



# AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SWINE VETERINARIANS

830 26<sup>th</sup> Street • Perry, Iowa 50220 • 515-465-5255 • [aasv@aasv.org](mailto:aasv@aasv.org)

May 17, 2024

The Honorable GT Thompson  
Chairman  
House Committee on Agriculture  
1301 Longworth House Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Scott  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Agriculture  
1010 Longworth House Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Thompson and Ranking Member Scott:

The American Association of Swine Veterinarians (AASV) is a professional association of veterinarians specializing in swine health, welfare, and production. Over 1,300 AASV members represent all facets of the veterinary profession including practice, research, allied industry, public health, government, academia, and education. It is the mission of the AASV to increase the knowledge of swine veterinarians, protect and promote the health and well-being of pigs, advocate science-based approaches to veterinary, industry, and public health issues, and promote the development and availability of resources that enhance the effectiveness of professional activities.

The AASV supports efforts that recognize the responsibility of veterinarians to work with farmers to ensure swine are raised in a manner that promotes animal health, animal wellbeing, and human safety. Because no single husbandry style is applicable in all situations, on-farm animal management decisions should be based on the best available scientific evidence and professional judgement. The veterinarians and farmers who work with these animals daily are best informed to make those decisions. Regulatory requirements placing arbitrary limits on the veterinarian's ability to work with our clients to promote the best on-farm husbandry practices may not be in the best interest of the animals under our care.

It is the position of the AASV that, given the variability inherent in different housing systems, we support the use of sow housing configurations that provide every animal with access to appropriate food and water; protect sows and piglets from detrimental effects associated with environmental extremes, particularly temperature extremes; reduce exposure to hazards that result in disease, pain or injury to sows or piglets; allow sows and piglets to express appropriate behaviors and minimize expression of inappropriate behaviors within the constraints of the housing type; minimize aggression and competition between sows; promote good air quality and allow proper sanitation; facilitate evaluation and care of individual animals while protecting worker safety; and provide alternative housing for sows based on evaluation of each sow's individual needs.

There are advantages and disadvantages to any sow housing that should be considered by weighing scientific evidence and veterinary professional judgement. The veterinarian's role is to teach and promote appropriate stockmanship, which is as important as housing type in meeting the needs of the animals. Methods of selection

(genotypic and phenotypic) should be considered for identifying animals that can thrive in various housing environments. Furthermore, we support research that investigates the impact of housing on sow welfare.

California's Proposition 12 prohibits the sale of products based on arbitrary animal housing requirements on a host of animals—including swine. The ballot initiative does not objectively improve animal welfare. In fact, in some cases, it may compromise animal welfare.

A well-established body of scientific literature assessing biological metrics of sow welfare in individual stalls and group pens shows that both housing methods can be important tools in managing a healthy herd. Categorically banning one of them, as Proposition 12 does, will likely harm rather than improve animal wellbeing. There is a strong scientific consensus that, in order to maximize animal welfare, the choice between individual stalls and group pens must be made on a case-by-case basis, depending on the circumstances faced by each individual herd and farm. When this choice is made according to sound husbandry and veterinary principles, animal-welfare outcomes are similar between group housing and individual stalls.

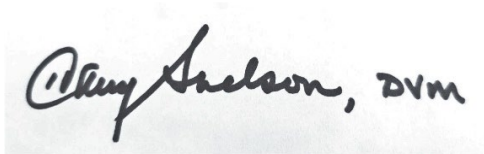
The scientific evidence thus indicates that both individual stalls and group pens are valuable management options for sow housing. Which of them is best to use, in what proportions, and at what times in a sow's reproductive cycle, are questions that depend on the individual circumstances of a farm and its herd. Maximizing animal health and welfare therefore requires housing arrangements for sows in farm herds to be determined on a case-by-case basis, by farmers and veterinarians considering all the circumstances of each individual herd and farm.

Without a solution, veterinarians will be restricted in their options to maximize animal welfare based on a herd's specific needs.

There is no one-size-fits-all housing type that is best for all sows in all situations. For all sow housing systems, careful husbandry, facility maintenance, and farmworker training are important to maximizing sow well-being. The best solution for animal welfare is for each team of farmers and veterinarians to have flexibility to determine the housing arrangements that are best for their animals in their circumstances. Because Proposition 12 would take away that flexibility, it places at risk the well-being of many animals. Moreover, the Supreme Court's decision in *National Pork Producers v. Ross* opened the door for additional unscientific state regulations across agriculture and veterinary practice.

The Supreme Court's opinion clearly stated only Congress can intervene. It is critical Congress assert its constitutional authority to protect the freedom of veterinarians to maximize animal health and welfare.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Harry Snelson, DVM". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "H".

Harry Snelson, DVM  
Executive director  
American Association of Swine Veterinarians