, as they are handled in lairage as well as humane stunning, sticking and bleed out.”

Well said, CFIA. Perhaps if CCTV were required in all Canadian kill plants, exposés by Canadian animal groups would not be needed.

Stephanie Brown and Claire Bruner-Prime are directors of the Canadian Coalition for Farm Animals, a farm-animal protection organization based in Toronto.

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