



Veterinary Association for Farm Animal Welfare

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Platinum
Transparency
2025

Candid.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND	3
II.	LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP	4
III.	OUR PROGRESS	
	➤ PROJECT 1: PAIN MITIGATION	5
	➤ PROJECT 2: LIVING ENVIRONMENTS	6
	➤ PROJECT 3: HUMANE END-OF-LIFE	8
	➤ ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS	10
IV.	FINANCIAL SPOTLIGHT	11
V.	LOOKING AHEAD	12
VI.	SUPPORTER APPRECIATION	13
VII.	CONTACT INFORMATION	14

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND

The Veterinary Association for Farm Animal Welfare (VAFAW) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that advocates for animals used in food and fiber production by providing a veterinary perspective grounded in animal welfare and ethics. Our mission is advanced through education, policy development, advocacy, and collaborative animal care.

FOCUS AREAS

- 1 Preventing and mitigating pain experienced by farm animals
- 2 Promoting living environments that meet the animals' physical and psychological needs
- 3 Ensuring humane end-of-life practices

Society entrusts veterinarians to advocate for the welfare of all animals, and our training makes us a credible voice in shaping practices and policies that impact animals. VAFAW was formed in 2023 in response to a perceived need for the profession to do more for animals used in food and fiber production systems. VAFAW wants to see animal welfare research inform animal agricultural industry standards, corporate protocols, legislation, and regulations.

VAFAW is a membership-based organization, open to anyone who supports our mission. We serve as a convener for veterinarians, animal agriculture professionals, researchers, advocates, and the public. Since launching in January 2024, more than 1300 people from 36 countries have joined VAFAW as members, with 75% being veterinarians and veterinary students.

The VAFAW Board of Directors and Operational Team bring expertise in veterinary medicine, animal agriculture, animal welfare, research, policy, law, ethics, direct lobbying, and grassroots advocacy. Our leadership includes board-certified veterinary specialists (Diplomates in the American College of Animal Welfare), award-winning pioneers in the field, and leaders with advanced, specialized degrees in animal welfare. With over 300 years of combined professional experience and vast networks, VAFAW is uniquely positioned to drive transformational change in farm animal welfare.

A LETTER FROM VFAW LEADERS

Dear VFAW Supporters,

With enthusiasm and gratitude, we share with you VFAW's *first ever* annual report. What started as a small group of passionate veterinarians committed to farm animal welfare led to the launch of this nonprofit organization. The response from people around the world has been incredible — affirming our mission and the need for our work.



VFAW is committed to demonstrating veterinary leadership on farm animal welfare, providing education about issues impacting farm animal welfare, and advocating for the incorporation of animal welfare science into agricultural policy. But to us, *how* we achieve these goals is just as important as *what* we achieve. VFAW is guided by the metaphor of a big table — one where there is always space to hear out and understand different perspectives — and a belief that collaboration is essential to change. Instead of a “with us or against us” mentality, we work to be conveners where respectful discussion and debate are welcomed. Change is possible when we remain open to the perspectives of others.

Our small but mighty team has big hopes for the future. In this annual report, we highlight the impactful work we accomplished in 2025 and provide a sneak peek of the strategic goals driving us forward.

Thank you to those near and far who have supported VFAW over the past year and are working every day in ways, big and small, to improve farm animal welfare.

With gratitude,

Gwendolen Reyes-Illg, DVM, MA
President and Co-Executive Director

Cameron Krier Massey, JD, MPH, MSc
Co-Executive Director

VFAW Board of Directors

Barry Kipperman, DVM, DACVIM, MSc, DACAW
Chair

Indu Mani, DVM, ScD, MSc, MSc, DABVP
Vice-Chair

Jeffrey Hill, MSc

Abigale Zoltick, DVM, MSc, DACAW

VFAW Officers

Gwendolen Reyes-Illg, DVM, MA, President
Debra Teachout, DVM, MVSc, Secretary

Heather Mitchell, MSc, MSc, Treasurer

OUR FOCUS: Preventing and mitigating pain experienced by farm animals

OUR GOALS

- Increase effective on-farm pain management
- Improve pain recognition in farm animals
- Reduce the prevalence of painful procedures and disease conditions

OUR WORK IN 2025

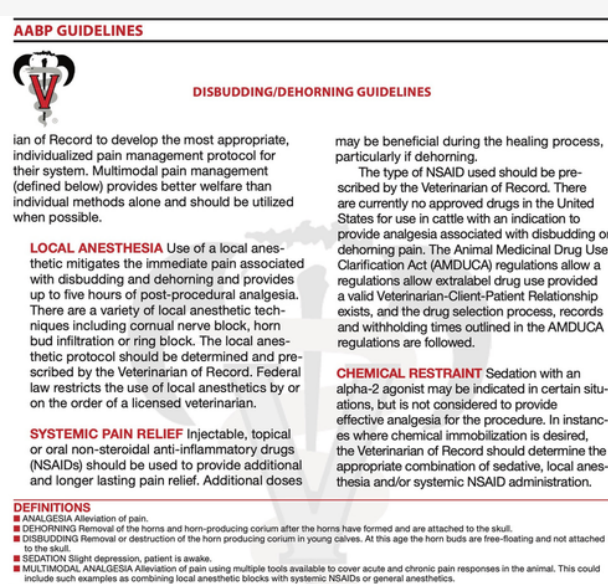
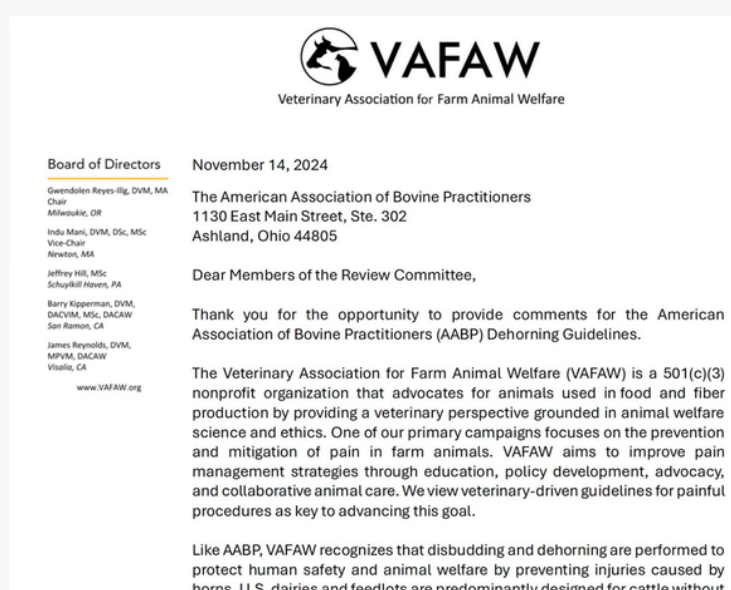
In 2025, VAAFW advanced these goals through the following:

- ◆ Hosted a free webinar focused on recognizing and managing pain in cattle. Dr. Eduarda Bortoluzzi, an animal welfare professor and scientist, presented on the fundamentals of pain management, emerging pain detection methodologies, and the development of pain models to achieve more effective and scientifically grounded pain relief. More than 200 people registered for the event, and the presentation has had more than 200 views on our YouTube channel.



This was the second webinar we hosted on pain since the organization publicly launched. All of our webinars in 2025 provided free CE credit to veterinarians and veterinary technicians.

- ◆ In 2024, we responded to the American Association of Bovine Practitioners' request for comments on their Dehorning Guidelines. When the updated guidelines were released in 2025, we were pleased that several of our suggestions were incorporated. These influential guidelines now explicitly recommend multimodal pain protocols and address re-dosing medications for prolonged pain associated with horn removal.



Promote living environments that meet OUR FOCUS: the animals' physical and psychological needs

OUR GOALS

Ensure that housing systems:

- Protect animals from disease and injury
- Provide opportunities for natural behaviors, agency, and positive engagement with their environment and conspecifics

OUR WORK IN 2025

In 2025, VFAFW advanced these goals through the following:

- ◆ Hosted a free webinar on the essential elements for successful group housing of sows. Dr. Jeremy Marchant, a renowned farm animal behavior and welfare expert, particularly regarding pigs, explored the challenges and benefits of transitioning sows from gestation crates to group housing. More than 200 from 29 different countries registered for the event.
- ◆ Hosted a free all-day virtual symposium on achieving higher-welfare living environments for farm animals that included seven expert speakers. Research, industry, and veterinary professionals shared insights on bridging the gap between research and on-farm practices of higher-welfare practices for cows, calves, sows, and chickens.



Of those who attended the event, 95% reported they “strongly agree” or “agree” that the symposium improved their understanding of farm animal welfare. When asked whether they “learned something in this symposium that I plan to use in my work with farm animal species—whether in production, research, policy, care, or advocacy,” 95% said they “strongly agree” or “agree.” One attendee commented, “I am so impressed with the world renowned experts leading the webinars. They presented innovative and practical research on how to improve the lives of farm animals. VFAFW is establishing itself as a leading voice in science-driven farm animal welfare!”



OUR FOCUS:

Promote living environments that meet the animals' physical and psychological needs

- Submitted a letter to the U.S. House Ag Committee opposing federal efforts to preempt (overturn) state laws that protect sows from extremely confined housing systems, such as California's Proposition 12 and Massachusetts' Question 3.

Proposition 12, a ballot initiative that received strong bipartisan voter approval, prohibits the sale in California of products from egg-laying hens, breeding pigs, and veal calves raised in extreme confinement, including gestation crates and battery cages.

While the Supreme Court declined to strike down Prop. 12, the fight to undo its protections continues to unfold in Congress. VFAFW is working to make sure those efforts are unsuccessful. A range of federal bills have been introduced over the years that would preempt state laws that incorporate an in-state sales ban on pork derived from pigs raised in intensively confined systems.



OUR FOCUS: Ensure humane end-of-life practices

OUR GOALS

Improve animals' welfare at the end of life by:

- Encouraging adoption of higher-welfare euthanasia, slaughter, and depopulation methods
- Decreasing animals' vulnerability to depopulation

OUR WORK IN 2025

In 2025, VFAFW advanced these goals through the following:

- ◆ Hosted a sign-on letter to the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) that provided feedback on their revised "Guidelines for the Depopulation of Animals." More than 850 veterinarians and veterinary students signed. In addition to that collective effort, VFAFW also provided detailed technical comments on a wider area of issues to the Depopulation Panel.

Depopulation refers to the large-scale killing of animals in emergencies, including for disease control purposes, such as in response to the current outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). Depopulation methods, including ventilation shutdown plus heat (VSD+), water-based foam, and blunt force trauma were the focus of requested reforms in the sign-on letter.

The Veterinary Information Network (VIN) News Service published an article about the AVMA's release of a draft of its revised depopulation guidelines, including the concerns raised in the sign-on letter and VFAFW's technical comments.

- ◆ Hosted a webinar by VFAFW board member (and president of Livestock Welfare Strategies) Mr. Jeff Hill on cutting-edge nitrogen-based depopulation technologies that protect animal welfare by rapidly inducing loss of consciousness and minimizing or eliminating negative affective states. We had 377 registrants for this webinar and the presentation has had nearly 300 views on our YouTube channel.

January 30, 2025

Panel on Animal Depopulation
American Veterinary Medical Association
1931 North Meacham Road, Suite 10
Schaumburg, IL 60173-4360

Re: Comments on Draft AVMA Guidelines for the Depopulation of Animals

Dear Members of the AVMA Depopulation Panel and Working Groups:

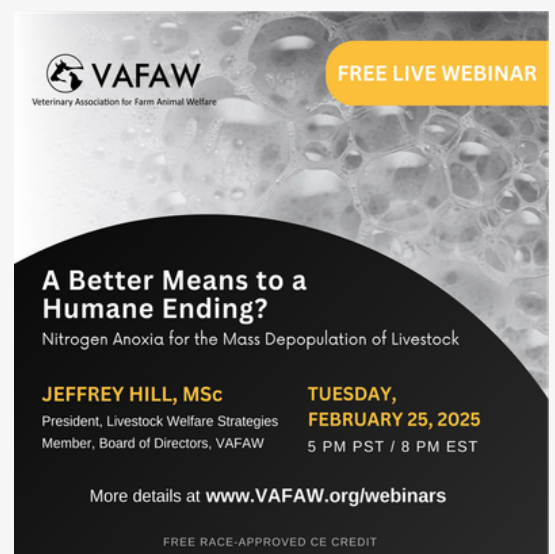
As veterinarians and veterinary students who take our profession's duty to lead in matters of animal welfare seriously, we appreciate the invitation to comment on the AVMA's draft *Guidelines for the Depopulation of Animals*.

We recognize and support several improvements in this updated edition, including the addition of higher-welfare, nitrogen-based depopulation methods for poultry and pigs in "Tier 1" (formerly "preferred methods"). These practical, scalable methods, including nitrogen whole-house gassing and high-expansion nitrogen-filled foam, result in rapid loss of consciousness without pain and with little or no distress.¹ We also support the *Guidelines*' emphasis on planning and preparedness,² particularly in agricultural settings, where tens of millions of animals are depopulated each year.^{3,4,5}

Importantly, however, we urge the AVMA to revise the draft *Guidelines* by reclassifying the following three depopulation methods to Tier 3: (1) ventilation shutdown plus heat and humidity (VSD+); (2) water-based foam for pigs and other livestock; and (3) manual blunt force trauma for pigs. As discussed in more detail below, Tier 3 is fitting because these methods result in poor animal welfare and should be considered only when higher tier methods are unavailable and doing nothing is likely to result in "significantly more animal suffering than that associated with the depopulation method."⁶

I. VSD+

VSD+ as a depopulation method must be described as "not recommended" for any species and



The poster features a background of water bubbles. At the top left is the VFAFW logo with the text "Veterinary Association for Farm Animal Welfare". At the top right, a yellow banner reads "FREE LIVE WEBINAR". The main title is "A Better Means to a Humane Ending?" followed by the subtitle "Nitrogen Anoxia for the Mass Depopulation of Livestock". The speaker is "JEFFREY HILL, MSc, President, Livestock Welfare Strategies, Member, Board of Directors, VFAFW". The date and time are "TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2025, 5 PM PST / 8 PM EST". At the bottom, it says "More details at www.VFAFW.org/webinars" and "FREE RACE-APPROVED CE CREDIT".

OUR FOCUS: Ensure humane end-of-life practices

- ◆ Provided outside witness testimony to the U.S. House and Senate Appropriations committees, calling on the USDA to invest in research and development of nitrogen-based depopulation methods. The testimony from VFAFW stresses that, in contrast to heatstroke-based depopulation methods like VSD+, nitrogen-based depopulation methods, when properly implemented, rapidly induce unconsciousness without causing pain and with little to no distress. Advancement of these methods offers our best hope of eliminating the use of heatstroke for mass killing.
- ◆ Influenced the USDA's comments to the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) on international standards related to depopulation. VFAFW was pleased to see that the USDA incorporated many of our suggestions. While they declined to accept VFAFW's recommendations regarding two controversial poor-welfare methods (heatstroke-based VSD+ and airway-occluding water-based foam), these methods were excluded from WOAH's latest draft of the standards.
- ◆ Published a letter to the editor in the *American Journal of Veterinary Research* raising concerns about a proposed depopulation method for pigs that relies on asphyxiating the animals by obstructing their airway with a water-based foam (WBF). In part because the profoundly negative animal welfare impacts of WBF are often omitted or obfuscated in published research, the U.S. pork industry is poised to adopt it as a first-line depopulation method.



VFAFW

Veterinary Association for Farm Animal Welfare

Outside Witness Testimony

Submitted By: The Veterinary Association for Farm Animal Welfare

Prepared For: The United States Senate Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies

Date: 22 May 2025

Re: The United States Department of Agriculture

The Veterinary Association for Farm Animal Welfare (VFAFW) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to advocating for animals used in food and fiber production by providing a veterinary perspective grounded in animal welfare and ethics. On behalf of the veterinarians, veterinary students, veterinary technicians, academics, researchers, and advocates who are VFAFW members, we write to express our strong support for including the following report language in the Agriculture Appropriations Bill, Fiscal Year 2026.

Nitrogen-Based Depopulation Methods.—The Committee directs the USDA to continue to utilize available funds through the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program to facilitate and invest in research and development of whole house gassing with nitrogen and high expansion nitrogen gas-filled foam as methods of large-scale poultry depopulation, particularly during animal disease emergency response events. Further, the Committee directs the Secretary to provide a report to the Committee within 90 days of enactment on the current utilization of nitrogen-based depopulation methods within the animal agriculture industry and barriers to widespread use of these methods.

Annex 24

CHAPTER 7.6.

ANIMAL WELFARE AT THE TIME OF KILLING FOR PURPOSES OTHER THAN SLAUGHTER

Article 7.6.1.

Introduction

Animals are killed for a variety of reasons, including those that may not make the transport for slaughter or the safe use of their products possible. Such reasons may include for contagious disease control, in cases where their welfare may be compromised due to natural or man-made disasters, when they are otherwise suffering from disease or injuries or for economic reasons. It is important to consider optimize their welfare during such killing for purposes other than slaughter this process.

Article 7.6.2.

Scope

This chapter identifies hazards to animal welfare during killing for purposes other than slaughter and provides recommendations for the appropriate procedures for such killing. It provides animal-based and other measures to assess the level of welfare during the process and recommends appropriate remedial actions to be applied.

This chapter applies to the killing of domestic and captive wild ruminants, equids, birds, pigs, rabbits, camelids and muskelds for all purposes, except for slaughter which is covered by Chapter 7.5. Animal welfare during slaughter mammals and birds (hereafter animals). Killing of reptiles is covered by Chapter 7.14 Killing of reptiles for their skin, meat and other products and killing of dogs for population management is covered by Chapter 7.7. The numbers of animals killed is situation dependent and could range from an individual to a large scale population.

This chapter should be read in conjunction with the guiding principles for animal welfare provided in Chapter 7.1.

Article 7.6.3.

General principles for the operations regarding the killing of animals

The decision as to whether to kill animals should not be delayed if there is any risk to the welfare of those animals. The recommendations in this Chapter are based on the premise that a decision to kill the animals has been made and they address the need to ensure the welfare of the animals until they are dead.

Letters to the Editor

Drowning or not, water-based foam is unacceptable for pig depopulation

The recent *AJVR* report by Park et al¹ concludes that foam-based depopulation methods are dissimilar to drowning and should therefore be considered "valuable candidates for US swine production." Unfortunately, the study obfuscates more than it clarifies, neglecting key differences between water-based foam (WBF) and high-expansion nitrogen foam (N2F). The article fails to assuage serious animal welfare concerns associated with WBF that warrant its rejection as a depopulation method.

Water-based foam works via airway obstruction, preventing the exchange of both oxygen

nitrogen foam systems available today have foam expansion rates exceeding 300:1, negating the utility of these references in the current context.

Finally, the study's conclusions regarding the "stark differences" between WBF and drowning are questionable, given that all study animals were anesthetized. As is likely the case for WBF, drowning in conscious individuals involves trying to keep the airway clear, breath holding, coughing, and laryngospasm, and postmortem lesions can vary.² That postmortem findings differ when anesthetized animals are submerged in water versus WBF does not demonstrate a meaningful distinction from drowning, defined by the

But wait, there's more!

- ◆ We celebrated the 1,300+ people from more than 36 countries who have joined VAWAW as members since our launch in January 2024, with approximately 75% being veterinarians and veterinary students. VAWAW membership is free for the first year. If financial constraints provide a barrier to membership renewal, VAWAW offers 50% and 90% discounts to be used. Dues enable us to provide free educational and advocacy resources to our members and the public, but we never want them to prevent someone from being a supporter.



- ◆ We published three member newsletters in 2025 that were packed with educational content, highlights of our activities, and opportunities for member engagement. The newsletters can be reviewed at www.VAFAW.org/news.



- ◆ We gained the 2025 Platinum seal of transparency from Candid (formerly Guide Star), a leading nonprofit accountability and transparency resource. This is the organization's most rigorous distinction, with fewer than one percent of U.S.-based nonprofits achieving Platinum status in any given year.

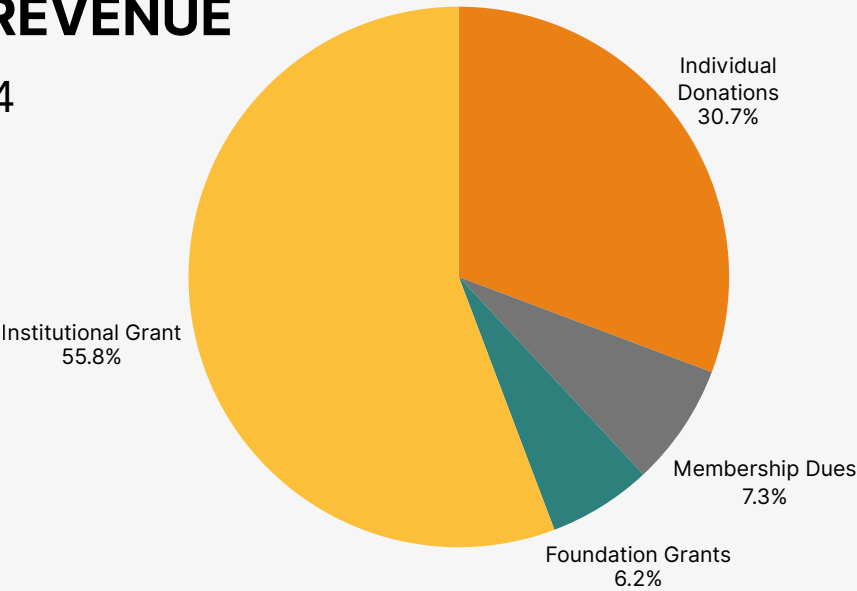


FINANCIAL SPOTLIGHT

In 2025, VAFAW raised \$87,344 in revenue, which includes an institutional grant that was awarded in 2025 but was funded in 2026 for programmatic work. In 2025, VAFAW spent \$40,236 to advance farm animal welfare.

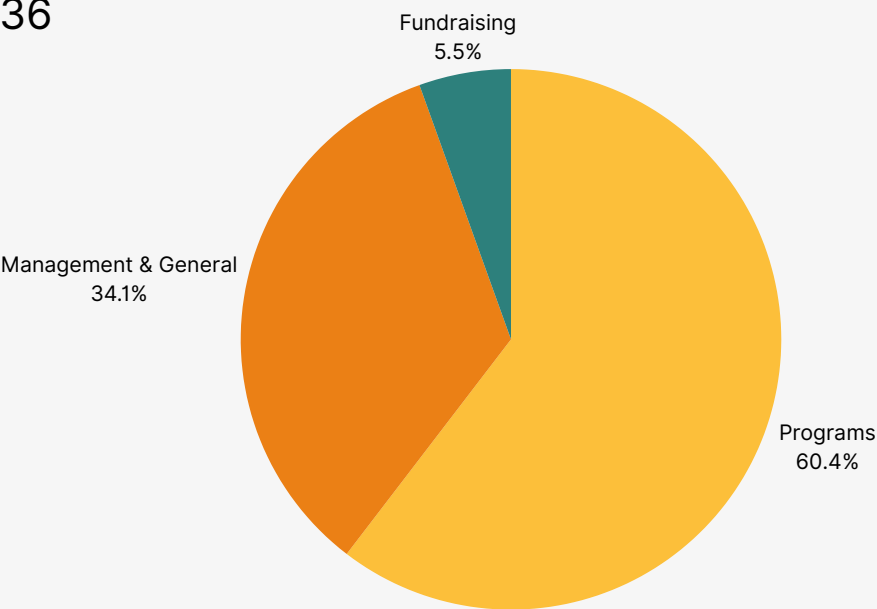
2025 REVENUE

\$87,344



2025 EXPENSES

\$40,236



RETAINED EARNINGS

Earnings raised since the creation of the organization in 2023 that were carried into 2025 were \$59,780.

LOOKING AHEAD

A sneak peek at our goals for 2026-2027.

VAFAW has a clear vision for advancing our three focus areas (pain mitigation, living environments, and humane end-of-life practices) through the goals listed below.

1 Reduce the use of painful procedures and increase effective pain management

- ◆ Publish a first-of-its-kind, science-informed guidebook authored by veterinarians on preventing and mitigating pain caused by common management procedures. The guide will cover both clinical practice and strategies for achieving far-reaching policy change.
- ◆ Secure the adoption of at least one new standard by a third-party animal welfare certification program or industry group that requires pain mitigation or changes to husbandry practices to eliminate the need for a painful management procedure.

2 Accelerate the transition from gestation crates to group housing systems for pregnant sows

- ◆ Protect Prop 12 and Question 3 from federal preemption.
- ◆ Advance state efforts to incentivize group housing/ban gestation crates.
- ◆ Support implementation of higher-welfare group housing systems.

3 Advance the use of higher-welfare depopulation methods and the adoption of a federal highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) vaccination strategy

- ◆ By 2028, reduce the use of heatstroke (VSD+) for HPAI-related depopulation by at least 25% compared to 2025 levels.
- ◆ Secure USDA adoption and initial deployment of an HPAI vaccination strategy for layer hens and turkeys by 2028.

Thank you

Our ability to improve farm animal welfare depends on the generous support of VAFAW members, individual donors, and institutional funders.

We simply could not do this work without you. Thank you!

Beyond those who support us financially, we deeply value everyone who helps elevate our mission—by raising awareness of VAFAW, using their voice to advance our advocacy efforts, and engaging thoughtfully in conversations about improving on-farm practices. Your enthusiasm and receptiveness inspire us, especially in the face of such complex policy and practical challenges.

And finally, we are incredibly fortunate to have a team of volunteers who give their time and passion to the mission. You are vital to our community and play a key role in helping drive meaningful change.



WHAT VAFAW SUPPORTERS ARE SAYING:

Webinars like this need to be in veterinary schools and any animal science program.

VAFAW is establishing itself as a leading voice in science-driven farm animal welfare!

I look forward to bringing some of this information back to our farm managers and vet techs.

Thank you so much for all you do and for offering these webinars. I'm pursuing a residency in animal welfare and am already learning a lot from the two webinars I've watched!

VAFAW is a long overdue, much needed, veterinary medical association.

This is one of the best symposiums I have attended. I'm grateful that this long overdue information is finally getting out into the world to protect these animals

CONTACT INFORMATION

Veterinary Association for Farm Animal Welfare

333 West Brown Deer Road
Unit G #481
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53217
EIN: 93-1583316

info@VAFAW.org.

Platinum
Transparency
2025

Candid.