

Sander Levin

U.S. House of Representatives
9th Congressional District, Michigan

February 5, 2015

The Honorable Thomas Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

I am writing to express my serious concern over the findings of animal neglect and mistreatment documented by a recent New York Times investigation of the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center.

The New York Times investigation reviewed thousands of pages of internal records and interviewed dozens of current and former employees at the Center. The evidence of animal mistreatment, suffering, neglect, and wholesale violation of basic rules of animal care is shocking. The U.S. Department of Agriculture should set the example for the proper care of animals; indeed, the Department does outstanding work in its enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act. It is therefore all the more surprising that one of the Department's research centers has demonstrated such a complete and longstanding disregard for even routine care of animals. Further, the Times investigation documented "a recurring failure to fully consider the pain that animals suffer during experiments, or in everyday life at the center."

I understand that you have directed the creation of an updated Animal Welfare Strategy plan for the Department's research labs. While I applaud this overdue step, the extraordinary and long-term problems documented at the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center require immediate action. I believe the Department of Agriculture should order a stand-down of animal experimentation at the Center until a full review is conducted and new animal protocols are implemented. At a minimum, the Center should be brought into full compliance with the letter and spirit of the Animal Welfare Act.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,


Sander Levin
Member of Congress

