

February 21, 2018

Roberta F. Wagner
Assistant Administrator
Office of Policy and Program Development
Food Safety and Inspection Service

Via email: Roberta.wagner@fsis.usda.gov

Re: Support For Mercy for Animals Petition to Include Poultry Under the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (Petition No. 17-06)

Dear Assistant Administrator Wagner,

On behalf of PETA and its more than 6.5 million members and supporters I am writing to express support for Rulemaking Petition 17-06, submitted on November 15, 2017, by Mercy For Animals. This petition requests that FSIS include poultry as “livestock” under the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (HMSA), 7 U.S.C. §§ 1901–1907, and as “amenable species” under the Federal Meat Inspection Act, 21 U.S.C. §§ 601 *et seq.* It also asks FSIS to determine methods of slaughter for bird species that comply with requirements under the HMSA and issue related policy and guidance documents.

The FSIS’s current interpretation of the HMSA excludes birds—who comprise approximately 98 percent of the land animals who are slaughtered for food in United States annually—from its protections. As a result, most of these animals are electrically immobilized, resulting in an array of animal welfare, as well as economic and worker-safety problems. The process involves dumping and shackling live birds, running them through an electrically charged bath of water to immobilize them, slitting their throats with a machine, and defeathering them in tanks of scalding-hot water. Birds endure bruised and broken wings and legs and can suffocate when they are dumped and shackled. Electric current levels are too low to render birds insensible to pain, and all are conscious as their throats are slit. Millions of birds miss the blades each year and are scalded to death in defeathering tanks. Workers have also been documented committing gratuitous acts of abuse, including tearing live birds apart, spitting tobacco in their eyes, spray-painting their faces, as well as stomping on, punching, kicking, and even sexually assaulting them.

The HMSA declares it to be “the policy of the United States that the slaughtering of livestock and the handling of livestock in connection with slaughter shall be carried out only by humane methods.” 7 U.S.C. § 1901. Excluding birds from the statute’s protections contravenes this intent and is arbitrary and capricious.

Very truly yours,



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