

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, my name is Elizabeth Sanborn and I reside in Hiram, Maine. I would like to present testimony in support of LD 1307 An Act To Restrict the Sale, Purchase and Use of Fireworks in the State and LD 1348 An Act to Limit the Decibel Level of Fireworks Near Working Farms.

My husband and I own Clover Ledge Farm, a small ten-acre working cattle farm. We raise, train, and sell pulling steers and oxen, and I also own three riding horses as well. While we work hard to keep our animals safe through proper animal husbandry practices, fireworks in this state have become a scary situation for all of us livestock owners. Since 2012 when the sale, possession, and use of fireworks became legal for consumers, every July is a stressful time for us. It is important to remember that fireworks are not limited to just the Fourth of July, but here where I live in Hiram, it goes on for most of the summer months. Livestock become startled by the loud, unpredictable noises of fireworks and there is no way to explain to them what is happening. Horses in particular are fight or flight animals, which means their stress response is to either fight or flee the scary situation. Their first instinct when frightened is to run away from the stimulus and if they cannot do so they will then bite, kick, rear, or otherwise strike out aggressively. This basic survival mechanism is not something that can easily be “trained” out of them when it comes to the sound of fireworks, and this behavior can cause harm to people, other animals, and to the horse itself.

My own horses, while well trained and tractable, are greatly disturbed by the fireworks that go off all around our small farm. They morph into anxious and difficult to handle animals, unable to stand calmly in their stalls, and will work up a sweat and refuse to eat feed or hay. Our cattle are generally calmer yet we have to rush to secure them into the barn before they begin to run in their pasture from the loud noises. Some of the younger cattle will also refuse to eat their feed or hay as well. It becomes virtually impossible to console a large animal that is forced into this automatic stress response, and I have seen it take up to 24 hours after the fireworks have stopped for our livestock's physical reflexes of the autonomic nervous system to relax.

Sadly, last [July 4, 2020](#), a 30-year-old horse in Yarmouth, Maine was killed due to being spooked by fireworks. The horse was scared enough to break its fencing in an automatic flight response and was missing for 14 hours before being found trapped in deep mud. Due to the length of time the horse was stuck, it sustained fatal injuries and had to be humanely euthanized. This was a senseless and horrific death that was directly related to the callous and unconcerned attitudes of neighbors with fireworks. Human entertainment using loud and dangerous explosions is certainly not more important than the safety and lives of animals.

There must be a better way to celebrate in our beautiful state but also keep our livestock safe. While I recognize LD 1348 only applies to working farms, many people own livestock who may not qualify as a “working farm” yet those animals also deserve to be kept safe too. According to the state Fire Marshal's office website, they did not want to see increases in firework-related injuries due to the legalization; while they may have been referring to human injuries, I do feel it is important to recognize livestock injuries have indeed become more common since 2012. Because it does not appear the public is aware of the dangers and impact of fireworks on livestock, I respectfully ask you all to consider the importance and necessity of LD 1307 and LD 1348.

I appreciate your time and consideration of this important issue. Thank you.