

■ National policy

# Humane Society sues the U.S. for poultry slaughter

BY LIBBY QUAID  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Chickens and turkeys should be covered by the same law as cows, pigs and other animals when they are slaughtered, the Humane Society of the United States said in a lawsuit filed Monday against the Agriculture Department.

Before becoming T-bone steak or pork ribs, livestock must be stunned or otherwise unable to feel pain, according to the federal Humane Methods of Slaughter Act. However, the Agriculture Department maintains that the 47-year-old law does not apply to poultry.

The Humane Society argues that common methods of slaughtering poultry are not only cruel, they increase the risk of contamination that leads to food poisoning. The lawsuit was filed in U.S. District Court in San Francisco.

Typically, birds arriving at a slaughterhouse are dumped from their crates onto conveyor belts, then shackled upside down on a conveyor line, the Humane Society said. The humane slaughter act specifically prohibits shackling and hanging of conscious animals by their legs, the Humane Society said.

Birds are then dipped into electrically charged water to stun them. Their necks are cut by a machine, and they are dipped into a scalding vat to loosen feathers, according to the lawsuit.

Studies show that birds defecate and inhale when they are stunned, contaminating the water of the stun bath as well as birds themselves, the Humane Society argued.

"Consumers may well be at an increased risk for contracting a potentially life-threatening food-borne illness," said Michael Greger, the

group's director of public health and animal agriculture.

A poultry industry spokesman called the lawsuit a publicity stunt for Thanksgiving, when people will eat an estimated 45 million turkeys.

"We do have humane handling and slaughter in the industry," said Richard Lobb, spokesman for the National Chicken Council. "The system is set up to stun the bird so that it is insensitive to pain when it is killed, and it should be dead before it enters the scalding."

Examples mentioned in the lawsuit are exceptions, he said.

Had Congress intended to cover poultry, the law would have said so specifically, Lobb said.

The law applies to "cattle, calves, horses, mules, sheep, swine and other livestock." In the lawsuit, the Humane Society argues that poultry counts as livestock.

Agriculture Department spokesman Steven Cohen said a separate law, the Poultry Products Inspection Act, governs inspection of poultry processing plants.

The law ensures "birds are slaughtered in a manner that's consistent with good commercial practices and they are handled in a way that minimizes discomfort and accidental injury," Cohen said.

About 9 billion birds are slaughtered for food every year in the United States, the Humane Society said, citing Agriculture Department estimates. About 36 million cattle, 100 million pigs and 3 million sheep and lambs are slaughtered annually, the group said.

The Humane Society was joined in the lawsuit by another animal rights group, San Francisco-based East Bay Animal Advocates, and five individual consumers.

## IN BRIEF

### State police plan to help arrange tissue donations

PORTLAND — The Oregon State Police are helping families to arrange human tissue donations from people who die in traffic wrecks.

Under pressure from tissue recovery agencies, state police have become the first law enforcement agency in Oregon to help families of victims of fatal accidents to donate their corneas, skin, bones and other tissues. Previously, that option was restricted to deaths in hospitals.

"It's as much about the families who donate as the recipients," said Bob Hinely, director of Community Tissue Services in Portland. "It helps families grieve and get through their loss, knowing their loved one helped someone."

Under the program, after a fatality a state police dispatch supervisor will alert a tissue recovery call center in Portland. Once the family has been notified of the death, a donor coordinator will call.

State police Capt. Gerry Gregg said the agency did not want to agree to the new program until it was assured that the agency workers contacting families so soon after a death were properly trained.

The first donation came after a 54-year-old Lincoln City man died Nov. 13 when his pickup truck rolled off a logging road outside Lincoln City.

So far this year more than 400 people have died on Oregon highways, and state police investigated about half of the cases.

Time is crucial. Corneas must be

recovered within 15 hours, and skin, bone, tendons and heart valves can be collected up to 24 hours after a death.

### Kulongoski files papers for re-election bid

SALEM — Gov. Ted Kulongoski on Monday became the first Democrat to formally file papers for the May 2006 gubernatorial primary, confirming what he has been telling aides for months.

Kulongoski's commitment to run for re-election could give pause to fellow Democrats who have been talking openly of challenging him.

The low-key election filing — there was no news conference or campaign kickoff event — also allowed Kulongoski to keep the emphasis on his role as the incumbent governor rather than just being another candidate.

"His focus is on being governor. He's got more than a full-time job doing that," said Peter Bragdon, former chief of staff to Kulongoski and a senior adviser to the Kulongoski campaign.

In August, Kulongoski told a group of state agency heads that he planned to seek re-election, and he has discussed his goals for a second term in various settings since then.

Still, Monday's filing was a "shot over the bow" of other Democrats who said they might run against Kulongoski — mainly state Sens. Vicki Walker of Eugene and Rick Metsger of Welches, who have both criticized Kulongoski, said political analyst Jim Moore.

"The other Democratic hopefuls have got to put or shut up in the next few weeks. That means raising money, putting together a staff and

crafting a strong message to run on," said Moore, who teaches political science at Pacific University in Forest Grove.

Walker has said she will announce her plans by the end of the month. Metsger's announcement is expected within the next day or two. Another Democrat, Lane County Commissioner Peter Sorenson, announced in January that he's running, but he hasn't filed yet.

A statewide poll issued last week showed Kulongoski in a virtual tie with former Gov. John Kitzhaber, even though Kitzhaber has said he has no plans at present to run for his old job.

The opinion survey, by Portland pollster Mike Riley, also showed Walker, Metsger and Sorenson in the single digits, which Moore says indicates that their criticism of Kulongoski's performance as governor isn't gaining them much traction among Democratic voters.

"They don't have a message that moves beyond being cranky," the political analyst said. "They are frustrated with Kulongoski, but they are having a hard time putting together a message about what their candidacy is about."

On the Republican side, former state GOP Chairman Kevin Mannix has filed papers to make a second bid for governor next year. Mannix won the 2002 GOP primary but lost the general election to Kulongoski.

Portland lawyer Ron Saxton — who was defeated by Mannix in the 2002 primary — and state Sen. Jason Atkinson of Jacksonville both have said they plan to seek the Republican gubernatorial nomination next May.

— The Associated Press

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