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Testimony on HB 2207
to
The House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
By Chad Bontrager
Kansas Department of Agriculture
February 14, 2013

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Schwartz, and members of the committee. I am Chad Bontrager, KDA agribusiness development coordinator, and am here to express the department's support of HB 2207, which would provide much-needed certainty to farmers and ranchers establishing animal feeding facilities in Kansas.

First and foremost, Kansas farmers and ranchers are the first and best stewards of the land and its resources. They make voluntary investments in conservation efforts and work continuously to comply with multiple state and federal laws aimed at protecting the water, land and natural resources. Upon initial reading of this bill, it would be easy to assume its largest impact will be a process for establishing separation distances. However, it is important for the committee to understand the significance of this bill as it relates to growing Kansas agriculture.

Global demand for animal protein is growing at a fast rate. Kansas is recognized as a leader in cattle and beef production but meeting these global demands means we must increase our state's presence in the dairy, swine and poultry sectors as well. Fortunately, Kansas is well-suited for large scale animal agriculture. Our state's vast open spaces combined with a favorable climate, supportive communities and state government, access to an abundant feed supply and efficient transportation systems, make Kansas a top choice for many animal agriculture farms.

KDA's agribusiness development team works each day with folks interested in moving their farm, ranch or agribusiness to Kansas. Many of these farming operations are complex and require multiple years and hundreds of thousands of dollars of investment to move from initial idea to being open for business in Kansas.

As I previously mentioned, farmers and ranchers willingly comply with stringent environmental laws and regulations, including requirements related to separation distance from a confined animal feeding operation to the neighboring homes. Unfortunately, current law leaves these farmers extremely vulnerable on the separation distance issue as they could be working for months on their new location only to have an individual or special interest group who opposes animal agriculture move in and set up shop within the prescribed separation distance, thus derailing the whole project.

HB 2207 makes a responsible and commonsense change to the law and will make Kansas an even more attractive location for animal agriculture. This law, while preserving the

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environmental protection standards, establishes a process whereby the entity interested in constructing an animal feeding operation must file a notice of intent to construct with the secretary. Once the secretary acknowledges the receipt, the registration date is set and the separation distance is established. Then, the farmer has 18 months from the date of filing the notice of intent to submit a completed confined animal feeding operation application to the secretary. If no application is submitted, the notice is null and void. The ability to lock-in the separation distance provides certainty and reduces risk, which improves the appeal of Kansas to folks in animal agriculture looking for a new place to do business giving our state another leg up on the competition.

Growing animal agriculture in Kansas will grow our state's economy. Not only does more animal agriculture create good-paying jobs, but it will result in more economic activity in rural communities. The farmers buy feed and equipment from local retailers. They shop at local grocery stores, send their kids to local school districts, visit local doctors and dentists and more. This commonsense bill is an important step forward in our state's efforts to lead the way in animal agriculture and provide consumers around the globe with healthful, safe protein.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I will stand for questions at the appropriate time.