



Animal Agriculture
June 2012

INTRODUCTION

As people's perspective on animals continue to change, Ohio Farm Bureau members need to discuss whether animals other than traditional farm animals should be considered agriculture in our policy as well as regulated as such. Many different types of animals are near and dear to people's heart, so any issues involving animals tend to be emotional and the use of facts, science and data to make decisions can be difficult. Animal issues continue to evolve at all levels (national, state, county, etc), as well as in American and Ohio Farm Bureau policy. OFBF has been engaged on animal issues ranging from traditional livestock to companion animals to wild dangerous animals.

As society continues to move generations away from the farm and with new and evolving animal agriculture enterprises, the perception of what is or is not animal agriculture has become less clear. Animals are typically regarded as "livestock" or "farm animals" if they provide food or fiber or are directly involved with the production of food or fiber.

BACKGROUND & ISSUES

OFBF policy uses terms for classification of animals that includes farm animals, livestock, farm livestock, companion animals, exotic animals, conventional, alternative and just the generic term "animal." The use of all these terms without a clear definition of what each means leads to confusion throughout the policy book. Should these categories be better defined, narrowed, broadened, or removed?

As we explore the answer to the question of how to classify animals, there are many issues to consider: Do people who own animals as a business enterprise consider themselves agriculture, even though the animals are not what we would consider traditional livestock? What types of animals should be considered agriculture? What types of animals should not be considered agriculture? Does it matter? What are the pros and cons of potentially expanding the definition of agriculture? Where do wild/dangerous animals fit on that spectrum? What about commercial dog breeding? Does it matter what particular animal is owned (pig, dog, llama, horse, etc.) or is it more important to consider how that animal is used (agriculture, pet, breeding, business, pleasure, etc.)? Can an animal typically considered a companion animal be considered part of animal agriculture depending on the use of that animal?

OHIO FARM BUREAU FEDERATION POLICY

Current policy regarding regulation of farm animals, livestock, companion, and other animals:

Animal Care 301

We recognize that animals are personal property and we oppose legislation and/or ballot initiatives that, unless clear abuse is evident, restricts the private ownership or use of animals or that inhibits free trade of an animal provided it meets Ohio Department of Agriculture testing and import requirements.

The Ohio Department of Agriculture should administer any animal welfare laws at the state level.

We support more specific regulations governing the housing, care, and movement of exotic animals by private individuals.

We oppose legislation that restricts or prohibits a farmer's ability to produce and sell livestock that is raised according to industry accepted animal husbandry practices.

We support that oversight authority of any livestock be it conventional, alternative, or exotic rest with the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

Cervidae, Llama, Alpaca and Buffalo 302

We support that any animal being kept under agricultural farm conditions shall be considered farm livestock and are subject to the policies and regulations as they relate to farm animals.

Equine 323

Equine should continue to be defined and recognized as livestock.

Aquaculture 324

We encourage the Ohio Department of Agriculture to support and oversee the aquaculture industry.

Dog Laws and Livestock Indemnity Claims 402

We support county dog wardens recognizing milk, meat, or fiber producing exotic animals as livestock when paying indemnity claims.

Additionally, OFBF Board of Trustees action in June of 2010 stated: "The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources will coordinate and take action on wild and dangerous animals including the prohibition of the sale and/or possession of big cats, bears, primates, large constricting and venomous snakes and alligators and crocodiles. Existing owners will be grandfathered in, but they could not breed or obtain new animals."

QUESTIONS

- Should animals such as companion, exotic, or wild and dangerous be classified as agriculture? If so, why or why not?
- Should animals be categorized in terms such as livestock, companion, exotic, etc?
- What are the dangers of classifying different types of animals? What are the advantages?
- What types of categories should we recognize? Should those categories be better defined?

- If animals are placed into categories, should it be defined as to how those classifications should be regulated by the state? Should all the categories be governed by the Ohio Department of Agriculture?