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Letter from Rabbi Armand Rine to Henry Spira

Armand Rine

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July 18, 1991

Mr. Henry Spira
Animal Rights International
P.O. Box 214, Planetarium Station
New York, New York 10024

Dear Mr. Spira,

I find your letter of March 16, 1991 to Mr. John Oedzes of Brown Packing Company disturbing. You quote "a number of concerned religious activists" without actually mentioning who they are.

I am a kosher slaughterer and Rabbi for 27 years including continuous service to Brown Packing Company during this time. I have witnessed innumerable slaughtering of animals over the years, both kosher and non-kosher, in all types of plants under all types of conditions. I take issue when I hear the hoist and shackle method referred to as "cruel and traumatic" treatment of animals, when, in fact, it is no more cruel or traumatic than any other method of restraint. I've witnessed many hoist and shackle situations in which the animal remains totally calm even after landed on the rail and cut by the Rabbi.

The key in all of these situations is in the TOTAL handling of the animal from the feeder to packer, and at the packer the off-loading, drive and final handling or restraining. Everyone involved must be calm, treat the animals calmly and with dignity. If not, no restraint system will eliminate the fear, confusion, and pain caused to the animal.

Judaism, as recorded in the Old Testament, and expounded later in the Talmud, has always been concerned about proper and humane treatment of all animals. From concern to overloading an animal, overtaxing an ox in the field, crossbreeding, allowing animals to "rest" on the Sabbath, and certainly proper methods of slaughter, whether sacrificially or for consumption, our record is proud and clear on animal welfare. To imply that Rabbis who supervise kosher slaughter, and are Orthodox observant Jews, are totally insensitive to these laws while upholding all other Jewish laws is an insult to their intelligence.

To reiterate and conclude, we, as Rabbis and kosher slaughterers, are as actively concerned about animal rights, animal welfare, and animal handling as the vocal, formal groups such as yours. If indeed there was evident abuse in the shackle and hoist system that created cruelty and undeniable pain to the animal, we would not continue to kosher in that manner. As long as we do, suffice it to say that it is no more abusive than other forms of restraint if the animals are handled properly, which they are at Brown Packing Company.

Respectfully,

Rabbi Armand Rine

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