

Summer 2016

County Farm Bureau Issue Backgrounder
Summer 2016
Animal Husbandry

Background

During the past two decades, animal rights groups have increased their efforts to dictate animal care and production methods by initiating ballot initiatives and pursuing state legislation. To further their advocacy, these groups have contacted manufacturers and retailers and requested that they only purchase agricultural products, especially livestock, that are raised a certain way.

As a result, livestock farmers are being asked by their processors to change the way that they raise their animals. To illustrate, the National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) has announced that dairy farmers participating in the National Dairy Farmers Assuring Responsible Management (FARM) program, must eliminate tail docking by 2017. Originally, the target date for phasing out tail docking was January 1, 2022, but due to concerns raised by many buyers of dairy products, the NMPF moved up the date by five years.

It's not only a dairy issue, but also poultry and swine. Whether it be individual state legislation or market access requirements, there are efforts to increase the size of cages for laying hens and to eliminate gestation crates for sows.

Farmers have varying views on these topics. Some believe that they should be able to decide how they raise their animals, while others believe that they need to raise animals the way consumers request. This leads to interesting discussions among farmers.

Current WFBF Policy **Animal Welfare**

We support farmers and veterinarians deciding appropriate husbandry practices for their farm. We support legislation prohibiting local units of government from regulating animal care and welfare and granting this authority to Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP).

Questions to Consider

1. Should WFBF policy contain language specific to tail docking, i.e., support or oppose?
2. Should WFBF policy address the fact that some buyers are requiring certain animal husbandry practices in order for a farmer to sell animals to them?
3. Other suggestions?