

## BRIEF TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Re: Bill C-205: An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act

Submitted By: Karoline Eilers, North Vancouver, BC.

To the Members of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

As a Canadian citizen I am very concerned about the nature of this bill which reads as an Ag-Gag bill disguised as a biosecurity bill. Below I will detail details that I would like the committee to consider in relation to this bill. I hope that you will take these notes into consideration in your work on Bill C-205.

### ***Disease on Industrial Animal Farms and Biosecurity.***

- The Canadian Food Inspection Agency, CFIA, which investigates every reportable disease outbreak has not a single documented case of trespassers or animal advocate introducing a biosecurity threat onto a farm.
- CFIA investigations have found that causes for contamination are usually farm staff working on multiple farms; the sharing of needles/equipment; contact with wild animals; or by feeding ground up dead animals back to live animals (as in the case of mad cow disease). In my home province of British Columbia, we have had three COVID-19 outbreaks at mink farms. Two of the outbreaks were a result of infected workers who passed the virus on to minks and the third is still being investigated.
- Poor adherence to biosecurity protocols on farms is the major problem. There is no adequate independent and unscheduled monitoring of biosecurity protocols to ensure they are being followed by farmers or their staff.
- I personally know a former chicken catcher that worked for two companies in the mid-2010s. At one company he did not have to follow any protocols when he and his coworkers came on to a farm to load chickens. They went to multiple farms a day with the same truck, same shoes, same clothes. The second company gave the workers plastic covers for their shoes, but just one pair so they wore that same pair to every farm they went to that day. No farmer ever raised any concern when the workers arrived on site.
- As long as this bill focusses only on trespassers, C-205 is ag gag-style legislation and not a biosecurity bill. It targets animal advocates who provide the only voice that the farm animals have. If Bill C-205 was truly intended to protect biosecurity on farms, it would apply to farmers, their staff and contract workers too—not just those on farms without permission.

### ***Transparency in Our Food System***

- Industrialized farms are closed door environments where the public has no view into what is happening inside.
- Canada has the National Farm Animal Care Council, NFACC, which outlines Codes of Practices for various farmed animals. The codes of practice are voluntary, they are not laws nor regulations. The codes of practice are more focussed on making farming easier than making the animals' short lives better.
  - Example 1: NFACC gave farmers 10 years 2014-2024 to move away from horrific gestation crates for sows. 10 years seems like more than enough time to move away

from the crates. This was recently extended to 2029 and this was not extended for the benefit of the sows.

- Example 2: Mink are kept in small cages their whole lives; an adult female should have a cage with a minimum floor space of 225 inches squared which is 15 inches by 15 inches.

Inspections are pre-scheduled rather than unannounced which allows for ample clean up time.

- Some provinces have made some of the NFACC codes practice into law, but enforcement is lax. Often a complaint needs to be raised before any action is taken. Complaints are rarely raised by employees as they are concerned about their jobs, or they simply do not have an issue with how the animals are treated.

### **A bill should be introduced for the regulation and monitoring of animal welfare conditions on farms at a federal level**

- Animal welfare is a matter of intense public concern, yet there are no federal or provincial animal welfare regulations protecting animals on farms. The farming industry benefits by not only making its own rules but being able to hide what is happening inside its facilities.
- People trespass on farms because government does not proactively monitor animal welfare conditions on farms. Without them citizens will never see the conditions the animals are living in. Many people that I know are losing confidence in the farming industry because of the lack of transparency and oversight and I believe that reflects more and more public opinion.
- No animal should suffer. If it is our family pet or if it will appear on the dinner table. The suffering that occurs on farms in the form of cleanliness, medical treatment without anesthetic, housing that is so small that animals cannot turn around or stretch or move normally, crowding with other animals so they can't spread their wings, never seeing daylight, and other animal abuse are all a choice that we as human beings can allow or disallow.

Bill C-205 promotes secrecy not biosecurity. We need more insight not more closed doors. We need more animal welfare action and legislation from our federal government.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my points.

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