

To all Ohio Cattlemen's Association members and stakeholders,

After many phone calls, e-mails and discussions, I writing this to elaborate on the reasons why I believe the correct decision was made to reach an agreement with HSUS. There were many, many factors that contributed to this decision and it was made with much thought, and even some pain of conflict with my own emotions. I feel very fortunate that the Ohio Cattlemen's Association was at the table to express our concerns and thoughts throughout the process.

From the beginning, the commodity groups and Farm Bureau agreed that it was in everyones best interest to work together and be unified as one voice. This began in the issue 2 campaign, and has remained this way even today. This is Ohio agriculture's fight! Each individual at the table had an equal vote and an equal voice. The only way it should have been. When the discussion of a possible agreement came about, I was kept fully updated by our Executive Director Elizabeth Harsh. She acted as our voice at the table but did not make ANY of the decisions on her own. Due to the timing, fluidness, and sensitivity of the negotiations, our entire membership could not be consulted. It was my duty as president, along with our board of directors to make a decision we felt was best overall for the entire livestock industry, especially those under the gun.

When the time approached that a decision needed to be made, I was personally torn. My belief that HSUS is an organization that wants to destroy what I love to do, makes me want to throttle any effort they make to change it. But this agrrement is not about my personal feelings. It is about my responsibility to Ohio's livestock industry. I personally talked with several well repected hog producers who would be directly affected by any agreement or by the ballot this fall if we chose to fight. These folks said they were very comfortable with the workings of the agreement, and their farms could efficiently move forward. Elizabeth talked with several veal producers who were ok with the wording on their behalf as their industry had already taken steps where the American Veal Association best practices matched the agreement. Poultry producers were also ready to accept the deal.

As I thought about it, one thing kept coming to the forefront. Does the Ohio Cattlemen's Association have the right to stop this agreement? The only acceptable answer is NO! Pork producers, poultry operations, and veal growers have their necks on the chopping block. If they are making a sound decision, it is our duty to support them. My direct words to Elizabeth and the OCA Board of Directors was that we should back their decision no matter which way it fell. I am not an expert on the pork, poultry, or veal industry, so I felt that the OCA should follow the wishes of their leadership and producers.

The agreement is not a perfect ending to the story. But we are not living in a fairytale world. We must deal with the reality that change can not be stopped. We have to adapt to what the consumer wants, or be left behind. If you look at the poultry industry, for example, this agreement has not made the significant changes, it is McDonalds and Walmart that has dictated cage size and conditions. This agreement also gives us time. Not only time to make changes, but to reach out to consumers and tell them the story of production agriculture. Public perception of animal agriculture will ultimately determine our future. We can fight legislation and ballot issues, but you can't

fight your customers.

From an OCA perspective, I say without any reservation that our "yes" to the agreement, in unison with the other parties involved, was the only responsible course of action. I am also extremely pleased to have our staff working full time on OCA business, not on another campaign. Lets all work together to make the beef business stronger than ever in the state of Ohio. I take the responsibilities of the job as OCA president seriously, and stand behind the decisions that I have made. I am always willing to talk and hear the ideas and concerns of our members. Let us stay united for the good of all agriculture, there are too few of us left to shoot each other in the back.

Dave Felumlee
President
Ohio Cattlemen's Association