



Ohio Sheep Improvement
ASSOCIATION

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House Government Oversight Committee

HB 503 Proponent Testimony

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Chairman Jones, Vice Chair Klopfenstein, Ranking Member Brent, and Members of the House Government Oversight Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to provide written proponent Testimony on House Bill 503 on behalf of the Ohio Sheep Improvement Association.

House Bill 503 is beneficial to Ohio's sheep and lamb industry as it not only protects our industry from the wide range of both domestic and foreign diseases, but it also protects our valuable farmland. The farmlands utilized by Ohio's sheep and lamb producers is a primary source of high-quality forages for both grazing and hay production as well as grain production for our livestock.

Feral swine, also known as wild boars or feral hogs, pose a serious threat to our state as a non-native and invasive species. Their prolific breeding, destructive foraging habits and potential for disease transmission make them a menace to rural and urban areas. These animals are not only a threat to our commercial sheep and lamb flocks operations, but a threat to Ohioans and youth raising 4-H and FFA animals or families trying to raise their livestock for personal consumption.

Feral swine are notorious for causing extensive damage to crops, pasture lands and water sources. Their rooting behavior disrupts soil and vegetation leading to erosion and loss of valuable agricultural and conservation resources. Ohio farmers work diligently to protect Ohio's water sources and feral hogs can damage that work. This directly threatens the livelihoods of Ohio farmers and the overall stability of our local food production, not just for the sheep and lamb industry, but all livestock and food crop producers.

Feral swine are known carriers of diseases that can affect both animals and humans. This has been illustrated extensively in European countries where domestic hog populations have been wiped out entirely by the transmission of African Swine Fever from feral swine to commercial hog barns. According to the USDA, Feral swine are known to carry at least 30 viral and bacterial diseases and nearly 40 parasites that can be transmitted to humans, pets, livestock and other

wildlife. The risks these animals present if their populations continue to grow far outweigh any perceived benefits.

By also eliminating the license to feed treated garbage to swine, you will mitigate the additional risk of foreign animal disease (FAD) transmission that remains with this practice. No facility in Ohio currently holds a license to treat the food waste associated with garbage feeding and only half the US states currently allow this process, with the practice being largely prohibited in states battling a feral swine population.

Taking steps to support biosecurity and the integrity of Ohio's food system is a proactive approach that benefits all. Helping Ohioans understand the most efficient process of eliminating feral swine and enforcing penalties for those who knowingly violate those rules and put Ohioans at risk is necessary for the long-term success of not only the sheep and lamb industry, but for the entire Ohio agricultural industry and food systems.

Thank you to for your consideration of HB 503, this is a very important piece of legislation for the health and welling being of Ohio's agricultural industry, as well as important legislation to protect Ohio's beautiful natural resources.