

For Immediate Release

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Nation's Largest Lamb Producer Enters Consent Decree with USDA to Reform Killing and Other Practices

Compassion Over Killing, Public Justice sued under False Claims Act on behalf of whistleblower; Consent Decree provides government oversight, compels more humane slaughter

Superior Farms, part of the largest lamb slaughter operation in the United States, will reform its killing practices after it [settled a federal False Claims Act lawsuit](#) brought by Compassion Over Killing, thanks to the work of one of its undercover investigators. That whistleblower witnessed what he believed were a variety of humane handling violations—despite the company's claim to be using slaughter practices in keeping with religious law—stemming from the mass, rapid kill floor used by Superior Farms. The team representing the whistleblower believe the inhumane slaughter may have been designed to better preserve lamb body parts for use as dog toys.

Superior Farms has been awarded numerous contracts from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Department of Defense to supply both fresh and frozen meat to the government, including to the National School Lunch Program. USDA's contracts require suppliers to comply with the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act.

As a part of this settlement, Superior Farms parent company Transhumance has entered into [a consent decree with USDA](#) involving oversight and reform of several of its practices.

COK determined its undercover investigator's recording showed:

- Violations of the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act, which requires that animals a) be rendered insensible to pain before slaughtered, or b) be slaughtered in accordance with religious ritual that prevents the animal from feeling pain during the remainder of the slaughter process (such as kosher or halal methods)
- A policy of changing the "best by" date on fresh meat to make it appear fresher than it is. At times the dates were changed by more than two weeks
- A repeated failure to comply with its internal policy to run meat through metal detectors to ensure the meat is safe for consumption

The [consent decree](#) with USDA mandates that Superior Farms:

- Within 30 days, must designate a Humane Handling Coordinator with at least two years of experience in livestock slaughter or who has taken instructional courses and training in humane handling and slaughter from a reputable organization. The humane handling coordinator will ensure compliance with humane slaughter law and that equipment used to restrain and stun animals have been tested for functionality and that animals are rendered unconscious by a single application
- Conduct refresher training for its management, supervisors, and employees working in the live animal areas in all aspects of the humane handling and slaughter requirements set forth in the HMS within 60 days
- To the extent that it continues to market itself as Halal, Superior Farms must maintain active certification for Halal slaughter from an outside Halal certifying organization

"This case represents a milestone for animal advocates, where a public advocacy organization teamed up with the federal government to set a standard for oversight and enforcement and to promote reform." said Cheryl Leahy, General Counsel at Compassion Over Killing. "COK pursued this case with the vision that this resolution delivers: real change for the animals at Superior Farms and a message to animal agribusinesses that compliance with humane slaughter law is not optional -- they are not free to police themselves, including at ritual slaughter establishments."

"This settlement sends a loud and clear message to industrial animal ag that consumer rights and animal welfare groups alike will hold it to account when it makes false claims, including leveraging the government where necessary," said David Muraskin, Senior Food Project Attorney at Public Justice, who represents the whistleblower. "For consumers who follow religiously-proscribed diets and those who don't, this is a historic victory, and industrial animal ag companies should be on notice that the USDA, DoD and watchdogs will not allow them to continue to violate the law."

The whistleblower in this case was represented by Cheryl Leahy of Compassion Over Killing, Richard Elias of Elias LLC, David Muraskin and Brian Hardingham of Public Justice, and Jennifer Verkamp of Morgan Verkamp.

Kelli L. Taylor of the U.S. Department of Justice was among the government attorneys intervening in the case.

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About the Public Justice Food Project

The Food Project supports rural communities, farmers, workers, and allies to fight for a just, humane, sustainable, and regenerative animal agriculture system.

About Compassion Over Killing

Compassion Over Killing (COK) is a nonprofit animal protection organization working to end the abuse of farmed animals through undercover investigations, litigation, corporate outreach, public education, and other advocacy programs.