February 11, 2015

The Honorable Thomas Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

As you are aware, on January 19, 2015, the New York Times published the article, “U.S. Research Lab Lets Livestock Suffer in Quest for Profit.” The article highlights the experimentation done on farm animals at taxpayer expense at the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center. Cows, sheep and pigs have undergone torturous experimentation and have suffered painful, often fatal, neglect including starvation. The research in question has been done to maximize profits for agribusiness but at a terrible cost and with no real benefit. The experimentation has been for naught and the animals have suffered and died needlessly. The taxpayers have paid nearly $200 million between 2006 and 2015 for research at the MARC facility, research done for the benefit of private entities but which has not even produced meaningful and useful results.

While we appreciate that you have directed USDA staff to create and deliver an updated Animal Welfare Strategy plan within 60 days, we urge you not to wait to stop the research at MARC. The American public is increasingly aware of where its food comes from and is concerned about animal treatment, especially in the production of food. The call for more humanely produced food becomes louder each day. We are writing to urge the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to immediately stop animal testing at the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center (MARC) in Nebraska until a full review is completed and new animal welfare protocols are implemented.

Further, we are asking the USDA to voluntarily comply with Animal Welfare Act standards as has been done by many other U.S. Government departments and agencies such as the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and Health and Human Services, which includes the Centers for Disease Control and The National Institutes of Health.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your response.
Sincerely,

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress

James R. Langevin
Member of Congress

Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

Katherine Clark
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

Raúl Grijalva
Member of Congress

Dina Titus
Member of Congress

John Conyers
Member of Congress

Charles B. Rangel
Member of Congress

Theodore Deutch
Member of Congress
Doris O. Matsui  
Member of Congress

Adam Schiff  
Member of Congress

Nita Lowey  
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

Linda Sánchez  
Member of Congress

Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress

Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Member of Congress

Frederica Wilson  
Member of Congress

Mike Quigley  
Member of Congress

Lois Frankel  
Member of Congress

David Cicilline  
Member of Congress

Bill Pascrell Jr  
Member of Congress

Chris Van Hollen  
Member of Congress
John A. Yarmuth  
Member of Congress

Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress

Albio Sires  
Member of Congress