

Escobar and Mace Introduce Landmark Federal Legislation to Ban Extreme Confinement of Pigs in Gestation Crates

Anti-gestation crate policies set to take effect in key states and among dozens of major food retailers in 2022

WASHINGTON , DC, USA, March 10, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Leading animal welfare groups and farmers applauded the introduction of the Pigs in Gestation Stalls (PIGS) Act, [H.R. 7004](#), by U.S. Reps. Veronica Escobar, D-Texas, and [Nancy Mace](#), R-S.C., to ban the extreme confinement of mother pigs. Along with a wide range of other organizations, Animal Wellness Action, the Animal Wellness Foundation, and the Center for a Humane Economy endorse this bipartisan legislation -- the first-ever federal policy proposal to ban gestation crates.



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R-S.C.*

Suffering from physical and psychological torment, a breeding pig may spend up to three years intensively confined in a crate barely larger than the animals. The sow may weigh 400 pounds, and the two-foot by seven-foot crate immobilizes her, inhibiting her from even turning around or taking more than half step. Pigs raised for meat are not kept in these needlessly restrictive crates, and neither should pregnant pigs.

“A national policy against gestation crates levels the playing field for all producers, retailers, and consumers, providing certainty and consistency for all stakeholders,” said Wayne Pacelle, president of Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy. “Keeping a sow in a two-foot-wide crate is akin to stuffing a large-bodied animal in a tiny little closet and never letting her out. All animals deserve humane treatment,

including animals raised for food.”

Almost every major food retailer in the United States – from McDonald’s to Costco to Aramark – has made a public pledge to phase out sourcing pork from factory farms that confine sows in gestation crates, with most pledges originally set to take effect in 2022. Smithfield Foods, the nation’s largest pig producer, pledged in 2007 to phase out gestation-crate confinement within 10 years in its company-owned operations due to consumer demand, and Hormel, Cargill, and other major producers made similar commitments. A report from Citigroup said that animal cruelty is a “headline risk” for restaurant companies. Additionally, a study from scientists at Iowa State University concluded that humane group housing alternatives allow for successful reproduction and cost less to build and maintain; the study points to an 11 percent reduction in the cost of raising a weaned pig. A federal policy on gestation crates will help drive the transition of the food retail industry and create regulatory certainty by establishing a minimum space allotment for the animals.

“Pigs are sentient beings that feel pain and suffering. They are sensitive, gentle, and smart creatures that are treated with incredible cruelty before they are sent to be slaughtered,” said

Congresswoman Veronica Escobar, D-Tex. “While there is much more work needed to reform the cruelty in our food industry, this is an important step in holding the swine industry accountable by limiting the horrific conditions pregnant pigs are kept in.”

Billionaire investor Carl Icahn has recently criticized McDonald’s for hedging on its pledge to go completely crate-free in its supply chain by 2022.



Rep. Nancy Mace and Animal Wellness Action Executive Director Marty Irby Following the Passage of the Historic Amendment to Ban Mink Farming in the U.S.

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“It’s inhumane to force animals to live in such small spaces that they are unable to stand up or turn around. It is also dangerous,” said Congresswoman Nancy Mace, R-S.C. “Extreme stress causes pregnant pigs to engage in self-mutilating behavior, making them more susceptible to diseases, such as zoonotic disease and swine flu, that can be passed on to humans. I support this bill because it will allow pregnant pigs the space to lie down, stand up, and turn around freely, a freedom that every living creature deserves.”

Voters have approved all five ballot measures in four states to ban the use of gestation crates in Arizona (2006), California (two separate ballot initiatives in 2008 and 2018), Florida (2002), and Massachusetts (2016). Major pig-producing states, including Colorado, Michigan, and Ohio, are phasing out gestation crates by law. Two of the aforementioned states – California and Massachusetts, with 50 million customers between them – also forbid by statute the sale of pork that is derived from farms that confine the sows so severely and their laws take full effect in 2022. This means that every restaurant, supermarket, and other food-selling outlets must adhere to this sales standard. The EU also bans gestation crates.

“Since inception, and for more than a quarter century, Niman Ranch has shunned the idea of keeping pigs in cages so small they can’t even turn around,” said Paul Willis, Niman Ranch’s founding hog farmer, based in north central Iowa. “We have over 600 hog farmers in our network today whose high welfare husbandry practices line up with the values of the vast majority of American consumers. That contrasts on factory farms where customary animal-rearing practices would shock people if they got an up-close view of what these smart, sociable animals endure.”

“It’s not just California that has banned gestation crates,” said Annie Harvilicz, D.V.M., president of the Animal Wellness Foundation. “So have nine other states, the European Union, and more than 60 of the biggest food retailers in the U.S. Trapping an animal in a cage isn’t farming, it’s cruelty.”

“All animals, livestock included, deserve to have the opportunity to express their instinctive behavior,” said Will Harris, owner and proprietor of White Oak Pastures and former Small Businessperson of the Year. “It is the responsibility of the stockman to provide an environment in which this is possible. Hogs were meant to root and wallow. Depriving them of this instinct is stressful to the hog, and a cruelty on the part of the hog producer. At the very least, they should not be immobilized.”

“Animals born and built to move and to turn around should at least be allowed to do so,” added Marty Irby, executive director of Animal Wellness Action, and senior vice-president at the Center for a Humane Economy. “Confining sows in crates that immobilize them is appalling and inhumane. We applaud Reps. Escobar and Mace for introducing the PIGS Act and working in bipartisan fashion to ensure that all animals are treated more humanely, including those raised for food.”

[Click here](#) to read Animal Wellness Action's detailed blog on the PIGS Act.

Animal Wellness Action (AWA) is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(4) organization with a mission of helping animals by promoting legal standards forbidding cruelty. We champion causes that alleviate the suffering of companion animals, farm animals, and wildlife. We advocate for policies to stop dogfighting and cockfighting and other forms of malicious cruelty and to confront factory farming and other systemic forms of animal exploitation. To prevent cruelty, we promote enacting good public policies, and we work to enforce those policies. To enact good laws, we must elect good lawmakers, and that's why we remind voters which candidates care about our issues and which ones don't. We believe helping animals helps us all.

The Animal Wellness Foundation (AWF) is a Los Angeles-based private charitable organization with a mission of helping animals by making veterinary care available to everyone with a pet, regardless of economic ability. We organize rescue efforts and medical services for dogs and cats in need and help homeless pets find a loving caregiver. We are advocates for getting veterinarians to the front lines of the animal welfare movement; promoting responsible pet ownership; and vaccinating animals against infectious diseases such as distemper. We also support policies that prevent animal cruelty and that alleviate suffering. We believe helping animals helps us all.

The Center for a Humane Economy (CHE) is a non-profit organization that focuses on influencing the conduct of corporations to forge a humane economic order. The first organization of its kind in the animal protection movement, the Center encourages businesses to honor their social responsibilities in a culture where consumers, investors, and other key stakeholders abhor cruelty and the degradation of the environment and embrace innovation as a means of eliminating both.

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