

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 12, 2015

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Jamie Whitten Building  
1400 Independence Ave, SW Room 220A  
Washington, DC 20250

RE: Downer Calves (Docket No: FSIS-2014-0020, Requirements for the Disposition of Non-ambulatory Disabled Veal Calves)

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We write to express our strong support for the May 2015 proposed rule to prohibit the cruel treatment and slaughter of non-ambulatory disabled calves (known as “downers”). The slaughter of downer calves—calves too sick, injured, weak, or tired to stand—is morally reprehensible, inconsistent with the *Humane Methods of Slaughter Act*, and a serious threat to the safety of the United States food supply. We urge the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to act quickly to finalize this rule and end this unacceptable practice.

Over the past several years, a number of undercover investigators have exposed employees at slaughter facilities cruelly treating downer calves. Just last year, yet another undercover investigation of a calf slaughter plant in New Jersey revealed that these egregious abuses persist.

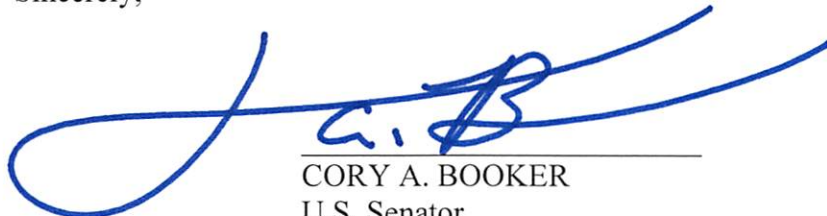
Keeping disabled calves alive to suffer in pens is not only inhumane, but also poses serious food safety threats. Non-ambulatory calves are often forced to lie in excrement, which can lead to contaminated meat. Calf fecal matter may contain a number of zoonotic pathogens including *Giardia*, *Salmonella*, and *E. coli* that can infect consumers, and calves actually pose a greater threat than adult cattle of transmitting such diseases.

Due to the urgent moral and safety implications of this practice, we applaud the USDA for proposing a strong rule, and urge you to prioritize the finalization of the rule.

Sincerely,



BRIAN SCHATZ  
U.S. Senator



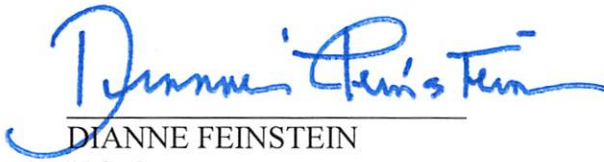
CORY A. BOOKER  
U.S. Senator



ROBERT MENENDEZ  
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U.S. Senator