



Animal Welfare Institute

900 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, Washington, DC 20003 • www.awionline.org
telephone: (202) 337-2332 • facsimile: (202) 446-2131

February 22, 2011

Ohio Livestock Care Standards Board
Ohio Department of Agriculture
8995 E. Main Street
Reynoldsburg, OH 43068

RE: Proposed Standards for Swine

Dear Members of the Board:

I am writing on behalf of the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI) to offer recommendations and promulgate concerns regarding the setting of standards for the on-farm treatment of pigs. We understand that the Ohio Livestock Care Standards Board (OLCSB) has posted a set of Proposed Standards for comment.

Since its founding in 1951, AWI has been alleviating suffering inflicted on animals by people. Major goals of the organization include supporting high-welfare farms and achieving humane slaughter and transport for all animals raised for food. In 2006 AWI launched a high-welfare food labeling program called Animal Welfare Approved (AWA). As part of this program AWA collaborates with scientists and farmers to set animal care standards. The program employs a highly trained field staff to audit farms for compliance with these standards, and communicates regularly with hundreds of family farmers in dozens of states, including Ohio. The program covers the full lives of the animals from birth through slaughter.

Position Statement

AWI is deeply disappointed with the proposed standards for pigs. The standards do not comprise the level of care and protection of animal well-being that the public demands.

Consumers want animals, even those used for food production, to be treated humanely while they are alive. In a 2004 survey conducted by researchers at the Ohio State University, 92% of Ohioans agreed that it is important that farm animals are well-cared for, and 81% said the well-being of farm animals is just as important as the well-being of pets.¹

AWI believes that a board charged with setting minimum care standards that provide for the well-being of farm animals has a responsibility to consider the most recent scientific literature and expert opinions and to set standards that reflect the latest information on animal behavior and welfare. As many new

¹ Rauch A & Sharp JS, *Ohioans Attitudes about Animal Welfare*, The Ohio State University, Social Responsibility Initiative, January 2005. http://ohiosurvey.osu.edu/pdf/2004_Animal_report.pdf.

studies and scientific and medical organizations (e.g. the American Veterinary Medical Association) have shown, a practice that has become routine in the industry may cease to be considered acceptable or humane based on new evidence. The OLCSB is positing standards that are even less stringent than common industry practices, which are themselves often unacceptable.

The OLCSB **must** create minimum standards that strive to increase, not decrease, the well-being of animals on the farm. To the contrary, the current set of proposed standards for pigs allows for conditions and practices that typically result in animal distress, pain and suffering.

Inadequate Standards

The proposed standards set for pigs do not meet the mandated requirements of the OLCSB under Article 14 of the Ohio Constitution in that they do not provide for the “care and well-being of livestock and poultry.”² Animal well-being is a concept that allows animals to be free from mental and physical pain and suffering, or fear and distress. Contrary to industry adage, a productive animal is NOT necessarily a healthy (either physically or mentally) animal. Advances in science and technology allow animals to maintain productivity even under duress. For example, producers are able to yield good meat product from animals with poor conformation and flighty or aggressive temperaments.

Numerous sets of guidelines, worldwide, have been developed to account for fundamental factors in achieving animal well-being. Most of these guidelines are based on the concept that humans have a moral obligation to afford farm animals “Five Freedoms.” These freedoms imply certain husbandry requirements for the provision of basic farm animal welfare and are viewed as necessary to avoid welfare-related problems.³

The Five Freedoms are listed below, along with specific examples of the OLCSB’s failure to set minimum standards that meet these basic guidelines for animal well-being.

- 1. Freedom from Hunger and Thirst** - by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigor.
 - Proposed Standards do not specify type and quality of feed.

- 2. Freedom from Discomfort** - by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
 - Proposed Standards have no ventilation requirements to prevent ammonia accumulation and poor air quality for breathing.
 - Proposed Standards do not specify texture and slope of flooring.

² Ohio State Legislature, 129th Assembly. The Ohio Constitution. § 14.01 Ohio Livestock Care Standards Board.

³ Farm Animal Welfare Council: Five Freedoms. <http://www.fawc.org.uk/freedoms.htm>.

3. Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease - by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.

- Proposed Standards make no specifications regarding painful practices such as tail docking and castration.
- Proposed Standards have no requirements about alleviating pain through analgesia or anesthetics.
- Proposed Standards do not set a minimum and maximum age range for painful procedures such as tusk trimming, castration, and tail docking.
- Proposed Standards do not specify procedures and treatment for sick or injured animals.

4. Freedom to Express Normal Behavior - by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.

- Proposed Standards allow confinement of sows to gestation crates until 2025.
- Proposed Standards allow the confinement of boars.
- Proposed Standards do not specify minimum space allowances for sows and boars.
- Proposed Standards do not specify minimum space allowances for growing pigs.
- Proposed Standards do not require outdoor access.
- Proposed Standards do not require rooting materials for normal behavior and stimulation.
- Proposed Standards allow continuous low level lighting.

5. Freedom from Fear and Distress - by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

- Proposed Standards make no allowance for pigs to be able to turn around, frustrating animals' desires to move, adjust their bodies for comfort, or groom themselves.
- Proposed Standards confine pigs to isolation for weeks at a time in farrowing crates and in gestation crates through 2025.

Conclusion

The OLCSB has been charged by the Ohio Constitution with setting standards that provide for “the care and well-being of livestock and poultry” and “protect Ohio farms and families”.⁴ Economic viability and profitability is a major concern for farmers in a competitive market. However, animal well-being must

⁴ Ohio State Legislature, 129th Assembly. The Ohio Constitution. § 14.01 Ohio Livestock Care Standards Board.

become a higher priority. Some farmers in Ohio and the rest of the United States are already proving that alternative production methods such as organic or high-welfare farming are economically viable too, and can serve as a model for balancing the varied interests the OLCSB is responsible for.

AWI appreciates the opportunity to offer these concerns regarding farm animal care standards for Ohio, and hopes to see the proposed regulations reworked to incorporate the tenets of the Five Freedoms and animal well-being into the on-farm treatment of pigs. Please do not hesitate to contact me by phone at 202-446-2148 or email at elissa@awionline.org if you have any questions or desire additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elissa Sosland". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent than the last.

Elissa Sosland, M.S.
Farm Animal Program Associate