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June 30, 2003

Dr. Nancy Halpern, Director
Division of Animal Health
NJ Dept. of Agriculture
PO Box 330
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Dr. Halpern,

I have lived and worked in New Jersey since 1976. I milked cows and raised calves for dairy farmers for twelve years, then had my own herd for fifteen years. In all, I have worked daily with cattle for the past 27 years. It is from this standpoint of considerable experience that I must very strongly disagree with the proposed "humane standards for the treatment of farm animals", and request that they be reassessed and modified before they are adopted.

HUMANE, by definition, is "characterized by compassion or consideration for other human beings or animals." (Webster's Dictionary)

"AHUMANE person is, specifically, one actuated by benevolence in his treatment of his fellows, or of helpless animals." (The American College Dictionary)

My own definition of 'humane treatment of farm animal' would be treatment that minimizes, or eliminates stress in animals.

The way to accomplish that broad goal is to practice husbandry that, as closely as possible, follows the natural needs and tendencies of the animals being raised.

I have raised hundreds of Holstein calves successfully in-group housing, where they had freedom of movement and the ability to socialize. As I said at the June 20th hearing, a three day old calf will easily run the length of a football field, just for the joy of it. And a calf will never be off by itself, unless it is sick.

The veal crate violates these basic needs: the need to move about freely, and the need to socialize. The veal crate is INHUMANE. It should be eliminated for accepted practices.

There are many other practices which would be condoned within your proposed "humane standards", that, although not in my area of experience, clearly defy common decency, as well as any semblance of humanness. These include the use of gestation crates for sows, battery cages and force-molting for hens, and the withholding of food and water for up to 4 days during transportation.

As a New Jerseyan, I request that you please reassess and modify your proposed standards to reflect TRULY humane treatment of our farm animals.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.