

Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack

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President Barack Obama

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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

Dear President Obama, Secretary Vilsack, Senators and Representative:

Thank you for banning the slaughter of downed cows and closing a loophole that let some non-ambulatory cows suffer until slaughter. As you know, the prior administration allowed case-by-case evaluations. Cows who collapsed *after* pre-slaughter inspection were routinely forced upright until killed.

Close to a half million infirm cows are annually dragged to slaughter, according to the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association (JAVMA). That figure doesn't account for downed pigs, sheep, goats, or other creatures farmed for human consumption. Ultimately, policymakers must stop the transport, marketing and slaughter of ALL downed animals.

Cows transmit *E. coli*. Pigs carry the bacterium *Yersinia enterocolitica* and chickens harbor salmonella. These toxic pathogens thrive in animal feces. Downers, who languish in manure for days, have no immune defense against infection.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates 76 million U.S. cases of foodborne disease occur yearly. Among them, salmonella poisons 45,808 people (2006) and *E. coli* O157 infects 70,000 more. Some 5,000 deaths and 325,000 hospitalizations annually stem from foodborne illness. The true tally is much higher because most cases go unreported. One way to lower these numbers is to forbid all downed animals from entry into the human food chain.

The CDC lists 18 North American cases of Mad Cow Disease (8/20/08). Science overwhelmingly links downers to BSE (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy). Virus-like prions in BSE can trigger Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD), a fatal nervous system infection in humans. Since we don't know exactly how BSE and TSE jump the species barrier, all downed animals are suspect.

As long as battered animals emerge from profit-driven factory farms, the USDA must protect all species. No dying animal should be rammed upright with tractors and forklifts — wrenched, shocked, pounded — so meat makers can eke about \$30 out of her tortured body.

Please advocate regulations to safeguard all downed animals; ensure merciful euthanasia; and outlaw use of tractors, forklifts, chains, electric prods, hoses or any violent means to move animals.

Thank you,