

The Modern-Day Attack on Animal Agriculture

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One of my favorite memories from last summer was a road trip I took with my grandparents. After hours on the road, we made our typical stop at 7-Eleven. While there, my grandpa bought his weekly lottery ticket. We made it back to the car and sat down, contently drinking our Slurpees. My grandpa excitedly scratched off the last corner of his lottery ticket with his keys, and for the first time, I saw the look of overwhelming joy on his face. He had won! We all looked up at him in anticipation, but his only words were, “kids, we’re buying bacon tonight!” Today, buying bacon might not be the result of winning a lottery ticket, but for some, it may be on the horizon. The recent passage of Proposition 12 in California has created the strictest animal space regulations for pork, eggs, and veal in the entire country. Proposition 12 poses a significant threat to the pork industry and its supply chain impacting producers, consumers, and the economy.

California’s Proposition 12 accomplishes two basic goals. First, it calls out minimum space requirements for breeding pigs, and second, it bans the sale of pork that does not follow production standards outlined by the law. With a 63 percent margin, California voters passed this “animal care program” on November 6, 2018, which went into effect on January 1, 2022. This bill created clarity for the more vaguely written 2008 Proposition 2. Every breeding pig now requires 24 square feet, which basically eliminates the use of gestation crates and breeding pens, which allow approximately 16 to 18 square feet of space (California Proposition 12, Farm Animal Confinement Initiative (2018), n.d.). In addition, all uncooked pork sold in California, including bacon and other cured meats, must come from the offspring of sows kept in the prescribed dimensions.

So how impactful is a law in a state that only produces one-tenth of one percent of the nation's pork? Let's look at the facts: California currently consumes around 15 percent of the nation's pork supply (*Supreme Court Grapples with Animal Welfare*, 2022). That means that 99.9 percent of pork consumed in California is shipped in from other states, yet they have now created regulations on how America's pork is produced (Douglas & Douglas, 2022). According to the ASPCA, 14 states now have farm animal confinement bans with more initiatives popping up in new states at every election cycle (Farm Animal Confinement Bans by State, n.d.) The vice president of the Humane Society, Josh Balk, considered Proposition 12 "the most transformational step forward of all time in regards to animal protections." (California Proposition 12, Farm Animal Confinement Initiative (2018), n.d.).

Animal welfare is a heartfelt concern for both producers and consumers, but not at the risk of ruining the industry. If not handled correctly, Proposition 12 could do this. These regulations were created with no input from groups such as American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC), and the American Farm Bureau. These same organizations claim the law is unconstitutional. As a result, a lawsuit against the state of California was filed, as well as a legal challenge in the Supreme Court asking for the proposition to be reviewed (The Pork Industry, n.d.) The NPPC stated that "the ban on the sale of out-of-state pork is a restraint of interstate commerce." (CA Prop 12 Amicus Page, n.d.). The lawsuit additionally points out that proposed animal welfare standards have no evidence of improved health or well-being for livestock. The AVMA stated that they are "concerned the proposal could compromise animal welfare by requiring producers to adopt systems that don't account for all

aspects of humane treatment.” (Larkin, 2018). The Supreme Court’s decision will undoubtedly pave the way for implementing similar laws in other states. As seen with Oregon’s IP-13 Initiative and Colorado’s Proposition 16, activists are pushing beyond borders in pursuit of additional animal space requirement laws.

How will these laws impact the pocketbooks of you and me? In the last five years, all-food CPI rose by 11.1 percent, only less than that of housing and transportation (USDA ERS - Food Prices and Spending, n.d.). With these regulations being placed on producers, this number will only continue to rise. UC Davis research estimates that these regulations will increase pork prices by up to 60 percent, disproportionately affecting low-income consumers within the state. The economic impact of this one measure is estimated to be 320 million dollars on consumers alone (Douglas & Douglas, 2022). With this rise in food prices, consumers will be forced to spend more money to feed their families, leaving them with less expendable income to contribute to the economy, impacting the American economy as a whole.

Moving forward, what can be done to slow the movement of anti-animal legislation? An essential step to protecting the industry is an increased understanding and perception of the agriculture industry: from producer to consumer. One way the National Pork Board is stepping up is with their ‘Real Pork MythBusting’. Utilizing celebrities, such as Eric Stonestreet, on their social media platforms, engages consumers and helps debunk myths about pork production. Eric, who grew up on a pig farm, brings producer credibility to consumers, building trust in agriculture. Unfortunately, this is not enough. Those of us in agriculture need to know our legislators and be part of the solution in informing the public about sound production methods.

Regardless of new propositions that emerge, regardless of the Supreme Court's decision, and regardless of the votes of the American people, the pressure on the livestock and surrounding industries are here to stay. This has caused much anxiety among producers; however, it has forced the agriculture industry to do better and to be better. Michigan State University Professor David Favre expects that "within five years, livestock producers will be proposing national legislation setting uniform welfare standards for farm animals." (Supreme Court Grapples with Animal Welfare, 2022)

Creating a balance to have healthy scrutiny of the agriculture industry will develop its best version, so that the pork industry and all those impacted may continue to thrive.

On hour four of our long drive home, my grandpa finally stopped to buy us what we'd been waiting for: a towering BLT from our favorite sandwich stop. Luckily, we still had money left over for an extra day at Disneyland, the second happiest place on earth—only second to bacon.

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I hereby certify that my speech entitled "The Modern Day Attack on Animal Agriculture"
is the result of my own effort and ability. It is understood that I am encouraged to utilize all available training facilities of my local school in developing my speaking abilities, and that I may obtain facts and working data from any source. However, in securing information as direct quotes or phrases, specific dates, figures or other materials, such must be marked in "quotes" in manuscript and are identified in the bibliography at the end of the manuscript. Failure to do so represents plagiarism and will automatically disqualify me as a contestant.

Shayla eddy
Signature of Contestant

2-20-23
Date

APPROVED: Kathy Mayfield
Agricultural Science & Technology Instructor

2-20-2023
Date

Chapter North Clackamas