

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 7, 2008

Honorable Henry A. Waxman, Chairman
Honorable Tom Davis, Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Request for Hearing on H.R. 1726, Farm Animal Stewardship Purchasing Act

Dear Chairman Waxman and Ranking Member Davis:

As you move forward in outlining your agenda for the Second Session of the 110th Congress, we would like to bring your attention to an urgent matter that highlights the need for our legislation, and we ask that the Committee hold a hearing on our bill, H.R. 1726, the Farm Animal Stewardship Act.

In late January, an undercover investigation by The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) revealed widespread mistreatment of “downed” cattle – animals too sick or injured to walk to slaughter – at a Southern California slaughter plant. Under State law and regulations promulgated by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), these animals must be given veterinary treatment or humanely euthanized. Instead, a video released by the HSUS shows workers at a meat packing plant in California kicking cows, ramming them with the blades of a forklift, jabbing them in the eyes, applying painful electrical shocks and even torturing them with a hose and water in attempts to force sick or injured animals to walk to slaughter.

Perhaps most alarming is that the slaughterhouse supplies beef to the second largest supplier of meat to the United States Department of Agriculture’s School Lunch Program, which was named the 2004-2005 “Supplier of the Year,” by the USDA and delivered beef to school children in more than 36 states. This company also supplied several other federal government food aid programs.

The deplorable situation at this slaughterhouse highlights the urgent need for our legislation. House Resolution 1726, the Farm Animal Stewardship Purchasing Act, would require producers who supply meat, dairy, and egg products to the federal government to meet a set of basic humane standards for raising farm animals. The legislation would also require the government to provide adequate veterinary care, including prompt treatment of injuries or euthanasia for a sick or injured animal.

Had the Farm Animal Stewardship Act been law, it would have not only prevented the inhumane handling of animals, but also would have precluded the health hazard in federal food programs now occurring across the country.

Given the revelations of abuse and illegal activity, we believe it is imperative that the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform hold a hearing on H.R. 1726 and, more generally, humane handling methods at meat packing facilities. We would welcome additional thoughts from Committee Members regarding the agenda for this hearing.

We look forward to working with you and your staff to develop this hearing in the very near future.

Sincerely,



Peter DeFazio
Member of Congress



Christopher Shays
Member of Congress