

ANIMAL WELFARE GROUP | **BANGLADESH** COUNTRY PROFILE



KEY METRICS

(All figures are approximate)



POPULATION



23,488,000



55,900,000



1,925,000



1,955,000

Bovine slaughter in 2014



26,076,600

Goats slaughtered in 2014



435,500

Sheep slaughtered in 2014

2002 BEEF CONSUMPTION



1.9
kgs/capita
(4.2lbs/capita)



The objective of the country profiles is to provide an overview of the animal welfare landscape and the differences between regions. The information provided is general in nature and a summary of facts, it does not represent the opinion of Leather Working Group. The country profiles are living documents, that are reviewed and updated from time to time. While Leather Working Group has taken due care to ensure the information is accurate as of the date of publication, the information is provided on an "as is" basis and we make no representation or warranty as to its accuracy. Please note that examples of high-quality and low-quality animal welfare can be identified in every region. Leather Working Group is not liable to any person for any loss suffered or incurred as a result of reliance on the information.

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SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

Transport

- Animals are often transported great distances before slaughter, often on foot or in unsuitable vehicles.
- A number of cows are illegally traded for slaughter from India. Often cows are chained together and smuggled across rivers, showing that animal welfare is not considered.

Traceability

- There is no widespread formal traceability system in place in Bangladesh.

Slaughter

- There is evidence of 'significant mistreatment' of animals prior to and during slaughter.
- A significant amount of slaughter does not occur in slaughterhouses.
- As Bangladesh is a predominately Muslim country, slaughter methods follow halal principles. There is no pre-stunning and there is evidence to suggest that animals are not slaughtered efficiently and humanely.

Legislation

- Legislation for the treatment of animals is outdated. The existing legislation suggests that animals should not be treated 'cruelly.' These guidelines do not give much detail about what is and is not considered cruel treatment.

Governance

- There is evidence of significant corruption within Bangladesh.
- There is little evidence to suggest that authorities enforce animal welfare legislation or that farmers are compelled to adhere to it.

NGO Activity

- There is significant attention from NGOs on animal welfare in Bangladesh, much of which focuses on the illegal trade and smuggling of cows from India.

FARMING

Livestock is an integral component of a largely agricultural based economy. Bangladesh and the Indian subcontinent in general are characterised by small, scavenging herds that are provided only rudimentary food, shelter and health care.

In Bangladesh, it is estimated that 89% of all households keep livestock¹, of these around 30% own no land and as such livestock is not farmed in a traditional sense (on farms in large numbers)².

A study by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) showed that most families in rural villages or peri-urban environments keep small quantities of livestock, equating to an average of 2.6 cows or buffalo, 1.5 goats or sheep³. These animals are used for currency, draft purposes, milk and meat⁴.

For the rural family, livestock provides up to 50% of revenue for the family and will often form security for financial loans.

The management of livestock also accounts for 20% of the full-time employment and 50% of the population in a part time role¹.

TRANSPORT

There are many issues with the transportation of animals for slaughter in Bangladesh. With industrial slaughtering facilities mostly located around large urban development, animals are often moved long distances either through trekking or via unsuitable, unlicensed vehicles. As animals provide many functions, they are seldom slaughtered until they are aged or infirm. This exacerbates the risk of injury or health issues during transportation.

There is a significant illegal trade in cows from India, this is the main focus of concern for NGOs as the transportation is unregulated and therefore presents welfare risks. Evidence from an investigation conducted by the news organisation India Today has revealed that India's north-eastern state of Assam has turned into a hot spot for illegal cattle trade bound for Bangladesh⁵. The illegal transport of animals across the border tends to originate in the markets of Lanka, Sivasagar and Karimganj in Assam⁵. The Mail Today has identified Gabatole, 13 miles from the capital Dhaka as one of the biggest cattle markets in Bangladesh. Evidence suggests that up to 3000 cattle per day arrive in Gabatole illegally to be traded, with increasing demand for beef in Bangladesh driving the illegal trade⁶.

The Mail Today has published accounts from Gabatole traders of how the cattle are transported; first they are transported in trucks via Bihar and Jharkhand to enter into border destinations of West Bengal and Assam. From the two border-states, the smugglers use water routes from villages to cross over the boarder. The commonly-used water routes are the Bangladeshi rivers Kalindi, Ichhamati, Raimangal and Hariabhanga. The cows are first kept in remote villages and bound to one another by a long iron chain before being herded through water during the night⁶. The treatment of animals in such ways during transport indicates that animal welfare is not being considered as part of this illegal trade.

TRACEABILITY

Bangladesh does not have a formal system of registering, marking or tracking livestock (cattle, sheep or goat)⁷. The reasons for lack of livestock traceability within a country are multiple and interlinked and they can include; the economic burden of implementation and management traceability systems; religious preferences; preferences toward less governmental control of production; majority agrarian populaces that are not technologically advanced to manage a traceability system; and lack of a distribution chain for animal products⁷. Bangladesh displays many of the conditions that would make traceability hard to implement.

The lack of good traceability means that the management of disease control within livestock can be challenging and supply chain controls become difficult to implement. A direct impact this has on animal welfare is that animals can be transported independent of official documentation, resulting in difficulties implementing animal protection legislation. This continued lack of traceability aids the black market trade from India, providing evidence that animal welfare considerations are not being met as part of this illegal trade and activity.



SLAUGHTERING

The slaughtering of animals in Bangladesh is covered under The Animals Slaughter (Restriction) and Meat Control Act 1957. Reviewed in 1983⁹, the legislation is basic and limited in scope, covering only those animals processed in slaughterhouses.

It should be noted that a significant proportion of animals are not slaughtered in official industrial slaughterhouses. As a result of the significant illegal smuggling of cattle from India, it is estimated that there could be as many as 2 million animals slaughtered outside of official registration⁹.

Although there is legislation in place to regulate slaughterhouses processes, there appears to be little or no enforcement of the laws¹⁰.

There is wide spread illegal slaughter of cows within Bangladesh, especially in border areas with India. There is also extensive local slaughter of sheep and goat in small quantities (as needed) by individuals or communal village slaughter slabs¹¹.

With 90% of the population practising Islam, it is the largest religion in Bangladesh, which means that the method used for slaughter follows halal principles that involve no pre-stunning. The application of this method does not appear to be well regulated or monitored by authorities.

The World Organisation for Animal Health OIE stated that "animals are subjected to considerable mistreatment, and there is an urgent need for the training and education of the staff in abattoirs concerning humane slaughtering practices as well as a need to build modern slaughtering plants in Bangladesh"¹².



HIDES, SKIN & LEATHER

For the size of country Bangladesh has a large bovine (cow and buffalo) population at around 25.4 million head, and an even bigger goat population of 57 million animals. The sheep population is small and almost no pig¹³. Despite its large bovine population, official figures suggest Bangladesh only processes around 3.4 million hides per year, which equates to approximately 109 million ft². In contrast, it claims to export 150 million ft² of leather which suggests a significant proportion is not officially registered as production¹³. In reality, the bovine kill is likely to be much higher, typically about 1/3 of the population or 8.4 million. This suggests that many more animals are unofficially slaughtered. It is well documented that significant quantities of bovine animals (figures vary from 3000 – 60,000 animals per day) are smuggled across the border from India which may account for this discrepancy. The latter number would appear high, the discrepancy between slaughter and availability of hides would indicate that a figure of 4000-6000 is more realistic^{14, 15, 6}.

Bangladesh also exports significant quantities of raw hides to China, Korea and Myanmar. It also exports significant quantities of bovine crust to Korea, China, Italy, Vietnam and Spain¹⁶.

The production of goat skin is by far the most significant element of leather production, with Bangladesh processing 39.4 million goat skins per year, equating to approximately 114 million ft² of crust or finished leather. A significant proportion of raw goat skins are imported into Bangladesh from Somalia, which accounts for the high process numbers. Approximately 75% or 85 million ft² of crust or finished leather is exported, the vast majority of which goes to China and Italy¹⁶.



LEGISLATION & REGULATION

The Cruelty to Animals Act, 1920, originated from the British Empire and was written for the region of Pakistan. This legislation was reviewed during the Revision and Declaration Act, 1973 (Act No VIII of 1973)¹⁷. In this review the name Bangladesh was inserted to replace references to Pakistan and East Pakistan.

The legislation is basic however it clearly identifies the penalties that will be applied if breaches do occur. The legislation outlines that there should be no unnecessary cruelty, tethering that would cause pain, the overloading of animals in transport, overcrowding, starvation, thirst etc. These guidelines apply in a general sense to both draft and farmed animals. The legislation does not provide any reference to guidelines or standards for animal welfare best practice¹⁷.

Enforcement of these laws can be applied by any police officer and the potential penalties range from fines to imprisonment.



GOVERNANCE

Information on governance is subjective; therefore, to help quantify implementation of law we use the independently published Global Corruption Index from Transparency International (TI) to assess the level of governance in each country. Bangladesh is ranked joint 145th of 176 countries (first place being the least corrupt) which places it alongside Cameroon, Gambia and Kenya¹⁸.

TI ranks Bangladesh as a highly corrupt country. According to TI this level of embedded corruption in society and government is likely to manifest itself through untrustworthy and badly functioning institutions, police and judiciary. Where laws exist they are likely to be skirted or ignored, bribery and extortion will be common place, and there will be official indifference from authorities to uphold the law¹⁹. These observations described by TI are supported by numerous press articles in relation to bribery and corruption in Bangladesh. It is therefore likely that legislation compliance will be minimal.



NGO ACTIVITY

There is significant, negative NGO and press activity in relation to the poor animal welfare issues in Bangladesh. There are over 200,000 articles referenced on Google from multiple sources. Although some of these are relevant to animal welfare NGOs such as PETA there are many articles from independent press in Europe, US and Asia^{20, 5, 21, 6, 22, 23, 24}.

The focus of these articles is primarily on the illegal trade of cows between India and Bangladesh. This illegal smuggling is widely covered in press and as referenced in the Hide, Skin and Leather section of this report is significant.

This illegal trade, driven by the significantly higher values for beef that can be derived in Bangladesh, means cows are transported in poor conditions, and often arrive injured. They are then slaughtered illegally in unlicensed facilities.



FARM ASSURANCE SCHEMES

Research has provided no evidence of any farm inspection and assurance programmes running for any livestock animals in Bangladesh. With the rural profile and small holder style of farming that is prevalent in Bangladesh, any such projects would likely be impractical to implement or police.





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Front Cover statistics

- Livestock population numbers: FAO Statistics <http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/QA>
- Livestock slaughter numbers: FAO Statistics <http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/QL>
- Per capita Beef consumption: http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/resources/en/publications/sector_briefs/lbs_BGD.pdf

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