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January 22, 2015

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary of Agriculture  
U.S. Department of Agriculture

**Via e-mail: [tom.vilsack@usda.gov](mailto:tom.vilsack@usda.gov)**

Dear Mr. Secretary,

As Christians, we were appalled when we read the shocking details of cruelty and neglect by a program run by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as revealed earlier in the week by *The New York Times*. We are writing to call on you to close the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center (MARC) immediately and to protect the tens of thousands of animals currently housed at the facility in Nebraska.

Proverbs tells us that the righteous care for the needs of their animals, but MARC uses taxpayer funds in cruel experiments for the sole purpose of trying, albeit vainly, to increase profit margins. MARC is hell on Earth for the animals under your watch, who have suffered from neglect, treatable diseases, and painful mutations. Severely deformed animals are denied basic veterinary care or relief from their suffering, while untrained workers operate on and kill animals. Crowding is so severe that workers are unable to clean barns properly, resulting in rampant respiratory disease and diarrhea. Lambs are purposely left out to die in open fields, their bodies ravaged by predators and harsh weather. At least one cow was restrained and gang-raped by bulls in a libido experiment. Her broken body gave out after hours of abuse, and she died.

Nothing can justify this astonishing cruelty, which is the very opposite of good stewardship and care of the creation to which human beings are called.

As Christians, we cannot stand silent while MARC continues to breed, neglect, and abuse God's creatures. The USDA's mission is to provide the nation with sound leadership on food and agriculture issues. Surely, you must agree that to retain any level of credibility in this role, you must put an immediate and permanent end to this nightmarish chapter of USDA history. We hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely yours,

Sarah Withrow King  
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