

Civitas

Citizens for Planetary Health

Bina Robinson, Director

Box 26 Swain NY 14884 USA

Tel/Fax 607-545-6213

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e-mail <civitas@linkny

<http://www.linkny.com/civitas>

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Submission to accept Petition 98P-0151/CP1 which would prohibit slaughterhouses from accepting downed animals

1. Sick animals are not fit to be used as food.
2. Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), which can be transmitted from cows to humans as a faster-killing variant of devastating Creutzfeldt Jakob disease (CJD), is spreading. It is not unlikely that whatever is affecting downed animals can also be transmitted to humans as BSE/CJD has been.

Mink on a Wisconsin fur farm fed almost exclusively (95%) on downer cows all died of a transmissible encephalopathy (TSE) similar to BSE and CJD. When brain material from these mink was injected into two calves, both of them succumbed to "downer" cow syndrome.

TSEs are already present in wild ungulates and squirrels. At least two deer hunters and a woman who ate venison have been diagnosed with CJD. Given the long latency period of this disease, more people could already be infected as has happened with BSE/CJD. In Kentucky, 11 people who ate fried squirrels' brains died of CJD.

The point is that TSE's are already present in the U.S. A Yale study found that six of 46 patients whose deaths were attributed to Alzheimer's disease actually died of CJD. That's 13%, much higher than the generally cited one per million cases in the general population (0.000001%).

3. The danger of TSE in farm animals is real because the U.S. did not act immediately to ban ground-up dead animals in feed for vegetarian cows, but left it up to rendering plants to do so on a voluntary basis. It still permits such carcasses to be incorporated in feed for chickens and pigs, however, AND allows excrement from chickens and pigs to be incorporated in feed for ungulates.
4. The non-therapeutic use of antibiotics to promote growth and prevent infections on crowded factory farms has produced resistant strains of bacteria, making it more likely that other disease pathogens will cross the species barrier
5. Some downed animals are the result of rough handling rather than disease. Modern stock-raising methods result in faster growth, heavier bodies and weaker bones. Making it illegal for slaughter

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houses to accept downed animals could encourage better husbandry practices and better handling during loading, unloading and transport.

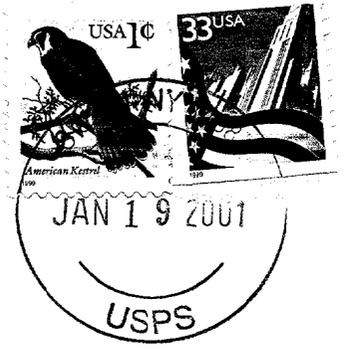
6. Moving and transporting downed animals is impossible without subjecting the animals to more severe pain and suffering. This reason alone should be sufficient for a civilized country to eliminate sending downed animals to slaughter.

7. I can't think of one really good reason why slaughterhouses should have to accept downed animals. It is not fair to the employees who are forced to cope with them and it not fair to consumers who are put into the position of unknowingly eating sick animals with possible harmful effects on their health.

It is commendable that the Department of Agriculture has refused to accept the inclusion of "downers" for the National School Lunch Program. It would be good to extend this safety measure to all consumers of American meat both at home and abroad. Also, putting a stop to the extremely inhumane treatment of these animals would be a step toward a less violent society.

Respectfully submitted,
Bina Robinson

Bina Robinson



USDA
Dockets Mgmt Branch
5630 Fishers Lane - 1061
Rockville MD 20852

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