

Still, producers who have followed HSUS and other animal rights organizations, are concerned where the ball is rolling, and where it may land.

Charles Wildman, a swine producer from South Charleston, and a member of the swine subcommittee, said he stands behind the subcommittee's decision to uphold the part of the agreement that does away with total stall confinement after 2025.

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But he's not sure the battle will end.

Acceptable housing?

The board is considering allowing swine crates for certain periods of a swine's life, which its members say is in the swine's best interest. Currently, a producer can build a new swine facility after 2025, as long as its with "alternative sow housing, not gestation crates."

But "alternative housing" is too broad, Wildman said, and the board could easily find itself in the same battle again, if the activists later attack the "alternative" method.

Another video?

He assumes alternative housing means sows are made to be penned together. If they are, then they eventually will fight each other, he said, to establish social order. And when it happens, he predicts someone will film it and use it against the care board.

"When that (fight) happens, someone is going to be there to take a picture and post it on the Internet with the following statement: 'OLCSB thinks this is the humane way to treat animals. Do you?' And there we go again," Wildman said.

Activists have used similar tactics in the past, calling for more humane standards and better practices, but later condemning the farm or farm business for not being humane enough.

More defensible?

Pacelle said the terms the board is adopting will make Ohio agriculture "more honorable, defensible and pertinent to the consumer."

Wildman wasn't convinced.

"The day Mr. Pacelle stands in front of a large production (facility) and defends it is the day I will owe somebody a very good meal," he said.

Pacelle said he can understand why there are mixed views, because people have different values and judge things differently.

Values matter

His own values led him to be a vegan, and leader of an organization that encourages consumers to "eat humanely." According to the HSUS website, that means "reducing, refining and replacing" meat, dairy and eggs from diets.

But Pacelle left the board with an optimistic look at Ohio's agriculture, and how the new standards will approve its industry.

"I do believe that agriculture is a deeply noble tradition," he said. "There are so many great aspects to it, but we also must put animal welfare into the equation."

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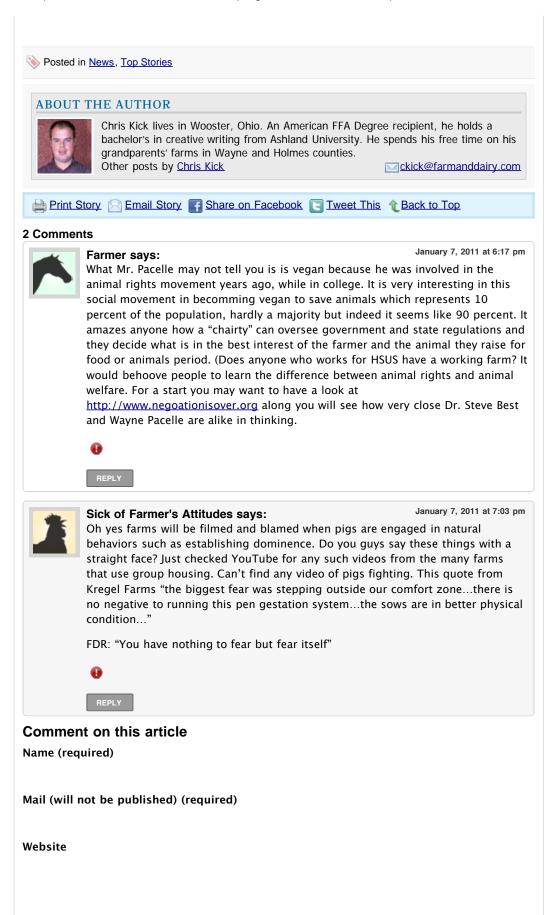
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