

Dr. Nancy Halpern, Director
Division of Animal Health
NJ Dept. of Agriculture
P.O. Box 330
Trenton, N.J. 08625-0330

July 1, 2003

Re: Humane treatment of farm animals

Dear Dr. Halpern,

This is an appeal to reject the proposed standards for the treatment of farm animals in N.J because it is biased in favor of agribusiness, and does little to improve animal welfare. The proposal continues to promote the status quo of “acceptable” factory farming practices including sow gestation crates, veal crates, and battery hen cages, which are not only detrimental to farm animals, but to communities as well.

One often overlooked cost of factory farming is public health. Public health is currently threatened by antibiotic resistant bacteria that are developing in large measure due to the overuse of antibiotics in agriculture. These antibiotics are used because they are necessary to raise healthy animals in the unsanitary conditions in which they currently exist.

Please consider the following:

- Every year, in the absence of disease, U.S. livestock producers administer 24.6 million pounds of antimicrobials. That is almost 8 times the amount given to humans to treat disease.
- Resistant bacterial infections result in longer hospital stays due to more virulent infections, and increased human suffering and mortality. It also costs the healthcare system more than \$4 billion per year.
- The American Medical Association, the American Public Health Association and the World Trade Organization, among others oppose the use of antibiotics in healthy farm animals.

This is such a serious problem that the Organic Trade Association (OTA) is endorsing twin bills, S. 2508 and H.R. 3804, which would start a two-year phase-out of the routine, non-therapeutic feeding of medically

important antibiotics to food animals, however the best way to reduce the use of antibiotics in healthy farm animals is to sincerely improve animal husbandry standards. This proposal does not accomplish that.

Those in agribusiness who claim that people concerned with animal welfare are “trying to put farmers out of business” are seriously misguided. Factory farm practices are bad for farmers too. They require fewer workers (hence higher unemployment), are disastrous for the environment, and place farm workers and their families at higher risk of acquiring antibiotic resistant bacteria. Truly humane animal welfare standards benefit the farmer because they can market their products as being more wholesome while eliminating personal exposure to hazardous organisms and substances.

Farmers concerned about their survival have many organizations available to help them market humanely raised grass fed beef and veal, organic free-range chickens, etc., without the use of antibiotics. The Chefs Collaborative, Farm Animal Concerns Trust (FACT) and Slow Food are three examples of such organizations.

New Jersey has an opportunity to lead the nation in a growing movement of sustainable agriculture where humane treatment of farm animals is but one aspect. Please reject the current proposal. Our farmers, farm animals, and communities deserve better.

Sincerely,

Denise Hewitt and George Daniel

