

March 6, 2004

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FSIS Docket Clerk
Docket 03-0251F
Room 102, Cotton Annex
300 12th and C Street SW
Washington, DC 20250-3700

Dear Secretary Veneman and FSIS:

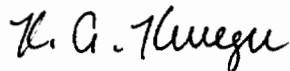
I am writing on behalf of our organization, Habitat and Animal Health Concern, Inc. to comment on the newly-adopted ban on using downer cattle for human consumption and the requirement of humane euthanasia for downer cattle. We are a professional research and education organization comprised of veterinarians, ecologists, and wildlife biologists. We support this ban and requirement because they represent both a minimum humane standard of care for slaughter cattle, and a necessary safety requirement for meat and other beef products destined for human consumption. We thank you for implementing these measures.

We strongly urge you to uphold these new policies, and prevent any weakening of the USDA downer ban. All non-ambulatory disabled animals, regardless of the reason that they are unable to stand or walk, including illness, injury, or a combination of these, should be condemned and euthanized in a humane manner without delay. We ask you to resist any efforts of legislators in Congress to weaken the downer ban. Any such efforts represent unethical and scientifically indefensible behavior, presumably in pursuit of squeezing every last cent out of these unfortunate animals, without regard to their welfare or the welfare of the people who might consume them. This is simply wrong. Additionally, we ask you to extend the downer ban beyond cattle to pigs, sheep, and other livestock.

We hope you agree with us that the greatness and value of any institution, as well as its moral progress, can be judged by the way its animals are treated. This holds for the United States, for the USDA and its leaders, and for all of us who interact in any way with animals.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,



Dr. K.A. Krueger, President
Habitat and Animal Health Concern, Inc.
26 Shawnee Way
Stafford, VA 22556