

# LEGISLATIVE FACT SHEET

## The Downed Animal and Food Safety Protection Act H.R. 661 and S.394



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### Support the Downed Animal and Food Safety Protection Act (H.R. 661 / S. 394)

*To amend the Humane Methods of Livestock Slaughter Act of 1958 to ensure the humane treatment of nonambulatory livestock, and for other purposes.*

The USDA's current regulation on the use of downed cattle for human food contains several loopholes: It applies only to cattle, leaving pigs, sheep, goats, and other animals who are unable to stand or walk on their own, completely unregulated. Current regulations also apply only to slaughterhouses, leaving stockyards, farms and other venues unregulated. Closing those loopholes through HR 661 introduced by Representatives Ackerman (D-NY) and LaTourette (R-OH) and S. 394 introduced by Senator Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI) will dramatically lessen the suffering of animals who become non-ambulatory from illness or injury, while also protecting the health of consumers.

#### Inhumane Treatment of Animals

- It is virtually impossible to move downed animals humanely and they are routinely dragged with chains or pushed with tractors or forklifts in violation of humane handling guidelines issued by the USDA. Handlers may inflict pain by pulling tails and ears, or through the use of electroshock prods and other implements to motivate downed animals to stand or drag themselves along.
- To be used for human food, animals must be kept alive until they are slaughtered. For this reason, downed animals awaiting slaughter often suffer for hours or days at a time, receiving no veterinary care. Removing the profit motive to keep suffering animals alive removes the main obstacle to humane euthanasia.
- Industry experts have estimated that as many as 90% of downed animal cases could be prevented through better care and transportation and handling methods. Banning downed animals from human consumption would provide a strong incentive to ensure the health of livestock during all stages of production.

#### Food Safety Concerns

Meat from downed animals is more likely to be unfit for consumption. It has an increased risk for bacterial contamination and diseases, including neurological afflictions such as Mad Cow Disease. USDA records show that downed animals afflicted with gangrene, malignant lymphoma, pneumonia, or other serious illnesses have been approved for human consumption by the Agency.

#### Public Opinion

A 2003 Zogby Poll of likely voters found that that 77% consider it unacceptable that downed animals are being slaughtered for human consumption.

#### Additional Point of Interest

Downer pigs are between .1% and .9% of all pigs slaughtered. With 103 million pigs slaughtered in 2006, the total number of downed pigs would have been between 103,000 and 927,000. Euthanasia of less than 1% of pigs brought to market would have minimal economic impact, especially if measures were taken to reduce the incidence of downed animals in the first place. Meanwhile, benefits to animal welfare and consumer health would be substantial.

*For more information regarding H.R.661/S.394 – The Downed Animal and Food Safety Protection Act please contact Julie Janovsky at [jjanovsky@farmsanctuary.org](mailto:jjanovsky@farmsanctuary.org) or 301.654.2903*