



**Testimony of Barry Londeree, Vermont State Director  
The Humane Society of the United States**

**Before the Vermont House Committee on Agriculture and Forest Products**

**J.R.S. 47 - Joint resolution expressing appreciation to the National Milk Producers Federation and Vermont's dairy farmers for their phasing out the tail docking of dairy farm animals**

*April 5, 2016*

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) is the nation's largest animal protection organization, with significant membership and support in Vermont. I am here today on behalf of the HSUS to discuss J.R.S. 47, a joint resolution in support of phasing out the tail docking of dairy cows. I appreciate the opportunity to provide my thoughts about this resolution to the Committee.

The HSUS supports S.22, a bill that would end the needless tail docking of dairy cows. Tail docking, which is the partial amputation of a dairy cow's tail, typically done without anesthesia or pain management, is cruel and unnecessary. A cow experiences immediate and long-term pain from this dismemberment and is rendered permanently unable to use her tail to swat biting insects or communicate with her herd.

Dairy industry experts and scientific literature have consistently determined that tail docking yields no benefits for milk quality, cow health, or dairy workers. It is an unnecessary practice. Not a single industry or veterinary organization supports the practice of dairy cow tail docking. The American Veterinary Medical Association "opposes routine tail docking of cattle." The American Association of Bovine Practitioners "opposes the routine tail docking of cattle...and [it] provides no benefit to the animal."

Several European countries, including Britain, Norway, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland, and the states of California (the nation's largest dairy-producing state), Rhode Island and Ohio prohibit the practice. Major food industry companies, including Kraft, Sodexo, Nestle, Starbucks, and Dunkin' Brands, have condemned tail docking and pledged to phase it out of their supply chains. And this past December, Ben & Jerry's announced that it will require its suppliers to phase out tail docking by the end of 2016.

A law prohibiting the practice of tail docking, such as S.22, would be the best course of action for Vermont. It would complement the National Milk Producers Federation's voluntary ban on tail docking and would add an additional layer of enforcement through inspections by the Agency of Agriculture. It would also end tail docking for all of Vermont's dairy cows, not just for those on farms that participate in the NMPF's National Dairy FARM Program.

In the absence of a statutory ban on tail docking, a resolution supporting the voluntary cessation of tail docking would be a step in the right direction. The resolution would signal to the general public that the Vermont General Assembly takes this issue seriously and supports the end of tail docking by 2017. And it would indicate to the dairy industry that legislators are watching their actions on this issue and expect the voluntary ban to be implemented in a timely, consistent, and enforceable manner.

I am troubled, however, by the resolution's final "whereas" section that dismisses the need for federal, state, or local laws against tail docking. While the HSUS has a track record of encouraging improvements in animal welfare through consumer-driven changes in industry standards, we also believe that changing current law should always be an available option. This provision seems to discourage future action on legislation regardless of whether the voluntary compliance program successfully ends tail docking. I would support its removal from the resolution.

I want to thank you again for providing me the opportunity to testify on the importance of the dairy industry ending the tail docking dairy cows. I appreciate the Committee's willingness to take testimony on this topic and to consider advancing a resolution that calls for an end to this painful and pointless procedure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Barry Londeree", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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