

For immediate release: 2nd March 2018

Bowood slaughterhouse staff sentenced at Leeds Magistrates Court

Three slaughtermen and one former company director were sentenced today (March 2) at Leeds Magistrates Court, after pleading guilty to animal cruelty offences. Three defendants received suspended prison sentences (between 16-20 weeks) and all were ordered to pay costs. The case was brought against staff at Bowood Yorkshire Lamb slaughterhouse, in Thirsk. It followed covert filming by Animal Aid over the course of three days in December 2014. This revealed a host of shocking incidents of animal cruelty. When the case was tried in January 2018, the charge against one defendant was dropped, but the remaining four pleaded guilty to offences relating to causing unnecessary suffering to animals. The case was adjourned and sentencing finally took place today.

Animal Aid's hidden cameras revealed sheep being: kicked in the face; smashed into solid objects headfirst; and picked up and hurled by their legs, fleeces, throats and ears. One worker was filmed repeatedly hacking at the throats of conscious sheep. Another worker was filmed standing on the neck of a conscious sheep, then bouncing up and down. Slaughterhouse workers laughed as a sheep bled to death with spectacles drawn around her eyes in green paint. Slaughtermen were also found taunting and frightening the sheep by waving knives, smacking them on the head and shouting at them.

Animal Aid believes that the poor design and shambolic set-up of the slaughterline guaranteed that animals would suffer. The area was held together with pallets and string. Sheep fell some distance from a chute onto a slippery floor in the killing area, and were often unable to stand. They were then frequently launched at some speed headfirst into a solid upright structure. With the sheep unable or unwilling to cooperate, Animal Aid filmed the four conveyor operators evidently taking out their frustrations on the animals.

Says Animal Aid Campaign Manager Tor Bailey:

'We greet these sentences with huge disappointment, since we do not feel that they reflect the severity of the abuses uncovered by our investigation. At Bowood slaughterhouse we filmed horrendous incidents of cruelty, which were meted out to defenceless animals. But we must remember that this is not just an isolated case. Time and again our footage has revealed shocking abuse and lawbreaking across the industry, from "higher welfare" to stun and non-stun slaughterhouses. Slaughterhouses are production lines, staffed by workers who inevitably become desensitised, where vulnerable animals are "processed" against their will, bringing their short lives to an end prematurely. Quite simply, there is no kind way to kill someone who wants to live. We would urge anyone who feels moved by this terrible suffering to go vegan.'

Notes for Editors

- More in depth information about the original investigation including stills and footage published at the time can be viewed here: <https://www.animalaid.org.uk/extreme-cruelty-inside-yorkshire-slaughterhouse-exposed/>
- Animal Aid's statement on stunned vs non-stunned slaughter, released at the time of the investigation, is available here: <http://animalaid.wpengine.com/footage-bowood-yorkshire-lamb-slaughterhouse-animal-aid-statement/>
- Administrators confirmed that the company went into administration and all employees were made redundant 6 months after we released the results of our investigation.
- For further information or interviews, please phone 07786 159 934.