

May 23, 2007

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Leonard L. Boswell
Chairman
Subcommittee on Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robin Hayes
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressmen Peterson, Goodlatte, Boswell, and Hayes:

The organizations and companies signed below represent a broad base of American animal agriculture, exhibitors, dealers and other uses subject to the Animal Welfare Act (AWA). Long before there were activist groups, it was the members of our organizations that championed the humane treatment of animals because it was the right thing to do, as well as being good for business. Our industries, however, continue to be vilified by activists and we would like to express our concerns about the current animal activist agenda and their efforts to destroy our industry through actions in the States, Congress, and their effort to be a part of the 2007 Farm Bill.

As you are well aware, the 2007 Farm Bill has sparked the interest of a wide array of groups, including many who want to use the reauthorization as an opportunity to insert their agenda into the one piece of legislation that affects U.S. farmers and ranchers more than any other. Many issues brought forth by these groups, while worthy of discussion and appropriate to the jurisdiction and purview of the House Committee on Agriculture, are not appropriate for the farm bill and should not be included in the farm bill process.

Producers and licensees under the AWA have been proactive in ensuring the humane treatment of animals by implementing industry-led standards and guidelines based on the latest scientific recommendations for animal welfare management systems. Those who work with and care for animals day in and day out should be guiding animal care and treatment practices, not activists. The animal rights activists want to be a part of the farm bill process in an attempt to legitimize their efforts and be seen by the public and Congress as mainstream. This potential recognition would only further their assault on animal agriculture and other legitimate animal use industries. It should not be forgotten that their underlying goal is not humane treatment, but an eventual end to all animal use.

The recent hearing in the House Agriculture Committee demonstrated that the relevant animal use industries take the welfare of the animals in their charge seriously. We have the knowledge, expertise, experience and interest in providing the best for our animals. We each have been working within our particular areas of expertise, along with veterinarians, scientists, researchers, behaviorists, and regulators to develop and implement the very best standards for the animals in our care, and we are continually working to improve these as new science and technology becomes available. The hearing by no means demonstrated that any legislation is necessary. It did show the broad range of industries and interests that would be affected, many of which are not agricultural in nature. It also showed that industry led initiatives and best practices are working.

Finally, bear in mind that the true goal of the activist agenda is not the welfare of animals, but instead the abolition of ALL animal uses, including agriculture, exhibits, pets, research and beyond. The animal activists and their agenda should not be allowed to harm the welfare of our animals, harm our businesses, or the livelihoods of the millions of people who our businesses employ to care for our animals.

As constituents of the Committee, we appreciate your consideration of our concerns and look forward to working with you to continue our commitment to humane treatment of our animals.

Sincerely,

American Agri-Women
American Association of Equine Practitioners
American Association of Meat Processors
American Sheep Industry Association
American Quarter Horse Association
Animal Agriculture Alliance
Animal Exhibitors Alliance
Animal Health Institute
Animal Welfare Council
Common Horse Sense Coalition
Dairy Farmers of America
Elephant Managers Association
Feld Entertainment, Inc.
International Animal Welfare Alliance
International Association of Fairs and Expositions
Livestock Marketing Association
Masters of Foxhounds Association of North America
The Mirage (Department of Animal Care)
National Animal Interest Alliance
NAIA Trust for the Protection of Animals, Animal Owners and Enterprises (NAIA Trust)
National Aquaculture Association
National Association of Meat Processors
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Grange

National Livestock Producers Association
National Meat Association
National Milk Producers Federation
North American Equine Ranching Information Council
North American Gamebird Association
Outdoor Amusement Business Association
Palomino Horse Breeders of America
Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association
Professional Rodeo Stock Transporters
Sportsmen's and Animal Owners' Voting Alliance
United Gamefowl Breeders Association
United Egg Association
United Egg Producers
U.S. Poultry and Egg Association
Yorkshire Terrier Club of America, Inc.
Pacific Egg and Poultry Association
Sunbelt Milk Producers Association
Alabama Cattlemen's Association
Alabama Gamefowl Breeders Association
Arizona Cattle Growers Association
Arizona Cattle Feeders Association
Arkansas Cattlemen's Association
Broiler and Egg Association of Minnesota
California Cattlemen's Association
California Outdoor Heritage Alliance
Colorado Cattlemen's Association
Colorado Livestock Association
Florida Cattlemen's Association
Florida Farm Bureau
Georgia Cattlemen's Association
Idaho Cattlemen's Association
Illinois Beef Association
Independent Cattlemen's Association
Indiana Beef Cattle Association
Iowa Cattlemen's Association
Iowa Horse Council
Iowa Turkey Federation
Kansas Livestock Association
Kentucky Cattlemen's Association
Kentucky Gamefowl Breeders Association
Michigan Agri-Business Association
Michigan Cattlemen's Association
Minnesota Pork Producers Association
Minnesota Turkey Growers Association
Mississippi Cattlemen's Association
Montana Stock Growers Association

Nebraska Cattlemen
Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation
Nebraska Grain and Feed Association
Nevada Cattlemen's Association
New Mexico Cattle Growers Association
New York Beef Producers Association
New York State Horse Council, Inc.
North Carolina Cattlemen's Association
Ohio Cattlemen's Association
Ohio Livestock Coalition
Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association
Oregon Cattlemen's Association
PennAg Industries Association
South Carolina Cattlemen's Association
South Carolina Poultry Federation
South Dakota Trucking Association
Tennessee Cattlemen's Association
Texas Cattle Feeders Association
Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers
Utah Cattlemen's Association
Utah Pork Producers
Virginia Cattlemen's Association
Washington Cattlemen's Association
West Virginia Cattlemen's Association
Allen County (Illinois) Farm Bureau
Macon County (Illinois) Farm Bureau