

## **Horned Cattle – Slaughter Issues**

### **Extracts from Nibblers online discussion group (2003)**

I have just had a query from a colleague in the Tomorrow's Heathland Heritage programme.

He was planning on using highland cattle on a grazing project but has recently heard that the horns of highlands are too big for the slaughterhouse and need to be sawn off before they can be processed.

This has created a number of obvious concerns e.g. stressing animals prior to slaughter and animal welfare, potential poor public image and so on.

Can you, or the other nibblers, confirm/deny this rumour? Any comments gratefully received.

Regards,

Steve Clarke  
THH Programme Manager  
English Nature

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If there is no other solution, it makes a good press story highlighting the difficulties of traditional breed graziers working within the inflexible constraints of commerce and hygiene regulations. Highland cattle have that "cuddly" factor. The idea of sawing off their horns because of commercial pressures could capture people's imagination. Especially if the animal in any publicity shot was called "Samson".

David Hodd

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For most animals less than 30 months the horns are not too big for conventional head yokes. For older cattle you might need to arrange with the abattoir for a special yoke. Several of the people in Scotland finishing Highland bullocks commercially dehorn the bullocks as calves - this should not be considered an option for the adults / breeding stock - for obvious reasons. I think it is possible to have a licenced slaughterman kill animals on-farm so (with minimal suitable facilities) this might be another option.

Eric SIGNAL

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Re the horns of highland cattle, I spoke to a friend, David Faulkner-Bryant - a respected breeder on the Isle of Skye. Up there, the slaughter houses are 'equipped' for horns. Elsewhere, highlands are de-budded when young, to overcome this problem. Another short-term problem will be the 30 month ruling - highlands mature @ 3 1/2 yrsd of age, their beef is superb! (There is the Special Beef Scheme operated by a few slaughterhouses that take beef up to 43 months?).

Monty Larkin

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