

**NEW JERSEYANS' OPINIONS ON  
HUMANE STANDARDS FOR  
TREATMENT OF LIVESTOCK**

*Conducted for:*  
**Farm Sanctuary**

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# **NEW JERSEYANS' OPINIONS ON HUMANE STANDARDS FOR TREATMENT OF LIVESTOCK**

## **I. Introduction**

In order to assess New Jerseyans' top of mind evaluations on having humane standards and to test messages related to animal welfare groups' concerns about this issue, Farm Sanctuary commissioned the Eagleton Institute's Center for Public Interest Polling at Rutgers University to conduct a statewide survey of New Jersey residents.

The survey involved telephone interviews conducted between September 18 and 24, 2003 with a random probability sample of 801 New Jersey residents 18 years old and older. Percentages for this survey have a sampling error of  $\pm 3.5$  percent at a 95 percent confidence level with 50/50 proportions. This report also describes findings for certain demographic groups in the population. Smaller sub-groups will have a higher margin of sampling error. A more comprehensive description of the research methodology is included in the appendix.

This report and the interpretation of the survey findings are the sole responsibility of the Center for Public Interest Polling, the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers the State University of New Jersey.

## **II. Opinion on Setting Humane Standards**

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture, under a legislative directive, recently published proposed regulations that would establish standards for the humane treatment of farm animals. Only a tiny fraction of the state's residents know about this administrative action. Just 2 percent say they have heard or read "a great deal" about the proposed regulations and 9 percent say they have heard "some." (Table 1). Nearly nine in ten New Jerseyans say they have heard "not much" (26 percent) or "nothing at all" (61 percent) about the Department's proposals.

Under these circumstances, questions asked of the public about the specific regulations concerning the humane treatment of farm animals should be regarded as, in effect, hypothetical. For most survey participants, the survey interview was the first time they had heard of this proposal. As such, the average individual's responses to such questions are not based on detailed knowledge of the specific considerations and practices involved, but on his or her general views about how animals ought to be treated.

Many New Jerseyans are likely to hold such general views. Even without having specific knowledge of the standards currently being considered, almost two-thirds of New Jerseyans say that having farm animals and livestock treated humanely is very important to them (Table 2). One-quarter say this is somewhat important. Just 9 percent say it is "not very" or "not at all" important to them. There are no significant differences among different New Jersey demographic groups in this view.

In general, most New Jerseyans express strong support for the idea that the state should regulate the treatment of farm animals. Overall, three in four residents support having such standards, including 56 percent who say they "strongly support" such regulations (Table 3). Only 14 percent are opposed. Again, there are no significant demographic differences.

Most of the public accepts the definition of “humane treatment” used in the proposed regulations. One survey question began by informing respondents that the regulations define humane treatment as “being marked by compassion, sympathy, and consideration for the welfare of animals,” then asked “Do you agree or disagree with this definition?” Seventy-seven percent of New Jerseyans agree with this definition, while 14 percent disagree and 9 percent have no opinion (Table 4).

### **III. Reactions to Messages Related to the Proposed Standards**

Animal welfare groups have expressed concern that the standards in the proposed regulations do too little to protect farm animals, permitting the continued use of farm practices that they believe should be prohibited. Farm groups counter that farmers’ practices benefit both farm animals and consumers.

The public is certainly sympathetic to the concerns raised by opponents of the proposed regulations when those concerns are stated in the language used by opponents. The survey put to respondents five practices identified by animal welfare groups as permissible under the proposed regulations, in the language that technically reflects the standards as allowed, and asked whether they should or should not be allowed. Between 74 and 83 percent feel that these practices, as described to them, should not be allowed.

I am going to read you some practices that may be allowed under the proposed standards. For each, please tell me whether you feel it should or should not be allowed. Should farmers be allowed or not allowed to...?	Should not be allowed	Should be allowed	Not sure
Confine pregnant pigs and veal calves to individual stalls that are only large enough for them to stand up in, but they can't turn around or stretch out	83%	10%	6%
Cut off the tails of cows or pigs without using pain killers	82%	9%	8%
Withhold all food from chickens for up to 14 days in order to increase egg production	81%	11%	8%
Transport livestock that are emaciated or unable to stand up for use as human food	78%	14%	8%
Feed their calves liquid diets with no fiber or iron in order to produce the pale color meat sold as veal	74%	14%	12%

These questions focused specifically on the idea of these practices being permitted under the narrowly defined legislative directive of a “humane standard” without reference to potential counter arguments. The survey also presented respondents with a question that balanced the claims of farm groups and animal welfare groups regarding the health impact of the size of enclosures used for livestock. In responding to this question, the public’s response is less one-sided, though still prone to agree the animal welfare groups’ position. Respondents were read two statements and asked to indicate “which point of view you agree with more.”

The two statements were:

- Some animal welfare groups feel that confining farm animals to small pens or cages is not healthy for the animals because they are not allowed to get normal exercise and interaction with other animals.
- Some farm groups say that confining farm animals to small pens or cages is healthier for the animals because it allows the farmer to control disease and keep animals from injuring one another.

A majority of those surveyed (57 percent) sided with the animal welfare groups' position, compared to about half as many (29 percent) who agreed more with the farm groups' assertion as stated (Table 5). The New Jersey public is generally responsive to the concerns raised by animal welfare groups, but a sizable portion is also responsive to the considerations raised by farm groups when they learn of those considerations.

#### **IV. Conclusions and Caveats**

Until this survey asked them questions about it, all but a handful of the survey respondents were unaware of the specific issues regarding the regulations proposed by the Department of Agriculture. It seems safe to say that at least as many New Jerseyans are unfamiliar with the practices of animal husbandry. The Garden State is largely an urban and suburban state. Few residents have any first-hand knowledge of farm practices. And farm practices are rarely a matter for public debate in this state.

When confronted with questions about farm practices and their regulation, New Jerseyans will fall back on what they do know - their feelings about animals. And this survey clearly shows that the underlying attitude in the state is that farm animals should be treated humanely. And most support on principle the idea that state government should regulate the treatment of farm animals.

In a domain where knowledge is so severely limited, responses to survey questions will depend even more critically than usual on the words in the questions. It may come as no surprise to find that the questions asked in this survey about specific farm practices allowed as “humane” without reference to farmers’ rationales for those practices, elicited an overwhelmingly negative response. However, when presented with competing ideas as to the health impact of one particular practice, the public is still inclined to side with the animal welfare groups’ position (albeit at a somewhat smaller majority).

The New Jersey public is generally responsive to the concerns raised by animal welfare groups, but a sizable portion is also responsive to the considerations raised by farm groups when they learn of those considerations. These differences confirm how little the public knows about the farm practices in question. It also confirms that when knowledge is so limited, a little information can change opinion substantially.

The results here demonstrate two points clearly. First, New Jerseyans do feel strongly that farm animals should be treated humanely. And second, if New Jersey’s farmers are to persuade the public that the practices allowed under the proposed standards are in fact humane, they will have to do a much better job of communicating their view to the public.

**TABLE 1**  
KNOWLEDGE OF NEW JERSEY'S PROPOSED HUMANE STANDARDS

	<u>Great Deal</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Not much</u>	<u>Nothing</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>(801)</b>
<u>Registered Voter</u>							
-- Yes	2	10	27	60	1	100	(642)
-- No	1	7	23	67	2	100	(159)
<u>Party Identification</u>							
-- Democrat	1	13	25	61	--	100	(252)
-- Independent	2	6	29	61	1	99	(299)
-- Republican	3	9	27	60	2	101	(173)
<u>Gender</u>							
-- Male	3	9	25	62	1	100	(394)
-- Female	1	10	27	61	1	100	(407)
<u>Region</u>							
-- North	2	12	23	62	1	100	(365)
-- Central	3	9	25	63	--	100	(230)
-- South	1	6	32	59	2	100	(196)
<u>Community Type</u>							
-- Urban	1	12	25	61	--	99	(158)
-- Stable Town	2	9	25	63	1	100	(305)
-- Developing area	2	8	27	60	2	99	(333)

**TABLE 2**  
IMPORTANCE OF HAVING HUMANE STANDARDS

	<u>Very Important</u>	<u>Somewhat Important</u>	<u>Not Important</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(801)</b>
<u>Registered Voter</u>						
-- Yes	64	25	9	2	100	(642)
-- No	68	19	10	2	99	(159)
<u>Party Identification</u>						
-- Democrat	66	25	9	1	101	(252)
-- Independent	67	24	8	1	100	(299)
-- Republican	59	23	16	2	100	(173)
<u>Gender</u>						
-- Male	62	21	15	2	100	(394)
-- Female	67	26	5	2	100	(407)
<u>Region</u>						
-- North	66	23	9	2	100	(365)
-- Central	64	24	9	2	99	(230)
-- South	64	25	9	2	100	(196)
<u>Community Type</u>						
-- Urban	69	22	8	1	100	(158)
-- Stable Town	66	22	9	3	100	(305)
-- Developing area	62	27	11	1	101	(333)

**TABLE 3**  
SUPPORT HAVING STATE HUMANE STANDARDS

	<u>Support</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>(801)</b>
<u>Registered Voter</u>					
-- Yes	78	12	10	100	(642)
-- No	73	16	11	100	(159)
<u>Party Identification</u>					
-- Democrat	79	13	7	99	(252)
-- Independent	72	16	12	100	(299)
-- Republican	76	12	12	100	(173)
<u>Gender</u>					
-- Male	70	17	14	101	(394)
-- Female	83	10	8	101	(407)
<u>Region</u>					
-- North	76	14	10	100	(365)
-- Central	76	14	9	99	(230)
-- South	76	11	12	99	(196)
<u>Community Type</u>					
-- Urban	74	15	11	100	(158)
-- Stable Town	78	9	13	100	(305)
-- Developing area	76	16	8	100	(333)

**TABLE 4**  
AGREE WITH DEFINITION OF HUMANE STANDARDS LANGUAGE IN PROPOSAL

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(801)</b>
<u>Registered Voter</u>					
-- Yes	76	15	9	100	(642)
-- No	78	14	8	100	(159)
<u>Party Identification</u>					
-- Democrat	81	11	8	100	(252)
-- Independent	73	18	8	99	(299)
-- Republican	76	15	9	100	(173)
<u>Gender</u>					
-- Male	73	18	9	100	(394)
-- Female	80	11	9	100	(407)
<u>Region</u>					
-- North	77	15	9	101	(365)
-- Central	76	13	11	100	(230)
-- South	77	15	8	100	(196)
<u>Community Type</u>					
-- Urban	73	16	11	100	(158)
-- Stable Town	78	13	9	100	(305)
-- Developing area	76	16	8	100	(333)

**TABLE 5**  
**OPINION ON STATEMENTS ABOUT PEN SIZE**

<i>Agree more with:</i>	<u>Animal welfare groups' view that small pens are not healthy</u>	<u>Farm groups' view that small pens are healthier</u>	<u>Depends/Don't Know</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(801)</b>
<u>Registered Voter</u>					
-- Yes	59	28	13	100	(642)
-- No	60	28	12	100	(159)
<u>Party Identification</u>					
-- Democrat	60	29	11	100	(252)
-- Independent	56	28	16	100	(299)
-- Republican	54	34	12	100	(173)
<u>Gender</u>					
-- Male	54	30	17	101	(394)
-- Female	60	28	12	100	(407)
<u>Region</u>					
-- North	55	28	17	100	(365)
-- Central	60	32	8	100	(230)
-- South	56	29	15	100	(196)
<u>Community Type</u>					
-- Urban	57	29	15	101	(158)
-- Stable Town	56	29	15	100	(305)
-- Developing area	58	29	13	100	(333)

**APPENDIX:**  
**SURVEY METHODOLOGY**

The questionnaire for this survey was drafted by Eagleton research staff specifically to test initial opinions, awareness, and the messages of animal welfare groups as presented by the research client.

A random proportional probability sample was used to select the 801 New Jersey residents 18 years of age and older who were contacted to participate in this study. The sample was designed to make sure that each of six regions (defined by area code) and population gender were proportionately. The three digit exchange was used to match telephone numbers and geographic areas. The remaining four digits were randomly selected. This procedure insures that those with unlisted or new telephone numbers are included in the sample. Each working phone number was called a minimum of three times, at different times of the week, in an effort to reach people who were infrequently at home.

The study involved CATI interviews with a random probability sample of 801 New Jersey residents 18 years of age and older. The CATI interviews were conducted by telephone September 18-24, 2003 by experienced professional interviewers who were trained and monitored by the Eagleton research staff.

While those interviewed in a survey ideally will have the same characteristics as the population they represent, samples frequently may under-represent groups that are more difficult to interview, such as the elderly or those with less than a high school education. To correct this imbalance, a statistical technique known as "weighting" is

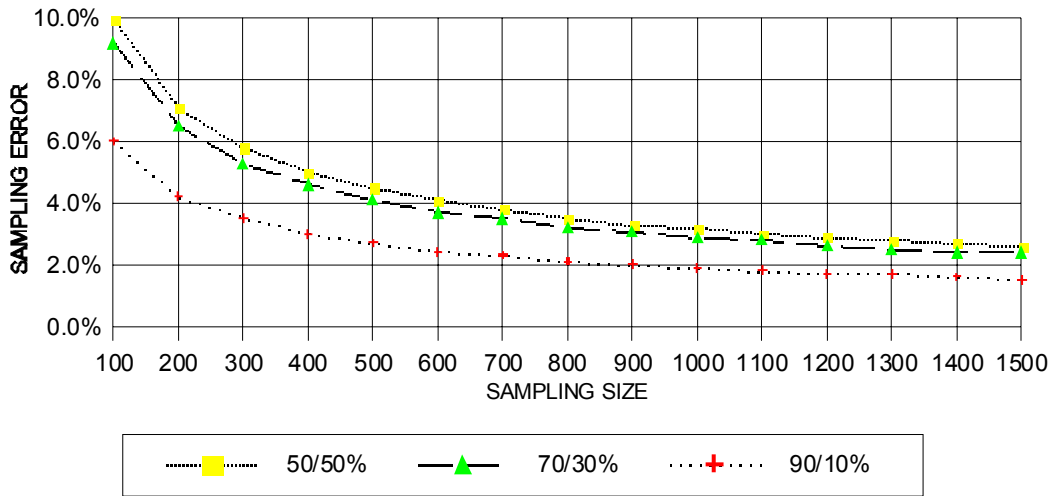
used. The weighting procedure compares New Jersey population figures for age and education based on census data with those of the sample.

When there is significant difference between these two figures, the sample is weighted so it more accurately reflects the population of the state. For example, if census figures show 39 percent of New Jerseyans, 18 years and older, to have a high school education, and the sample consists of 32 percent with a high school education, each respondent in this category would be counted as 1.21 persons to adjust for this difference.

The percentages obtained in a sample survey are estimates of what the distribution of responses would be if the entire population had been surveyed. "Sampling error" is a statistical term which describes the probable difference between interviewing everyone in a given population and a sample drawn from that population. For example, the sampling error associated with a sample of this size is  $\pm 3.5$  percent at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus, if 47 percent in this sample are found to agree with a particular statement, the percentage of agreement within the population from which the sample was drawn would be between 43.5 and 50.5 percent ( $47 \pm 3.5\%$ ) 95 times out of 100.

Sampling error increases as the sample size is reduced. For, example, if statements are made based on a sub-group of 600, the sampling error is  $\pm 4$  percent. This fact must be kept in mind when comparing the responses of different groups within a sample (e.g. men compared with women). Readers should note that sampling error does not take into account other possible sources of error inherent in any study of public opinion. The following chart shows the relationship between sample size and sampling error.

### SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING ERROR



### Demographic Characteristics (n=801)

	<u>Registered Voter</u>		<u>Family Income</u>
78%	Yes	18%	Under \$25,000
22	No	26	\$25-49,999
		37	\$50-99,999
	<u>Party Identification</u>	19	\$100,000 or more
36%	Democrat		<u>Child in the home</u>
42	Independent/Other	41%	Yes
22	Republican	59	No
	<u>Gender</u>		<u>Years in New Jersey</u>
49%	Male	14%	10 or less
51	Female	28	11 to 30
	<u>Education</u>	58	More than 30
51%	High School or Less		<u>Region of the State</u>
22	Some College	46%	North
28	College Grad	28	Central
	<u>Race</u>	26	South
74%	White, non-Hispanic		<u>Type of Municipality</u>
26	Hispanic, Black, Asian, other	10%	Major Urban Center
	<u>Age</u>	13	Other Urban Area
19%	18 to 29	38	Older Town & Suburb
43	30 to 49	35	Growing Suburb & Town
21	50 to 64	5	Rural Area
17	65 and older		

## STATEMENT FOR PUBLIC RELEASE OF DATA

**Any public release of these data must include the following information in addition to the actual text of the questions in the survey instrument:**

This survey was conducted by telephone from September 18 to 24, 2003 with a scientifically selected random sample of 801 New Jersey adults. The figures in this release are based on this sample size. All surveys are subject to sampling error, which is the expected probable difference between interviewing everyone in a population versus a scientific sampling drawn from that population. The sampling error is  $\pm 3.5$  percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey residents were found to think the state was in good economic condition, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46.5 and 53.5 percent ( $50 \pm 3.5$ ) had all New Jersey residents been interviewed, rather than just a sample. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported by race or age, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. Sampling error does not take into account other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording or context effects. The verbatim wording of all questions asked is reproduced in this memo. The sample has been stratified based on county and the data have been weighted on age and education to insure an accurate proportional representation of the state. The questions referred to in this release are as follows.

## SURVEY INSTRUMENT

**(n=801)**

F1. Now I'd like to ask you some questions about the treatment of farm animals. Do you support or oppose the state passing strict regulations concerning the humane treatment of farm animals? [**PROBE**: Do you support/oppose this strongly or somewhat?]

56%	Strongly support
20	Somewhat support
7	Somewhat oppose
7	Strongly oppose
11	DK/Ref

F2. How important to you is it that farm animals and livestock in New Jersey be treated humanely – very, somewhat, not very, or not at all important?

65%	Very important
24	Somewhat important
4	Not very important
5	Not at all important
2	DK/Ref

### **[MESSAGE TESTING SECTION:]**

F3. I'm going to read you two statements. Please tell me which point of view you agree with more. [**ROTATE CHOICES**]

-- Some animal welfare groups feel that confining farm animals to small pens or cages is not healthy for the animals because they are not allowed to get normal exercise and interaction with other animals.

-- OR --

-- Some farm groups say that confining farm animals to small pens or cages is healthier for the animals because it allows the farmer to control disease and keep animals from injuring one another.

57%	Small pens are NOT healthy
29	Small pens are healthier
6	Depends/Other/Both (VOL)
8	DK/Ref

F4. The state of New Jersey's Department of Agriculture has proposed standards for the humane treatment of farm animals. How much have you read or heard about these proposals – a great deal, some, not much, or nothing at all?

2%	Great deal
9	Some
26	Not much
61	Nothing at all
1	DK/REF

F5. The proposed standards define humane treatment as “being marked by compassion, sympathy, and consideration for the welfare of animals.” Do you agree or disagree with this definition?

77%	Agree
14%	Disagree
9	DK/REF

I am going to read you some practices that may be allowed under the proposed standards. For each, please tell me whether you feel it should or should not be allowed. Should farmers be allowed or not allowed to [READ ITEM] –

**[ROTATE F6-10]**

F6. Withhold all food from chickens for up to 14 days in order to increase egg production.

11%	Should be allowed
81	Should not be allowed
1	Depends (VOL)
7	DK/Ref

F7. Confine pregnant pigs and veal calves to individual stalls that are only large enough for them to stand up in, but they can't turn around or stretch out?

10%	Should be allowed
83	Should not be allowed
--	Depends (VOL)
6	DK/Ref

F8. Feed their calves liquid diets with no fiber or iron in order to produce the pale color meat sold as veal?

14%	Should be allowed
74	Should not be allowed
2	Depends (VOL)
10	DK/Ref

F9. Cut off the tails of cows or pigs without using pain killers?

9%	Should be allowed
82	Should not be allowed
1	Depends (VOL)
7	DK/Ref

F10. Transport livestock that are emaciated or unable to stand up for use as human food?

14%	Should be allowed
78	Should not be allowed
1	Depends (VOL)
7	DK/Ref