

Proposed Op-Ed Piece Submitted for Publication
October 30, 2009

Issue 2 Supports Ohio's Farmers and Consumers

By Robert J. Boggs

Director of the Ohio Department of Agriculture

This November, Ohio voters have the unique opportunity to support our livestock farmers, our food consumers and the future of Ohio.

Issue 2 is critical to Ohio for several reasons. It will mean ensuring the continued viability and success of our livestock and poultry farmers. It will mean that we can maintain the excellent care of livestock and poultry in our state. It will mean that we can protect Ohio family farms. It will mean that we can sustain the availability of safe, locally-grown food.

This initiative is not a question of policy, it is a process for improvement. By approving Issue 2, voters will create the Ohio Livestock Care Standards Board, which will serve to establish a uniform set of standards for livestock and poultry care in Ohio. This 13-member board will be comprised of a diverse mix of Ohio experts in animal care and food production. Its membership will include: the Ohio Director of Agriculture, three family farmers, a state licensed-veterinarian, the Ohio Department of Agriculture State Veterinarian, a food safety expert, a county Humane Society representative, two statewide farm organization members, an Ohio agriculture college or university dean, and two members of the public representing Ohio consumers.

The experts of this board will be charged with setting livestock and poultry care standards in Ohio. In doing so, they may consider issues such as food safety, consumer concerns, animal health and mortality, biosecurity, and good farm practices. The appointed members of the board will be selected by the governor and the Ohio General Assembly and will be subject to the authority of the General Assembly.

Creating this board will provide a transparent process for Ohio's citizens. Those who wish to voice their opinions and concerns on the well-being and treatment of livestock and poultry in our state will now have a public forum through which to share their views.

We all can be proud of our state's rich agricultural heritage. Many people may not know or fully understand the immense influence the agriculture industry has on our state, its citizens, and our economic prosperity. Our state's food and agricultural industry annually contributes more than \$98 billion to the state's economy, and provides one in seven Ohioans with good jobs, on and off the farm. That is more than any other sector.



Page 2 of 2 – Op-Ed on Issue 2 Supports Ohio’s Farmers and Consumers

Like other sectors of the economy, agriculture can not rest on its past. It must be prepared to continue to adapt and change. The best practices and production techniques of yesterday may not be the best for tomorrow. The Ohio Livestock Care Standards Board will strengthen the ability of Ohio’s agricultural producers to respond to emerging scientific research and changing consumer trends.

Each and every day, Ohio’s livestock and poultry farmers face many daunting challenges. They work tirelessly in the face of uncertain markets, volatile weather and increased costs to provide us with the best quality food in the world. Issue 2 would give us the opportunity to provide farmers with enhanced expertise on the most up-to-date and appropriate standards of livestock and poultry care.

As consumers, we all want to be certain we purchase the highest quality foods for our families. We want foods that are wholesome, safe, healthy, affordable and locally grown. By knowing that Ohio farmers will use the specific standards and practices created by the Ohio Livestock Care Standards Board, we can remain confident the food we eat was raised in an accountable and dependable way.

Whether as farmers or consumers, we all share in the common concern that our livestock and poultry are raised in a responsible, safe and healthy manner. We can no longer rely on inadequate, antiquated measures to ensure the continued success of our state. Ohio should have the opportunity to provide an Ohio solution to an Ohio problem. Issue 2 gives us the necessary framework to ensure that happens.

– 30 –

