

On June 10th, 2021, Governor Mike Parson of the state of Missouri passed House Bill No. 574. This law amends a previous law pertaining to the inspection of agricultural facilities. The amendment states that entities such as “The Missouri department of agriculture or its representative, the Missouri department of natural resources or its representative, the county sheriff for the county in which the facility is located, the United States Department of Agriculture, and any other federal or Missouri state agency with statutory or regulatory authority over the products, animals, or processes described ... have the exclusive authority to inspect grounds or facilities that are located in Missouri”. The law then states the impacted uses for which it applies to such as the production of eggs and dairy products along with the raising of livestock¹. This individual law received little to no news coverage because of its minor addition to a larger chapter in Missouri state law. Though animal rights activists have yet to comment on the law, it may exist to dissuade animal rights activist groups from performing illegal inspections of their own. Even though injustices performed by farmers should not go unnoticed, I still believe that the approved authorities should be responsible for conducting inspections, and therefore I would support this law.

Activist groups have been known to infiltrate farming operations and inadvertently caused direct harm to either themselves or the animals they are trying to protect. A prominent instance of this is when hundreds of activists stormed a duck farm and chained themselves to the equipment after an activist leaked videos of abuse at the facility². The activists came after a raid on the farm by the county’s sheriff department to investigate the claims³. This law establishes guidelines for the admissibility of testimony or evidence regarding the conditions or events at the designated grounds or facilities in criminal prosecutions. Clearly specifying the authorized

sources of admissible evidence helps maintain the integrity of legal proceedings and prevents the use of potentially unreliable or unauthorized evidence.

This law states the authorized groups allowed to conduct these inspections help streamline the process. We achieve this goal by ensuring that authorized and knowledgeable parties conduct inspections, thereby reducing potential confusion and ensuring consistency. Knowledgeable and uncorrupt parties are essential to completing accurate inspections. There are stories of safety inspections that were conducted incorrectly, leading to undue harm. One example is where the Georgia Department of Agriculture passed a dog breeding facility which was later revealed to have dogs with decaying teeth, matted fur, and flea infestations. Even after video footage surfaced of said dogs, the authorities still declared the evidence unfounded⁴. With laws handing the responsibilities over to government entities, public trust and accuracy must be the foremost goals of these organizations.

The bill specifically targets the inspection of grounds or facilities involved in the production of eggs, milk, and dairy products, and the raising of livestock or poultry. By prioritizing these sectors, the bill aims to address specific concerns not explicitly stated in the bill and ensure that proper regulations and standards are upheld in these key areas of agricultural production. Considerations and exemptions are considered because the unique circumstances and regulatory frameworks of these entities ensure that the bill's provisions are appropriately tailored and implemented.

House Bill No. 574 highlights the significance of authorized inspections in agricultural facilities and underscores the importance of entrusting this responsibility to knowledgeable entities. Though the law may have been introduced, in part, to deter illegal inspections by activist

groups whose goals are good, it is important to recognize that injustices within the agricultural industry should not go unnoticed. All these actions are undertaken to maintain the integrity of inspections, legal proceedings, and agricultural production.

References

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