



Proposed Initiative 16: Protect Animals from Unnecessary Suffering and Exploitation (PAUSE) *Summary and Impacts*

Overview

The ballot proposal “Protect Animals from Unnecessary Suffering and Exploitation (PAUSE)” seeks changes to the Colorado Revised Statutes (CRS) in order to criminalize certain animal husbandry, reproductive health and medical practices, change the age at which livestock is slaughtered, and remove exemptions related to animal cruelty statutes.

The initiative was submitted to the Colorado Secretary of State’s office in February 2021 to qualify it for the November 2022 statewide election. Listed as Initiative 16, the initiative’s title was set on March 17, 2021 by the Colorado Title Board. Following approval, opponents petitioned the Colorado Supreme Court challenging the title and seeking to affirm that Initiative 16 violates the single subject rule. If the petition is rejected, Initiative 16 will be eligible for signature collection that might qualify it for the statewide ballot. A total of 124,632 valid signatures are needed to place the proposal on the ballot.

If adopted by voters, Initiative 16 revises the CRS by:

- Expanding the definition of livestock to include fish,
- Expanding the definition of “sexual act with an animal” to include conventional animal husbandry and animal health practices,
- Defining a “natural lifespan” for certain species of livestock and defining animal cruelty to include slaughter of an animal whose age is one-quarter or less than its “natural lifespan,”
- Removing an animal cruelty exception for animal husbandry practices,
- Eliminating exceptions to sentencing requirements for animal cruelty,
- Prioritizing animal cruelty criminal statutes over animal care statutes when these are in conflict.

Initiative 16’s supporters argue these changes will improve animal welfare based on their understanding of current practices and their own beliefs of human-animal interactions.

Opponents believe the initiative will negatively impact companion animal, horse, and livestock welfare by outlawing humane and widely accepted medical practices. Further, opponents argue the changes effectively eliminate livestock production in Colorado by increasing costs, eliminating income, increasing animal sickness and death rates, and placing Colorado livestock production at a competitive disadvantage. Criminalizing accepted practices will also harm youth education programs and university teaching, research, and engagement programs.

Key Implications

Colorado State University experts conclude that Initiative 16’s passage will criminalize animal health practices and negatively impact the wellbeing of companion animals and livestock, increase disease spread, threaten the viability of youth livestock programs, harm the financial and environmental sustainability of livestock production, and significantly curtail economic activity in rural Colorado where few employment and business alternatives exist.



Criminalizing Safe and Accepted Medical Practices

Commonly accepted, humane practices that may be outlawed by Initiative 16 include neutering, spaying, anal gland expression, artificial insemination, embryo transfer, in-vitro fertilization, estrus synchronization, pregnancy verification, breeding soundness exams, birthing assistance, castration, sex identification in poultry, and rectal temperature measurement.

As a result, passage of Initiative 16 will

- criminalize pet reproductive health practices, including spaying and neutering, that reduce pet overpopulation, aggressive pet behaviors, and some forms of cancer.
- eliminate horse and livestock reproductive health practices that are known to protect maternal health, increase conception and live birth rates, and reduce undesirable traits in offspring (e.g., oversized calves requiring cesarian section). These practices improve animal welfare and benefit the safety of caretakers.

Impacts to Livestock Producers and the Agricultural Industry

- Initiative 16 defines the ‘natural’ life expectancy of certain livestock species, and then sets a minimum slaughter age that is significantly greater than conventional practice. This change would reduce the quality of meat products, decrease sales of Colorado meat to wholesale and retail food suppliers and substantially increase costs of all livestock operations. The change in minimum slaughter age reduces animal welfare and wellbeing.

As an example, the ‘natural life’ of cattle is arbitrarily defined as 20 years in Initiative 16, and slaughter is set at no less than 5 years (60 months) of age. Most cattle are slaughtered at approximately 20 months of age when they have reached maturity. Increasing the time to slaughter necessarily reduces overall animal wellbeing, increases feeding costs, magnifies the environmental footprint of cattle production, and reduces the quality of the meat product. No protein-producing sector, domestic or international, applies this ‘natural life’ practice.

- Initiative 16 enforces the ‘natural life’ standard on a farm or ranch and not at the retail level. As a result of Initiative 16, retailers will import higher quality, lower cost meat supplies across state lines leaving Colorado producers without markets for their products.
- The livestock, poultry and dairy industries in Colorado typically generate more than \$6 billion in farm gate sales each year, and these sales are primarily spent on local supplies and local wages in rural areas. The industry purchases a large share of feedstuffs from Colorado farmers. Considering the interrelatedness of economic activity, the economic value-added estimate of the livestock industry is in excess of \$20 billion each year and sustains more than 30,000 jobs.
- In effect, Initiative 16 will ban animal agricultural production in Colorado. If enacted, Colorado producers will be unable to adjust to the new requirements, which are inefficient, costly, and decrease the quality meat products. Household income will decline and rural unemployment rates will increase. Economic impacts to the state will be significant and permanent.



Impacts to Education, Engagement, and Research at Colorado State University

Initiative 16 will adversely impact the educational, engagement, and research mission of Colorado State University (CSU). Criminalizing widely accepted, humane animal husbandry and reproductive health practices will lead to poorly trained students, less effective research, and a damaged reputation.

- The CSU Veterinary Program ranks among the world's best in training veterinary students and practitioners. The passage of Initiative 16 would almost assuredly cost the CSU Doctor of Veterinary Medicine Program its accreditation. Initiative 16 outlaws basic educational experiences required by the American Veterinary Medical Association for licensure eligibility and subsequent employment. Lost accreditation eliminates the CSU Doctor of Veterinary Medicine Program.
- Even if accreditation were maintained, prospective CSU veterinary students would go elsewhere to get a full educational experience that provides fundamental skills for a veterinarian.
- Initiative 16 criminalizes many common and necessary surgeries and procedures conducted at the CSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital that improve animal health and wellbeing.
- Both the College of Veterinary Medicine and the College of Agricultural Sciences are recognized for achieving student learning outcomes and providing experiences aligned with the needs of constituents. The proposed ballot initiative criminalizes well accepted practices. These would be removed from the curriculum and place students at a disadvantage for employment. Students will choose to go to peer institutions rather than seek a degree at CSU.
- Colorado State University actively maintains livestock and equine herds for research in reproductive and fetal health, as well as research in nutrition, physiology, disease prevention and treatment, welfare, behavior, and safety. The elimination of widely accepted reproductive, health maintenance and safety practices such as artificial insemination, castration, and breeding soundness exams will eliminate important research in all areas.
- The CSU Department of Animal Sciences conducts one of the world's best meat safety and quality academic programs. Passing Initiative 16 will eliminate most meat science research and engagement at CSU as funding partners fail to support research not aligned with practice.
- The reputation of a land grant university depends largely on its ability to advance new knowledge, support its constituents, and train the next generation of agricultural and veterinary professionals to be successful in their endeavors. The changes necessitated by the passage of Initiative 16 will erode the effectiveness and relevance of CSU, thereby harming its reputation and diminishing its impacts.