

Vote “No” on Question 3, the Misleading “Right to Food” Amendment

Question 3 on Maine’s ballot in November is meant to sound innocuous. But a closer examination of the measure’s poorly drafted and ambiguous language shows that it could have harmful, unintended consequences for Maine’s animals, while doing nothing to relieve food insecurity.

Cruelty laws undermined

Question 3 grants individuals a constitutional right to “grow, raise, harvest, produce and consume the food of their own choosing...as long as an individual does not commit trespassing, theft, poaching or other abuses of private property rights, public lands or natural resources.” Due to the glaring omission of animal cruelty in the list of limitations, Maine’s animals could be deprived of even minimal protections if they’re being raised as an individual’s food. Maine has had numerous cruelty cases involving pigs, goats, chickens, ducks and other animals commonly raised for food, and Question 3 could let offenders off the hook.

Dogs, cats and horses also at risk

The “consume the food of their own choosing” phrase is so broad that it could open the door to eating *any animal*. This could include the consumption of dog, cat or horse meat. The measure could also be used to thwart companion animal cruelty investigations. If, for example, a person was torturing a dog or cat (or any other animal), they could simply claim that they are raising the animal for food and possibly be shielded from prosecution.

Doesn’t relieve hunger

Proponents of the legislation have struggled to convincingly explain why this measure is needed. Question 3 is truly a solution in search of a problem. The measure makes no provisions for providing more affordable food for low-income Maine residents. Rather, it will result in costly litigation diverting already limited state and municipal resources away from beneficial programs that can effectively address hunger.

Diverse coalition opposing

Because of the dangers of such sweeping language being inserted into the state constitution, a broad range of organizations oppose Question 3, including the Maine Veterinary Medical Association, Maine Farm Bureau, Maine Municipal Association, Maine Friends of Animals, Maine Animal Coalition and the Maine Federation of Humane Societies along with the Humane Society of the United States.

