



The Ruling on Machine Slaughtered Chicken

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One of the most pressing contemporary concerns faced by Muslims around the world - especially in non-Muslim-majority countries - is the question of whether machine-slaughtered chicken is permissible (Ḥalāl) to consume. With mass production and technological advancement dominating the meat industry, many Muslims find themselves uncertain: if a chicken is slaughtered by a mechanical process, does it still meet the conditions of Islamic slaughter (Dhabḥ)?

This issue holds particular relevance in Australia, where a significant portion of poultry is processed through machines. As a result, confusion and disagreement persist within Muslim communities regarding the permissibility of consuming such meat.

In this article, we aim to shed light on the matter through a careful examination of the Qur'ān, the Aḥādīth of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, and the principles of Islamic jurisprudence, to better understand whether machine-slaughtered chicken aligns with the requirements of Sharī'ah.

Allāh's Name Not Being Recited at the Time of Slaughter

One key condition for Ḥalāl slaughter is the mention of Allāh's name (Tasmiyah) at the time of slaughter. A common question arises: if the animal is slaughtered correctly (e.g., veins are cut properly) but the name of Allāh is not mentioned, is the meat still Ḥalāl?

Allāh ﷻ states in the Qur'ān:

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا لَمْ يُذْكَرِ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَإِنَّهُ لَفِسْقٌ

"And do not eat of that upon which the name of Allāh has not been mentioned - for indeed, it is grave disobedience". (Qur'ān 6:121)

Shaykh 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Muḥaddith Dehlawī (RA) explains that this verse refers to animals upon which Allāh's name is not mentioned at the time of slaughter - regardless of how the animal dies or who slaughters it (be it a Muslim, a person of the book, or otherwise). Such meat remains Ḥarām.

There is scholarly difference regarding forgetfulness in saying the Tasmiyah. Some scholars (including Ibn 'Umar, Nāfi', Sha'bī, Ibn Sīrīn, Dāwūd, and Zuhri (RA)) hold that if Allāh's name is not mentioned, even out of forgetfulness, the meat is still not permissible. On the other hand, scholars like 'Alī, Ibn 'Abbās, Ṭāwūs, Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyib, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Abū Ḥanīfah, Mālik, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (RA), and others state that if the omission is due to forgetfulness, the meat is still Ḥalāl.

This latter opinion is supported by the Ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ:

ذَبِيحَةُ الْمُسْلِمِ حَلَالٌ سَمَّى أَوْ لَمْ يَسْمَرْ مَا لَمْ يَتَعَمَّدْ

"The slaughter of a Muslim is Ḥalāl, whether he mentions Allāh's name or not, as long as he does not omit it intentionally". (Badā'i' al-Ṣanā'i', 4:167)

Ibn Kathīr, in his Tafsīr, affirms this view and explains that the verse prohibits slaughter without mentioning Allāh's name, but does not include cases of forgetfulness.

This discussion is highly relevant today in the context of machine-slaughtered poultry, where in many cases, Allāh's name is not recited on each individual bird. Some claim that Tasmiyah is not necessary for every animal, but as we will see, the Qur'ānic and Ḥadīth evidence demands a more careful evaluation of this claim.

What is the Islamic legislation behind machine slaughtering?

In recent times, a major point of contention has arisen regarding the permissibility of chickens slaughtered by machines. Are such animals Ḥalāl or not?

Those who argue in favour of its permissibility often claim that reciting the name of Allāh is not required for every individual animal. This view is attributed to the opinion of Imām al-Shāfi'ī, who stated based on a Ḥadīth, that the name of Allāh resides in the heart of a Muslim. As such, they argue that if the slaughterer is a Muslim, the verbal recitation becomes unnecessary - even if done intentionally.

However, the majority of scholars maintain that pronouncing the name of Allāh is obligatory at the time of slaughter, regardless of whether the slaughter is done by hand or machine. This position stresses that Tasmiyah is a condition for Ḥalāl slaughter and must be recited upon each individual animal.

The question then arises: Is the machine a Muslim? Or has the name of Allāh been fed into it? The answer is clearly no. To excuse the omission of Tasmiyah on such grounds is both a flawed analogy and a misuse of Imām al-Shāfi'ī's view. Let us not misrepresent scholarly opinions to justify personal convenience. Misusing a Madhhab to support one's innovation is a serious injustice.

There are several reasons why chickens slaughtered via machines cannot be deemed fully Ḥalāl. The issue revolves around whether the Shar'ī conditions of lawful slaughter (Dhakāh) are fulfilled. If even one of these conditions is missing, the meat cannot be declared Ḥalāl under any circumstance.

This discussion focuses on Dhabḥ Ikhtiyārī (voluntary slaughter), which applies to animals such as chickens, cows, goats, and birds. The following are the conditions outlined by the Fuqahā' (jurists) for a Shar'ī slaughter:

1. Dhakāh (Shar'ī Slaughter)

Allāh ﷻ says:

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةُ وَالدَّمُ وَلَحْمُ الْخِنْزِيرِ وَمَا أَهْلَ لِعَیْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ وَالْمُنْخَنِقَةُ وَالْمَوْقُوذَةُ وَالْمُتَرَدِّيَةُ وَالنَّطِيحَةُ وَمَا أَكَلَ السَّبُعُ إِلَّا مَا ذَكَّيْتُمْ

"Forbidden unto you are carrion, blood, swine flesh, that which has been dedicated to other than Allāh, the strangled, the beaten, the fallen, the gored, and that which wild beasts have devoured-except that which you make Ḥalāl through proper slaughter". (Qur'an 5:3)

Animals requiring proper slaughter include cows, goats, chickens, and birds. The process is known as Dhabḥ, while animals like camels are slaughtered by Naḥr (piercing the throat).

According to the Shar'īah, Dhakāh is achieved by cutting the following:

- حلقوم (windpipe)
- مریء (oesophagus)
- ودجان (jugular veins)

Imām Abū Ḥanīfah states that three of the four must be severed for the slaughter to be valid. This view is supported by a Prophetic narration:

نهى رسول الله ﷺ عن شريطة الشيطان، وهي التي تذبح فيقطع الجلد ولا تفرى الأوداج ثم تترك حتى تموت

"The Prophet ﷺ forbade slaughtering in the manner of Shayṭān. It is when the skin is cut but the jugular veins are not severed, and the animal is left to die". (Abū Dāwūd, 3:390)

Imām Abū Ḥanīfah's view is also rational. The purpose of Dhakāh is to remove blood, which is Ḥarām. This goal is only achieved by severing the jugular veins. Imām Al-Qurṭubī further states: "In the Sharī'ah, Tadhkiyah refers to the flow of blood and the cutting of the jugular vein". (Badā'i' al-Ṣanā'i': 41/5)

2. The Slaughterer Must be a Muslim or Ahl Al-Kitāb

According to the Qur'ān, the meat slaughtered by a Muslim or a member of Ahl Al-Kitāb is permissible. However, a crucial issue today is identifying who truly qualifies as Ahl Al-Kitāb. If the slaughterer is neither Muslim nor a legitimate member of Ahl Al-Kitāb, then the meat is not Ḥalāl.

The entire Muslim Ummah agrees that meat slaughtered by the People of the Book is permissible, as proven by the verse:

وَطَعَامُ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حَلَالٌ لَّكُمْ

"And the food of those who were given the Scripture is lawful for you". (5:5)

However, this raises the important question of whether the same conditions required for a Muslim's slaughter such as severing the necessary vessels, using a sharp instrument, and reciting the name of Allāh must also be fulfilled when the slaughter is performed by a Jew or Christian.

Firstly, the correct opinion is that meat slaughtered by the People of the Book is only lawful if the animal is slaughtered in accordance with Islamic guidelines. This includes cutting the required vessels and draining the blood. If the animal is strangled, struck fatally, or killed in any way that contradicts Islamic law, the meat is considered unlawful.

Secondly, The animal must be slaughtered with the name of Allāh recited upon it. As Allāh ﷻ says in the Qur'ān: *"And do not eat of that upon which the name of Allāh has not been mentioned"*. (Qur'ān 6:121) The passive form of *"has not been mentioned"* indicates that leaving out the name of Allāh renders the animal unlawful, regardless of whether the one slaughtering it is a Muslim or from the People of the Book.

In the Australian context, it is unreasonable to assume that all commercially available meat is Ḥalāl by default simply because it is slaughtered by people identified as Jews or Christians. The Qur'ānic concession applies specifically to genuine, orthodox, monotheistic followers of previous revelations and those who uphold the belief in the oneness of God and follow the core teachings of their scriptures. The widespread secularism and modern practices among many in today's society make it implausible to classify all such individuals as true Ahl al-Kitāb in the religious sense intended by Islamic law.

3. Tasmiyah – Reciting the Name of Allāh

Most scholars—including Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, Imām Mālik, Imām Aḥmad, Imām Al-Thawrī, and Ḥasan Ibn Ṣāliḥ—hold that Tasmiyah is obligatory at the time of slaughter.

According to the Ḥanafīs, if a Muslim forgets to recite the name of Allāh, the meat remains Ḥalāl. However, if the Tasmiyah is intentionally omitted, it is not Ḥalāl. Imām Mālik holds that the omission, whether intentional or forgetful, renders the meat unlawful. The evidence is derived from the following narrations:

ذَبِيحَةُ الْمُسْلِمِ حَلَالٌ سَمَّى أَوْ لَمْ يُسَمَّ مَا لَمْ يَتَعَمَّدْ

"The slaughter of a Muslim is Ḥalāl whether he recites the name of Allāh or not, as long as he does not omit it intentionally". (Badā'i' al-Ṣanā'i': 5/47)

Ḥaḍrat ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Abbās was questioned:

أَنَّهُ سِئِلَ عَنْ رَجُلٍ ذَبَحَ وَنَسِيَ أَنْ يَذْكُرَ اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ، فَقَالَ: اسْمُ اللَّهِ فِي قَلْبِ كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ، فَلْيَأْكُلْ

He (‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Abbās (RA)) was asked about a man who slaughters an animal and forgets to mention the name of Allāh at the time of slaughter-what should he do? He replied: “The name of Allāh is in the heart of every Muslim; so let him eat”. (Badā’i‘ al-Ṣanā’i‘: 5/47)

Allāh ﷻ further says:

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا لَمْ يَذْكُرِ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَإِنَّهُ لَفِسْقٌ

“Do not eat from that upon which Allāh’s name has not been mentioned-for indeed it is grave disobedience”. (Qur’ān 6:121)

Al-Kāsānī, in Badā’i‘ Al-Ṣanā’i‘ (4:167), deduces:

- The verse constitutes a prohibition-hence, the act is Ḥarām.
- The meat is labelled Fisq (grave disobedience), a term used for what is categorically forbidden.

Ibn Taymiyyah (RA) also affirms that Tasmiyah is a condition for valid slaughter and cites four verses:

- “So eat of that which they catch for you and mention Allāh's name upon it”. (al-M’āidah: 4)
- “Eat of that over which the name of Allāh has been mentioned”. (al-An’ām: 118)
- “And why should you not eat of that upon which the name of Allāh has been mentioned?” (al-An’ām: 119)
- “And do not eat of that upon which the name of Allāh has not been mentioned, for indeed, it is grave disobedience.” (al-An’ām: 121)

Additionally, the Prophet ﷺ said:

مَا أَتَهَرَ الدَّمَ وَذَكَرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ فَكُلُوهُ

“Any animal that causes blood to flow and Allāh’s name is mentioned over it-eat it”. (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 3/1238)

Evidences Cited by Those Who Consider Tasmiyah Non-Essential and the Scholarly Response to Them

Some cite this verse:

قُلْ لَا أَجِدُ فِي مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ مُحَرَّمًا عَلَى طَاعِمٍ يَطْعَمُهُ إِلَّا أَنْ يَكُونَ مَيْتَةً أَوْ دَمًا مَسْفُوحًا أَوْ لَحْمَ خِنْزِيرٍ

“Say: I do not find in what is revealed to me anything forbidden to eat except carrion, flowing blood, or swine flesh”. (Qur’ān 6:145)

They argue that since Tasmiyah is not mentioned, its omission does not invalidate the slaughter. However, scholars clarify that this verse outlines general prohibitions, while other verses deal specifically with the issue of Tasmiyah. Al-Kāsānī writes:

فَمَرْوِيٌّ عَنْ طَرِيقِ الْأَحَادِ فَلَا يَقْبَلُ فِي إِبْطَالِ حُرْمَةِ تَثْبُتْ بِالْكِتَابِ

“The narration that Sūrah al-An’ām was revealed all at once is a solitary report (Khabar Wāḥid), which cannot override rulings clearly established by the Qur’ān”.

The Ḥaḍīth of ‘Ā’ishah (RA):

إِنَّ قَوْمًا قَالُوا: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ! إِنَّ قَوْمًا يَأْتُونَنَا بِاللَّحْمِ، لَا نَدْرِي أَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ أَمْ لَا؟ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: سَمُّوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ وَكُلُوا

“A group said: O Messenger of Allāh! People bring us meat and we do not know whether Allāh’s name was mentioned upon it or not. The Prophet ﷺ said: Mention Allāh’s name and eat”.

(Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: 2057)

Some claim this proves Tasmiyah is not required. However, Imām Al-Bukhārī includes this narration under the chapter of doubt. The instruction to mention Allāh's name was to remove doubt, not to bypass the requirement of Tasmiyah.

This is comparable to the narration:

"A man complained to the Prophet ﷺ that he felt something during prayer. Should he end it? The Prophet ﷺ replied: No, not unless he hears a sound or detects a smell". (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 4:294)

Just as this narration addresses doubt in prayer-not the rules of purity-the Ḥadīth of 'Ā'ishah (RA) addresses doubt in meat provenance-not the necessity of Tasmiyah.

4. Intention During Tasmiyah

Merely uttering the name of Allāh is not sufficient. The slaughterer must have the intention to invoke Allāh's name at the time of slaughter. If the name is recited absentmindedly or without intention, the slaughter is not valid.

5. Reciting Only the Name of Allāh

If any name besides Allāh's is invoked during slaughter-such as saying: "In the name of Muḥammad"-the meat is Ḥarām. Similarly, combining Allāh's name with another, e.g., "In the name of Allāh and His Messenger", also invalidates the slaughter.

6. Tasmiyah Must Be at the Time of Slaughter

The name of Allāh must be recited at the moment of slaughter. If it is recited well in advance, the slaughter is invalid. However, a short interruption (e.g., returning a greeting or taking a sip of water) does not affect its validity.

These six conditions are essential for a valid Dhabḥ Ikhtiyārī (voluntary slaughter) in Islam.

The Nature of Machine Slaughtering

Scholars differ on the permissibility of machine slaughtering, even if the six conditions are seemingly fulfilled.

According to one view, machine slaughtering is impermissible due to its very nature. In Islamic slaughter, the act must be directly performed by the slaughterer. In mechanical systems, it is the electric motor-not the human hand-that drives the blade. The operator merely activates a switch. Thus, the slaughter is executed by the machine, not by a Muslim, failing the requirement that slaughter be performed by a Muslim or a legitimate Ahl al-Kitāb.

Others argue that the act of switching on the machine constitutes the initiation of slaughter. Since a Muslim operator starts the process, and the blade is under his control, he is considered the slaughterer-albeit indirectly-therefore fulfilling the requirement.

A key issue in machine-slaughtering is the time gap between the recitation of Tasmiyah and the actual act of slaughter (i.e., severing the arteries). According to many scholars, a long delay between these two actions renders the Dhabīḥah invalid.

- Allāmah Ibn Rushd (Mālikī) says:

"Is it a condition that the slaughter be performed immediately after the recitation of Bismillāh? The schools unanimously agree that immediacy is a condition of valid slaughter". (Bidāyatul Mujtahid: 1/359)

Scholars such as ‘Allāmah al-Zayla‘ī, ‘Allāmah al-Ḥaṣkafī, and Imām Shams al-A‘immah al-Sarakhsī have all echoed a similar stance: if the Tasmiyah is followed by only a brief interruption—such as sharpening the knife or speaking briefly—the slaughter remains valid. However, if the delay is prolonged, the validity of the slaughter is no longer upheld.

The overwhelming scholarly view is that the Tasmiyah must be closely followed by the act of slaughter. If there is a significant delay—such as between turning on a machine and the actual cutting of the animal—this violates the condition of Fawr (immediacy) and renders the Dhabīḥah invalid.

The Greatest Drawback of Machine Slaughtering

The most significant issue with machine-slaughtering is that multiple birds are often slaughtered with a single Tasmiyah. This practice is invalid according to classical jurists unless all animals are slaughtered simultaneously, not sequentially.

Some justify machine-slaughtering by referencing a statement of the Fuqahā’:

ولو جمع العصفير في يده فذبح وسمى و ذبح آخر على أثره ولو لم يسم لم يحل الثاني، ولو أمر السكين على الكل جاز بتسمية واحدة

“If one gathers birds in his hand, recites Bismillāh and slaughters one, then slaughters another immediately after without repeating the Tasmiyah, the second is not Ḥalāl. But if the knife is passed over all at once, one Tasmiyah suffices.” (Fatāwā Hindiyyah: 5/289)

Proponents argue that since the mechanical blade runs continuously, the case is analogous to simultaneous slaughter. However, this is a misapplication. Machine-slaughtering is sequential, not simultaneous. The birds pass the blade one after another, each at a different time, thus invalidating the use of a single Tasmiyah.

Several authoritative jurists clearly affirm the requirement of repeating Tasmiyah for each slaughtered animal when done in sequence. Below are a few quotes:

- **Al-Ḥaṣkafī:** “If two goats are slaughtered simultaneously after one Tasmiyah, both are Ḥalāl. If slaughtered one after the other, the second is not Ḥalāl unless Tasmiyah is repeated”. (Raddul Mukhtār: 6/303)

- **Al-Sarakhsī:** “If someone intends to slaughter multiple animals, one Tasmiyah is not valid for those slaughtered afterward, as each act of slaughter is separate”. (Al-Mabsūṭ, al-Dhabā’ih: 12/3-4)

- **Qāḍī Ḥasan Ibn Manṣūr al-Awzjandī:** “If a person intends to slaughter many animals, only the first is Ḥalāl if one Tasmiyah is recited”. (Fatāwā Qāḍī Khān: 4/343)

- **Ṭāhir Ibn ‘Abd al-Rashīd al-Bukhārī:** “If someone sees a flock of goats, recites Bismillāh, then grabs one and slaughters it, that slaughter is not valid”. (Khulāṣatul Fatāwā: 308)

This confirms that the presence of sequence and delay—both realities of machine slaughter—renders the practice non-compliant with Sharī‘ah if one Tasmiyah is used for multiple birds.

Sharī‘ah Precaution and Conclusion

The Prophet ﷺ said:

دَعْ مَا يَرِيكَ إِلَى مَا لَا يَرِيكَ

“Leave what causes you doubt for what does not cause you doubt”. (al-Tirmidhī: 2518)

Another narration states:

“Whoever indulges in doubtful matters will fall into Ḥarām”. (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 1599a)

Sharī‘ah teaches us to avoid doubtful matters, particularly in what we consume. One’s spiritual well-being is connected to the purity of one’s intake. Consuming doubtful meat can lead to spiritual harm and distance from Islām.

To conclude, there is no objection to utilising modern technology, provided it complies with Islamic requirements. For machine-slaughtered poultry to be deemed Ḥalāl, several essential conditions must be met:

- The respiratory tract, oesophagus, and at least one jugular vein must be severed.
- The slaughterer must be a Muslim who recites Tasmiyah with intention at the time of each slaughter.
- Only Allāh's name may be invoked, and any delay between Tasmiyah and slaughter invalidates it.
- Tasmiyah must be recited for every bird, and the operator must physically direct each bird toward the blade while doing so.

There are also some secondary conditions related to the machine. Firstly, stunning must not kill the bird, and secondly, scalding should not damage the meat. If all conditions are met, the slaughter is Ḥalāl; if any are missed, it is not.

Note: This article is solely an Islamic academic explanation based on Qur'ānic verses, Prophetic Aḥādīth, and scholarly interpretations.

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