



ANIMAL CARE

Issue:

For farmers and ranchers, the well-being of their animals is of primary importance. Producing healthy food for this country requires that livestock and poultry caretakers protect their animals from disease, injury, competition and predators. Farmers and ranchers work continually with veterinarians and animal scientists to develop, enhance and employ reasonable, science-based management practices. Quality assurance programs at the national and state levels provide guidelines for the production of safe, wholesome animals, including recommendations on necessary animal handling practices and facilities design.

Farmers and ranchers must be allowed to raise livestock in accordance with commonly accepted agricultural practices. Any changes to animal well-being guidelines should be based on scientific data, expert analysis and economic feasibility. Adding unnecessary costs to U.S. production will increase the amount of food imported from places that have an inferior record on food safety and animal well-being. Overzealous standards will increase the price of food, negatively affecting all families trying to make ends meet.

Background:

Legislative, regulatory and legal attempts by animal rights activists to restrict livestock and poultry production and processing are increasing. During the 2008 state legislative sessions and general election, several states saw animal production-related bills and ballot initiatives, most dealing with confinement production practices. California adopted a measure aimed at ending the use of cages that protect egg-laying hens.

Legislative Status:

H.R. 503/S. 727, the Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act of 2009, has been introduced by Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.) and Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-La.), respectively. The legislation would effectively prohibit and criminalize the transportation, possession, sale or donation of horses and other equines destined for slaughter for human consumption. Farm Bureau opposes the bills.

AFBF Policy:

Farm Bureau supports the right of farmers and ranchers to raise livestock in accordance with commonly accepted agricultural practices and opposes restrictions on common, veterinary-approved livestock production practices.

Farm Bureau supports adoption of science-based animal handling guidelines like those developed through species-specific quality assurance programs and is opposed to arbitrary space requirements for livestock and ending the use of certain confinement systems.

Farm Bureau supports full funding and enforcement for the Animal Welfare Act as currently written.

Farm Bureau support allowing the sale, possession and transport of horses intended for processing and supports funding for Food Safety and Inspection Service inspectors in facilities that slaughter horses.

Farm Bureau supports vigorous enforcement of the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act and believes that farms and research facilities should be reimbursed for damages and lost animal research when willfully damaged.

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