



Animal Welfare Institute

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July 13, 2018

Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman, Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry
United States Senate
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member, Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry
United States Senate
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

The Animal Welfare Institute (AWI) would like to thank you for crafting a bipartisan Farm Bill free of poison pill riders. The Senate version of H.R. 2, the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, addresses pressing issues regarding animal welfare while wisely excluding certain harmful provisions that are in the House version. Such provisions would have serious adverse consequences not only for animal welfare and wildlife conservation, but also for agricultural interests and public health and safety.

As the Farm Bill conference begins, AWI urges you to **support** and facilitate the inclusion of the following provisions in the final legislation:

- **Section 12503 of the Senate bill** incorporates the Pet and Women Safety Act. The correlation between domestic violence and animal abuse is well documented. Abusers exploit the bond between their victims and companion animals to control, manipulate, frighten, and punish their victims, many of whom will not leave their abusive situations out of fear for their pets. Few resources are currently available to assist these survivors, thus leaving many trapped in the cycle of abuse and manipulation. The PAWS language would make more resources available to help meet the particularly challenging housing needs of domestic violence survivors with pets, while providing law enforcement with additional tools for protecting them from their abusers.
- **Section 12521 of the Senate bill and Section 11613 of the House bill** prohibit the slaughter of dogs and cats for human consumption. The killing of dogs and cats for human consumption is still legal in 44 states. Although not a common practice, there are horrific examples that attest to the need for this prohibition. These provisions provide a much-needed tool against the brutality and public health dangers of the dog and cat meat trade and ensure that stolen pets or stray animals are not killed for this purpose. We urge the conference to adopt the stronger House version.
- **Section 11616 of the House bill**, which extends the Animal Welfare Act prohibition on animal fighting to U.S. territories, was overwhelmingly agreed to by a vote of 359-51. Animal fighting is illegal in all 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia. However, the cruel sport of cock-

fighting remains prevalent – and legal – in U.S. territories. Section 11616 is needed to close this loophole and outlaw this cruel activity regardless of where it occurs.

Likewise, we urge you to **reject** the inclusion of any of the following House bill provisions in the final Farm Bill package:

- **Sections 11701 and 11702**, also known as the King amendment, together are a badly conceived attempt to deny states the authority to set animal welfare standards within their own borders. Moreover, because the provision is so broad, it is expected to have negative consequences not only for animal welfare but also for food safety, worker protections, environmental quality, and consumer safeguards. In prior Farm Bill negotiations, Senate conferees have rejected similar ill-advised and constitutionally questionable language, and we urge Senate conferees to again oppose inclusion of the King amendment in the final Farm Bill.
- **Section 8303** would exempt the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management from having to consult with the US Fish and Wildlife Service about how a proposed project may threaten a listed species or critical habitat. Interagency consultation under the Endangered Species Act is crucial to ensuring that projects minimize damage to vulnerable wildlife.
- **Section 8503** provides the Forest Service with yet another exemption from the ESA. The FS would no longer be required to take potential harm to protected species into account when moving forward with a project.
- **Section 9111** would exempt the Environmental Protection Agency from having to engage in interagency consultation under the ESA before registering a pesticide, and **Section 9114** would exempt the EPA, companies that have registered pesticides, and end users from liability under the ESA for the harm or death of any listed species caused by pesticides. These sections would pose a particular danger to pollinators, which are critical to many crops.

Further, we urge you to reject any attempt to amend the Animal Welfare Act to extend the length of time US Department of Agriculture registered research facilities may operate without inspection. Amendments to do away with the one inspection per year required under the AWA were rejected for consideration by both chambers, indicating that Congress recognizes the need for assuring at least this minimal level of oversight, especially given the recent revelations regarding animal use in experiments. Please ensure that no changes of this nature succeed during conference.

Again, thank you for your commitment to crafting a bipartisan piece of legislation containing none of the problematic provisions contained in the House version of H.R. 2. It is our sincere hope the conference committee will produce a final Farm Bill that will improve animal welfare rather than put animals at risk.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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