

RESOLUTION # 17

LIVESTOCK IN NEW JERSEY AGRICULTURE

1 **WHEREAS**, livestock has been a part of New Jersey agriculture from the state's
2 earliest days as a colony; and

3 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey's standing as the most densely populated state in the nation
4 means that livestock often are kept and raised in close proximity to residential areas; and

5 **WHEREAS**, the value of, and income derived from, livestock in commercial
6 operations in New Jersey is economically significant, including (for 2015, according to the
7 National Agricultural Statistics Service): \$38.46 million in value of cattle and calves;
8 \$733,000 in income from hogs and pigs; \$22.4 million worth of milk produced (for 2012,
9 according to NASS, other categories reported \$2.6 million in value of sheep, goats and wool;
10 \$40.8 million in poultry and eggs, with a total livestock income of more than \$1 billion in the
11 Garden State); and

12 **WHEREAS**, the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES) at Rutgers has
13 conducted a comprehensive survey aimed at cataloguing livestock owned in New Jersey,
14 both on commercial farm properties and in "backyard operations," in which residents keep
15 chickens, goats or other livestock in residential back yards, as an aid toward making animal-
16 disease response efforts in the state more effective; and

17 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey also has traditionally seen keen interest in farmers and
18 other residents owning horses, both in the pleasure horse sector and those bred and raised
19 for horseracing, leading to the horse being the State Animal; and

20 **WHEREAS**, according to a 2007 study by the Rutgers Equine Science Center, the
21 horse industry contributes approximately \$1 billion annually to New Jersey's economy; and

22 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey's livestock industry also helps sustain multiple supporting
23 economic sectors, such as hay and grain producers, equipment dealers, veterinarians,
24 blacksmiths, fencing and construction, and others who work in the livestock industry; and

25 **WHEREAS**, interest also is growing among New Jersey residents who desire to keep
26 small numbers of livestock – including chickens and other poultry, sheep, goats, donkeys
27 and others – to make fresh agricultural products, including eggs, milk and cheese, wool,
28 meat, hides, and others for themselves; and

29 **WHEREAS**, farms that might produce other crops or agricultural products as their
30 primary business also may have small numbers of livestock on their operations as well; and

31 **WHEREAS**, all of these factors combine to make New Jersey livestock operations
32 both unique and more diverse when compared to livestock operations in other states where
33 there are more animals per operation and they are typically more removed from residential
34 areas; and

35 **WHEREAS**, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture’s Division of Animal Health
36 (DAH) is the primary agency charged in the state with ensuring the health of livestock
37 animals, since diseases in livestock can spread to other animals and, in some cases, to
38 humans; and

39 **WHEREAS**, a large part of that responsibility is ensuring that livestock coming into
40 New Jersey from other parts of the nation or the world does not also bring animal diseases
41 that could spread to animals already in the state; and

42 **WHEREAS**, the DAH must prepare to prevent diseases from entering the state not
43 only via animals that may be imported to New Jersey but also through wildlife that cannot be
44 controlled for testing; for example, the preparations the past three years to respond, if
45 necessary, to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) that is transmitted by wild waterfowl
46 and has resulted in the euthanasia of millions of birds in the Midwest and West, where those
47 wild birds have passed HPAI into poultry operations, but has not, to date, similarly impacted
48 the East Coast; and

49 **WHEREAS**, the Certified Livestock Inspectors within the DAH are, by law, the
50 experts for humane treatment of livestock when an allegation of cruelty or neglect is made
51 against an owner of livestock, as those inspectors have expertise that is not common among

52 humane-law enforcement officers, or others, who may mistake normal husbandry, an ill
53 animal or biosecurity measures for mistreatment of animals, and humane-law enforcement
54 officers and others may jeopardize a farmer's livelihood or the state's livestock population
55 when they do not follow appropriate testing and biosecurity protocols; and

56 **WHEREAS**, a recently released report by the State Commission of Investigation
57 (SCI) called into question many of the tactics employed by the New Jersey Society for the
58 Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NJSPCA), citing overly aggressive, armed agents without
59 an oversight structure by a government agency, and legislation was passed to address those
60 issues; and

61 **WHEREAS**, previous State Agricultural Conventions have seen livestock owners
62 complain about similar issues centered on livestock, and that the tenets of the regulations
63 regarding Humane Treatment of Domestic Livestock, N.J.A.C. 2:8 et seq. (herein referred to
64 as the "Humane Standards") which offer a safe harbor to livestock owners in New Jersey if
65 they follow accepted livestock practices, are not always followed by animal-cruelty
66 investigators; and

67 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey State Board of Agriculture President Mitchell Jones testified
68 at a recent Senate Economic Growth Committee hearing on the SCI's NJSPCA report,
69 drawing attention to the absolute need for DAH's Certified Livestock Inspectors to be
70 involved in EVERY cruelty complaint involving livestock, in order to ensure that animals that
71 may be sick, and not subject to cruelty, are not removed from the property on which they
72 reside because such removal could risk spreading the disease they have; and

73 **WHEREAS**, it is vital that livestock farmers understand their rights, the role of the
74 DAH and how humane-law enforcement officers in a given location operate; and

75 **WHEREAS**, it is crucial for law enforcement officers to understand the vital role
76 played by DAH's Certified Livestock Inspectors, and to understand that they must
77 immediately notify the Department of Agriculture's Division of Animal Health for all cases at
78 the time a complaint is filed and before an investigation begins; and

79

80 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey's commercial farmers have in recent years branched out
81 beyond "traditional" livestock (cattle, poultry, swine, small ruminants, etc.) and there are now
82 also New Jersey farmers raising llamas, alpacas, water buffalo, bison, rabbits, emus,
83 ostriches and other livestock, all of which can be a source of farm income and contribute to
84 the overall value of farm products sold in the state.

85 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 103rd State
86 Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 7-8, 2018, do
87 hereby urge the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, working alone or in conjunction with
88 other state and federal agencies, to continue fostering a livestock industry that is a source of
89 both pride and economic importance to the state.

90 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Legislature and the Governor to
91 provide additional and appropriate funding levels to the Department to allow the DAH to
92 continue providing expert advice and training to those tasked with humane-law enforcement
93 and livestock owners regarding the Humane Standards in cases where abuse and/or neglect
94 are alleged but which also require knowledge of animal husbandry, best management
95 practices, animal diseases, diagnostic testing and the practice of proper biosecurity
96 measures.

97 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we require the New Jersey humane-law
98 enforcement community to follow the Humane Standards and work with the DAH when
99 assessing livestock so that better and more consistent decisions concerning law
100 enforcement are made, ensuring that appropriate animal husbandry, biosecurity and health
101 documentation are followed as part of every humane investigation.

102 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the appropriate authorities to implement
103 oversight recommendations in the SCI report for animal-cruelty enforcement officers so that
104 a level of accountability and cooperation with appropriate Certified Livestock Inspectors will
105 be established in humane investigations.

106 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Department to establish a direct line
107 of communication with the livestock-raising community and livestock operators in New
108 Jersey, regardless of which type of animals they raise, and for livestock owners to
109 communicate amongst their groups as a whole sector, in a concerted effort to better
110 communicate their concerns to the DAH.

111 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we strongly urge the Department to join with New
112 Jersey Farm Bureau, Rutgers University Cooperative Extension, New Jersey Veterinary
113 Medical Association and other agencies to provide assistance to livestock producers in the
114 state, including those raising “backyard livestock,” such as technical advice, educational
115 programs to enhance awareness of best management practices, preventative medication,
116 nutrition, waste management, humane standards compliance, liability and marketing,
117 including one or more livestock summits in the coming year toward this goal.

118 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that all livestock products, such as meat, wool, fiber,
119 eggs and hides, will be eligible for recognition through the Jersey branding programs.

120 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that law enforcement officials must understand that
121 they must immediately notify the Department of Agriculture’s Division of Animal Health for all
122 cases at the time a humane-treatment complaint is filed and before any investigation begins.

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