

The Honorable Representative

U.S. House of Representatives; Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Senators

The U.S. Senate, U.S. Capitol Building; Washington, D.C. 20510

Secretary of Agriculture Edward W. Schafer

U.S. Department of Agriculture; 1400 Independence Ave., S.W.; Washington, DC 20250
ph: 202-720-3631; email: Edward.W.Schafer@usda.gov

Dear Representative, Senators and Secretary Schafer:

Electric prods shock the heads, necks, spines and rectums of animals crumpled on concrete. Their eyes blink, but their bodies are limp. Organs have begun to fail. Some have crushed bones, torn ligaments. Still, heavy chains drag them. Forklift blades toss their giant bodies as they moan in pain. Concentrated water jets are fired into their nostrils and throats.

These are downed animals. Suspended between life and death, they are forced to stand for inspection at slaughterhouses like the Chino, Calif.-based Westland/Hallmark Meat Co. Recent undercover video from Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) depicts Hallmark workers who kick, ram, shock, harass, and even “waterboard” incapacitated cows.

The gruesome images are hardly breaking news. Downed animals are routinely tormented at stockyards and slaughterhouses. Hallmark simply got caught in the act.

The breathtaking news is that it took a nonprofit welfare group to disclose flagrant violations of state and federal law. It took a guy with a hidden video camera to prompt the USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service to conclude Westland/Hallmark Meat fails to function in compliance with laws instated to deter animal abuse and keep downers out of the food chain.

Now that this major supplier to U.S. school lunches has been exposed, 143 million pounds of beef have been recalled. An Office of the Inspector General inquiry could proceed to the Justice Department for criminal prosecution. FSIS inspectors have effectively closed the Hallmark plant.

Yet these band-aid fixes don’t address the bigger problem. The U.S. government must enact enforceable laws to ban the transport, marketing and slaughter of ALL downed animals for ANY purpose. I call upon Congress and regulatory agencies to:

- Pass the **Downed Animal and Food Safety Protection Act (H.R. 661/ S. 394)** which bans slaughter of downer cows, pigs, sheep and all “livestock.”
- Require humane euthanasia for all downed animals. A current loophole lets immobilized animals suffer until they undergo USDA inspection. As evidenced in the HSUS video, animals are tortured as they await one of 7,600 inspectors charged with monitoring 6,200 processing plants nationwide.
- Forbid use of downed animals for “pet” and “livestock” foods.
- Pass **the Farm Animal Stewardship Purchasing Act (H.R. 1726)** to install basic animal protections (such as humane euthanasia of downers) for producers selling food to federal programs.
- Require training in methods that prevent animals from becoming downers in the first place. Temple Grandin, an American Meat Institute advisor, contends: “90% of all downers are preventable.”

In 2004, USDA forbid the sale of downed cows after the discovery of a Washington state dairy cow diagnosed with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). Plainly, USDA’s interim rule is not working. Please expand and codify USDA’s ban to assure no commercial goods are processed from animals at risk for transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) and other dangerous foodborne pathogens. No suffering animal should be forced to stagger toward a kill floor for any reason.

Thank you,