

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

An Act Regarding the Slaughter of Animals

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 7 MRSA §306-A, as enacted by PL 1999, c. 72, §5, is amended to read:

§ 306-A. Agricultural Development Fund

1. Agricultural Development Fund. The commissioner shall establish an agricultural development fund to accelerate new market development, adoption of advantageous technologies and promotion of state agricultural products by state producers and to facilitate compliance with Title 22, section 2521 by commercial slaughterhouses and custom slaughterhouses as defined in Title 22, section 2511.

2. Fund operation. The commissioner shall utilize the agricultural development fund under subsection 1 to:

- A. Provide grants to individuals, firms or organizations to conduct market research or to undertake market promotion activities for the purpose of expanding existing markets and developing new markets for state agricultural products; and
- B. Test and demonstrate new technologies related to the production, storage and processing of state agricultural commodities; and
- C. Provide grants to commercial slaughterhouses and custom slaughterhouses to modify their facilities to comply with Title 22, section 2521.

3. Rulemaking. The commissioner shall establish, by rule, in a manner consistent with Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter H-A2-A criteria for the allocation of grant money, application requirements consistent with the provisions of this section, a schedule for accepting and reviewing applications, reporting requirements on grant expenditures and project results and any other administrative requirements necessary for the efficient implementation of this program. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter H-A2-A. The commissioner is guided by the following criteria:

- A. Applications may be submitted by individuals, firms or organizations;
- B. At least 25% of the total cost of any project must be funded by the applicant or applicants and at least 10% of the total cost must be funded from nonpublic sources. A single grant may not exceed 20% of the total funds available to be granted in a given year; however, in no case may a single grant exceed \$30,000;

C. Information relative to market research or development activities provided to the commissioner prior to formal application, included in grant applications or provided to the commissioner to fulfill reporting requirements is confidential information and may not be publicly disclosed by the commissioner as long as:

(1) The person to whom the information belongs or pertains has requested that certain information be designated as confidential; and

(2) The commissioner has determined that the information gives the person making the request opportunity to obtain business or competitive advantage over another person who does not have access to the information or will result in loss of business or other significant detriment to the person making the request if access is provided to others; and

D. When possible, the commissioner shall award grants to applicants representing diverse agricultural enterprises and geographic areas of the State.

4. Advisory committee. The commissioner shall establish the Agricultural Development Committee to evaluate market and production development grant applications and review project results.

Sec. 2. 22 MRSA §2521, as enacted by PL 1999, c. 777, §1, is amended by adding at the end a new paragraph to read:

Beginning January 1, 2009, the slaughtering of livestock or presence of dead livestock within sight of another livestock animal is prohibited in commercial slaughterhouses and custom slaughterhouses.

Sec. 3. Priority in awarding grants from the agricultural development fund. Notwithstanding criteria established in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 7, section 306-A, subsection 3 and rules adopted in accordance with that subsection, for the 2 grant cycles of the agricultural development fund under that section following enactment of this Act, the Commissioner of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources shall give priority to applicants seeking funds to modify slaughterhouse facilities so that dead animals and the slaughter of animals are not visible to other livestock.

SUMMARY

This bill enacts a prohibition on slaughtering livestock in sight of other livestock. This prohibition becomes effective January 1, 2009 and applies to custom and commercial slaughterhouses. The bill also amends the statutes governing the distribution of grants from the agricultural development fund to specify that the fund may be used to modify slaughterhouse facilities to comply with statutory provisions for humane slaughter. The bill also directs the Commissioner of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources to give priority in the next 2 grant cycles to applicants proposing to modify slaughterhouses to comply with the prohibition.