



**SIERRA  
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MASSACHUSETTS  
CHAPTER

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July 9, 2013

Chairwoman Katherine Clark  
Joint Committee on the Judiciary  
State House, Boston, MA 02133

Chairman Eugene L. O'Flaherty  
Joint Committee on the Judiciary  
State House, Boston, MA 02133

**Re: Testimony in Support of H1456/S741, An Act to Prevent Farm Animal Cruelty.**

Dear Chairwoman Clark, Chairman O'Flaherty, and Honorable Members of the Committee,

Thank you for providing this opportunity to offer our comments on H1456/S741, An Act to Prevent Farm Animal Cruelty.

The Sierra Club is the oldest and largest non-profit, non-partisan environmental organization in the country. With over a forty year history in this state, the Massachusetts Sierra Club represents about 22,000 members throughout the Commonwealth and over 1.4 million supporters and members nationwide. We fight for clean air, clean water, the preservation of the state's most precious natural spaces, and healthy, vibrant communities.

On traditional family farms, cows, sheep, pigs, and chickens are almost part of the family. Chances are that each animal has a name, and when the animal is taken to slaughter, farm families try to make sure that the processing is done humanely, causing the animals as little stress and suffering as possible. The chickens that provide eggs and the cows that furnish milk, cream and butter live long and productive lives. Farm animals are turned out in pastures, with access to shelter during inclement weather. Humane treatment of animals is based on understanding of their natural behavior. When farm animals are treated with respect, nature itself is respected. Farmers call this "good husbandry."<sup>1</sup>

There is a direct connection between respect for natural animal behavior and protection of the environment. Animal husbandry practices that accommodate the natural ways of animals tend to be much more in tune with sustainable and non-polluting farm practices.

Today, industrial style animal raising ignores animal nature and welfare by standardizing the animals raised to eliminate natural genetic diversity, by speeding up animal production through genetic manipulation and the use of chemical and drug additives to feed, and by concentrating production in giant confinement barns that crowd animals together in inhumane conditions ripe for disease. In turn, more drug inputs are needed to keep them alive. These facilities are actually animal factories. The water and air pollution associated with animal factories stems directly from the reducing of animals to units of industrial production. For example:

- Millions of broiler chickens are housed in industrial barns containing up to 25,000 birds. Birds are bred to have such heavy breasts that many are unable to stand, and die of thirst because they are unable to reach water;

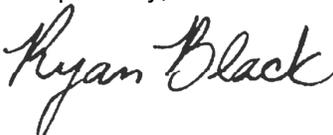
- Thousands of dairy cows are confined in concrete encased feedlots. To artificially boost milk production, cows are often injected with hormones that cause crippling loss of bone mass and produce painful infections. Animals are milked by mechanical devices as many as three times each day. The farmer/animal connection ceases to exist in these massive industrial dairy factories;
- Hogs are confined by the thousands in industrial barns which force them to spend their lives in tight metal pens, often standing painfully on slated concrete floors, breathing almost poisonous levels of ammonia and hydrogen sulfide from the manure stored under their pens. Hogs are sentient, social creatures that can be debilitated by stress when deprived of outlets for their nature behavior. Antibiotics and other artificial inputs are given, in part, to overcome the physical symptoms of this stress.
- Egg laying hens are confined by the millions in giant industrial barns, living in tight metal cages, called "battery cages" stacked one atop another. Hens are forced to artificially molt (lose their feathers) through systematic starvation.
- Huge beef feedlots in many places throughout the United States, such as western Kansas, Texas Panhandle, Oklahoma Panhandle, and eastern Colorado confine thousands of steers and heifers and feed them hormones and antibiotics to promote faster growth.
- The Humane Slaughter Act, passed in 1960 by the US Congress, has no provisions for awarding fines or penalties, is generally not enforced by the US Department of Agriculture, and is routinely ignored. Industrial animal production for food represents a systematic violation of nature.

And a production system that treats animals inhumanely also tends to enslave farmers in unfair production contracts, threatens public health through manure runoff and antibiotic use, and impoverishes rural communities through tax subsidies and denial of other economic development possibilities. Animal factories are corporate-controlled monoculture, in which all of the federal largesse goes out of the community, and all efforts are focused on industrial livestock production, eliminating any other economic enterprises.

The treatment of farm animals is a marker for the entire industrial system's attitude towards farmers, communities, consumers and the environment. Farmers today can make a good living raising animals according to humane and environmentally responsible standards. Several polls have shown that consumers overwhelmingly favor sustainable and humane practices, and look for meat that is labeled "natural" or "organic". These USDA certified labels indicate the animals have been raised in a system that respects their nature. New labels certifying animal welfare are also emerging from the Animal Welfare Institute and Certified Humane.

The adoption of sustainable farming practices is one that will require governmental standards. We respectfully ask this Committee to report H1456/S741 favorably, and furthermore urge all members of the Massachusetts State Legislature to support this bill's passage. We strongly believe that this bill is a positive step in the creation of sustainable and humane farming practices.

Respectfully,



Ryan Black  
Director  
Massachusetts Sierra Club

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<sup>1</sup> "Inhumane Treatment of Farm Animals," Sierra Club (national office) Clean Water and Factory Farms, Feb 17, 2006