

Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights
PO Box 208
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June 17, 2003

Dr. Nancy E Halpern, Director
New Jersey Department of Agriculture
Division of Animal Health
PO Box 330
Trenton, NJ 08625

Re: Humane Treatment of Domestic Livestock, Proposal PRN 2003-168, Proposed New Rules N.J.A.C 2:8

Dr. Halpern:

I am writing to provide public comment on the New Jersey Regulation for the Humane Treatment of Domestic Livestock. Having graduated veterinary school as a large animal practitioner and as the current liaison of the Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights (AVAR) at the American Veterinary Medical Association meetings, I am well-acquainted with many of the issues addressed in the proposal.

Our organization is pleased that the New Jersey Department of Agriculture is considering instituting animal welfare regulations, but we are quite disappointed that, for the most part, these proposed regulations, as written, make no substantial welfare changes to existing inhumane animal agriculture industry practices. The definition used in the document for 'humane' is "marked by compassion, sympathy and consideration for the welfare of animals." Yet, the suggested regulations attempt to codify practices that could not possibly be considered humane by the definition and are, conversely, cruel, multiple examples of such inconsistencies exist in the proposed rules. Unfortunately, instead of attempting to institute a baseline for determining inhumane treatment of animals, these new regulations seem to legitimize current unacceptable practices.

Nothing in the rules is to prohibit 'owners' from providing medical care and treatment to their own animals. This is problematic because this allows practices to continue which have caused extreme suffering to so-called farm animals. I am referring to branding, castrating, de-horning, tail docking, beak tip amputation and other procedures which are routinely performed by non-veterinarians who may have experience in doing the procedures but who do not consider the welfare of the animal. Because anesthetics are controlled substances, these procedures are performed without them, causing considerable pain to the animal. These are procedures which should be performed by licensed veterinarians only.

The definition of induced molting appears to have been taken from the American Veterinary Medical Association's (AVMA) position statement on the subject, and the

current wording is inaccurate. Poultry experts will attest that induced molting is not similar in any way to natural molting.

The definition should read that induced molting is an industry practice used to increase egg production and which is accomplished by either removing food or causing a molt through altered feeding practices. Natural molting occurs as a result of changing photoperiodicity and a complicated hormonal cascade, while induced molting occurs as a result of the stress of food deprivation.

Your proposed rules allow for 14-days of food removal for inducing molt. Even, the AVMA, whose position statement on forced molting does not promote humane treatment, condemns long-term food withdrawal, as do numerous restaurant chains.

Keeping sows in crates during and after their pregnancy is inhumane. These are intelligent animals who exhibit highly nurturing and successful maternal behavior, which is well-know to be a result of stress and frustration. Further, lack of exercise causes lameness and other health maladies. Intensive confinement should be banned, as there ate more humane methods available for raising pigs.

Adopting the regulation of the veal industry is also indicative of the failing of the intent of the proposed ruling. Calves used for veal suffer from food deprivation, which is considered cruel according to your own definitions of animal care. Since their all-liquid diet does not enable proper rumen development and the initiation of natural rumen cycles, they routinely exhibit scours for their entire brief lives. These animals are intentionally deprived of iron so that they become anemic. They are also routinely chained or tethered and cannot make normal postural adjustments. Intensive confinement of this nature should be banned.

The standard for the humane treatment of domestic livestock has been set so low in these proposed regulations that it seems it would be impossible for anyone to obtain prosecution or the challenge your state laws on routine uses of domestic livestock. Further, because the proposed regulations seek to justify practice, which the public views as inhumane, should they be adopted, New Jersey will be considered a less-that-progressive state on animal well-being.

With reverence for all life,

Holly Cheever, DVM
Board Member