



Media Release

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For Immediate Release:

HSA awards Centenary Scholarship to develop humane mechanical methods for killing chickens

The Humane Slaughter Association (HSA) has awarded its first Research Training Scholarship, commemorating the HSA's Centenary this year, to Jessica Hopkins of the Scottish Agricultural College (SAC). Jessica will undertake a three-year research programme at doctoral level to address the major welfare problem of the need for a humane method for killing chickens.

When the need for emergency killing of sick and injured birds occurs on large-scale commercial chicken farms, the usual method is neck dislocation. This method is also routinely used (ie for non-emergency killing) in some smaller commercial operations and smallholdings, and where 'backyard' chickens are kept. Thus, very large numbers of birds are killed this way. However, there is evidence that this method is not ideal: it may be difficult for some people to perform effectively every time and even when it is performed appropriately birds may retain brain activity for up to 30 seconds, for part of which time consciousness may persist. From January 2013, European law will limit the number of birds that can be killed in this way.

Various types of culling equipment are available but none are ideal. For example, some are affordable but have welfare risks, others are humane but too expensive for all smallholders. There is thus a pressing need for a humane, easily used and accessible alternative.

The research programme will investigate the potential for modification of existing devices developed for use in other species (eg rabbits), and includes scope for the development of totally new approaches. The aim is to develop a reliably humane, effective and affordable method for use by all poultry keepers anywhere in the world.

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Note to Editors:

As an independent registered charity, the HSA is unique in working exclusively to achieve the highest worldwide standards in food animal welfare at markets, during transport and at slaughter through scientific and technical advances, education and training. Its work includes researching, refining and demonstrating humane slaughter methods, publishing material such as guidelines, best practice, books and videos, funding research projects and the development of equipment. Specialist technical staff provide expert and practical advice on all welfare issues relating to food animals.

The HSA is funded by voluntary donations, subscriptions and legacies.

For more information about the HSA's work call 01582 831919, email info@hsa.org.uk or visit www.hsa.org.uk

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