

December 6, 2021

To: Sen. Elder Vogel, chair Senate Agriculture & Rural Affairs Committee; Sen. Judy Schwank, Democratic Chair Senate Agriculture & Rural Affairs Committee; Rep. Dan Moul, chair House Agriculture & Rural Affairs Committee; and, Rep. Rep. Eddie Day Pashinski, Democratic Chair, House Agriculture & Rural Affairs Committee

Dear Chairs:

Thank you for giving Pennsylvania Farm Bureau the opportunity to share some thoughts on the need to place some reasonable restrictions on the use of backyard fireworks, especially the consumer grade products that have become available to residents in recent years.

It's our perspective that most individuals who participate in launching fireworks are unaware of the impact that these displays have on animals, including livestock. Horses and other animals are sensitive to loud noises and spook easily. Agitated animals are more susceptible to illness and injury. At minimum, we believe the state needs to invest in outreach efforts to help educate individuals to the potential harm they may be causing to farm and companion animals while igniting fireworks.

Due to changes in our state's fireworks laws that allow a wider variety of fireworks to be purchased by consumers and set off at any time in the calendar year, our organization supports establishing safeguards that protect livestock agriculture.

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau would support legislation that restricts the ability to set off fireworks within 500 feet of an animal housing unit. It is often the close proximity of fireworks that cause the most stress—and create the greatest likelihood for injury—among farm animals. I think we can all easily visual a horse running frantically around a paddock having been spooked by neighbors setting off fireworks.

For those reasons, it's important to have laws in place that penalize individuals who set off fireworks in close proximity to where animals are kept. A 500-foot

buffer is a reasonable safeguard to provide some reasonable projection for livestock agriculture.

In addition to legislative changes, it is clear that greater enforcement of existing fireworks laws is necessary, particularly among those municipalities that have local restrictions on the frequency of backyard fireworks displays, or setbacks from property lines.

Our hope is that Pennsylvania makes needed legislative changes to provide a buffer for fireworks displays around livestock enclosures, creates educational outreach to help consumers better understand the impact these displays have on livestock and companion animals and that State Police and municipal police departments step-up enforcement of existing fireworks laws.

Thank you for providing Pennsylvania Farm Bureau with the opportunity so share some thoughts on this issue.

Regards,



Darrin Youker
Director, State Government Affairs