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THE GOOD EGG PEOPLE®

July 10, 2023

Dear Representative,

As the nation's second-largest egg producer, with a major footprint in Indiana, Missouri, Illinois, Iowa, North Carolina, Georgia and Arizona with about 22 million birds in production, Rose Acre Farms writes to convey its support for H.R. 2742, the Fighting Inhumane Gambling and High-Risk Trafficking (FIGHT) Act. About 8 percent of all laying hens in the United States are owned and managed by Rose Acre, providing millions of Americans with a low-cost, high-protein, and enjoyable dietary staple.

Rose Acre adheres to strict animal care and animal welfare standards and has been an industry leader in promoting those practices. Cockfighting is the antithesis of proper animal care, and on that basis alone, Rose Acre supports efforts to crack down on the grisly and inherently violent practice of cockfighting. As you know, cockfighters attach knives or gaffs to the birds' legs to deliver intentional, mortal wounds to the animals.

We are also deeply concerned about an additional feature of cockfighting – its role in the transmission of disease, with sickened cockfighting birds infecting laying hen and broiler bird operations. Cockfighting has been implicated in the spread of a wide range of pathogens to other birds. There are well documented concerns about the transmission of Avian Influenza and virulent Newcastle Disease, to name just a few, to commercial poultry, leading to mass depopulation efforts and billions in expenses to our federal government. Birds reared in many backyard cockfighting operations are ill with a range of respiratory diseases and widely dispersed in illegal commerce, threatening poultry production across the United States. We are particularly concerned about the illegal movement of fighting birds from Mexico into the Southwest, where we also maintain major laying-hen flocks. Virulent Newcastle Disease is endemic in Mexico, and there is a robust illegal trade that the United States must interdict for the health of our poultry industry.

Cockfighting has played a major role in the spread of H5N1 in Asia, and now that virus is in the U.S. and has triggered major containment efforts by our agricultural agencies. Cockfighting may have a role in reviving the outbreak and that is a risk we as a nation cannot take. An invigorated outbreak could cost our nation tens of billions of dollars as well as cost Rose Acre Farms millions of dollars.

Cockfighting birds are kept under the radar and as such evade veterinarian inspections and safeguards that have been established to control various diseases. Such birds are often moved across state lines without proper permits or inspections leading to highly probable disease proliferation.

Cockfighting is an organized criminal enterprise and it makes our communities unsafe, bound up with money laundering, narcotics trafficking, and high-stakes illegal gambling.

We are enthusiastic supporters of the FIGHT Act. With your role on the Senate Committee on Agriculture, we do indeed hope you'll cosponsor this bill and play a role in shepherding it to passage.

We stand ready to help in advocating for H.R. 2742 and its Senate companion, S. 1529.

Sincerely,

Joseph A. Miller
General Counsel
Rose Acre Farms, Inc.