

**From:** [Elizabeth Jones](#)  
**To:** [Trisha Linebarger](#)  
**Subject:** FW: HSUS Written Testimony -- Texas Animal Health Commission  
**Date:** Wednesday, September 30, 2020 10:55:11 AM  
**Attachments:** [HSUS TAHC Written Testimony.pdf](#)

---

**From:** Lauren Loney  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 30, 2020 10:53:47 AM (UTC-06:00) Central Time (US & Canada)  
**To:** Sunset Advisory Commission  
**Subject:** HSUS Written Testimony -- Texas Animal Health Commission

Dear Sunset Commission Staff,

I hope y'all are doing well as well as can be expected and having a good week so far! Thank you for your hard work over the last few months—I can't imagine how challenging it must be to figure out and implement the logistics of a Sunset review process in light of all the COVID-related concerns. I "attended" the meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> and, from my perspective as a viewer, it was great!

I appreciate the opportunity to submit this written testimony (attached) in response to the Texas Animal Health Commission's review.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to me.

All my best,  
Lauren

**Lauren Loney**  
Texas State Director, State Affairs  
[lloney@humanesociety.org](mailto:lloney@humanesociety.org)  
P. 512-534-7939  
[humanesociety.org](http://humanesociety.org)



The Humane Society of the United States is the nation's most effective animal protection organization, fighting for all animals for more than 60 years. To support our work, please make a [monthly donation](#), give in [another way](#) or [volunteer](#).



Dear Texas Sunset Advisory Commission:

We thank the Texas Sunset Advisory Commission Staff for their continued dedicated work during such tumultuous times, and for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the recent staff report regarding the Texas Animal Health Commission.

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to ending the cruelest practices impacting animals. Across the nation, we are leading efforts to reform agricultural practices to make our food supply system more humane, safe, and sustainable. Most recently, as COVID-19 has swept across the globe, one thing has become abundantly clear: The pandemic is a global wake-up call for humanity to reassess our relationship with animals, including livestock animals.

To that end, please accept the following written testimony regarding the Texas Animal Health Commission's role in managing the health of Texas' robust and diverse agricultural industry.

**Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) is uniquely situated to study and address the relationship between animal welfare and animal health to prevent the future spread of zoonotic diseases in Texas. We urge the Texas Sunset Commission and TAHC to consider implementing policies, such as reducing intensive confinement of animals, that would address these concerns.**

Like COVID-19, some 73% of emerging infectious diseases in humans are zoonotic, originating in animals. In addition, more than 58% of known infectious diseases affecting humans, like the rabies virus and Salmonella, are transmitted by animals. Together, zoonotic diseases account for billions of illnesses and millions of deaths across the globe. Their spread has direct connections to our use and misuse of animals, connections that should rise to the forefront of public policy discussions in the immediate future.

[Studies suggest](#) that the most intensive types of confinement and other common practices utilized in industrial agriculture, such as long transports between farms and feedlots, failure to provide pain relief during castration and dehorning, and early separation of cows and calves, among others, contribute to increased susceptibility to disease.

Moreover, keeping farm animals in overcrowded and unsanitary confinement facilities is a major risk factor, facilitating the development of zoonotic pathogens with the potential to infect human populations. When thousands of animals are tightly confined, it creates a prime breeding ground for pathogens to proliferate and mutate. [A 2013 review published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#) found "strong evidence" that "intensified [farming] systems can be linked to disease emergence and amplification." Facilities that cage animals are of particular concern, as outlined in HSUS' recent [report](#) identifying policies that would help prevent another global health crisis.

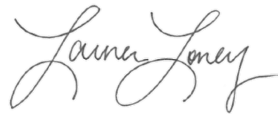
The Texas Sunset Commission Staff found that, "in examining the agency's ability to prevent, control, and eradicate animal diseases in Texas, the [Texas Animal Health Commission] has not fully kept up with Texas' shifting disease landscape." One area in which this is readily apparent is that TAHC's

activities currently do not address the relationship between animal welfare standards and disease, despite the ever-increasing body of literature and evidence that animals raised in industrial, confined settings are less healthy and, therefore more susceptible to contracting and spreading disease than those animals raised in non-industrial, less concentrated facilities.

Now, COVID-19 has brought the nexus between animal and human health to the front-and-center of conversations about our food industry. TAHC has broad authority to implement regulations to prevent and manage the spread of disease in farm animals in Texas. We respectfully urge TAHC to incorporate inspections of animal welfare standards in all agricultural facilities as a means of ensuring that animals are healthier and less susceptible to contracting and spreading diseases, particularly those with the potential to infect people.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration. Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at [lloney@humanesociety.org](mailto:lloney@humanesociety.org) or (512) 534-7939.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lauren Loney".

**Lauren Loney**

Texas State Director, State Affairs

[lloney@humanesociety.org](mailto:lloney@humanesociety.org)

P. 512-534-7939