

**Some want to limit a few of your favorite things***By Lynne Finnerty*

Schnitzel with noodles is one of Maria's "favorite things" in the musical, *The Sound of Music*. Some of your favorite things might be sausage and eggs on a Sunday morning, or roast turkey with gravy and buttery mashed potatoes on Thanksgiving.

Of course, there are people who have different tastes. They prefer not to eat meat, or they go even further and swear off eggs and dairy products as well. Hey, it's a free country. Vegetarians and vegans have good intentions, and they give farmers another market segment to serve.

You would never shove meat, eggs and dairy products down someone's throat if that's not what they like to eat. But there are people who want to take away your choice to eat what you like. Don't believe it? Then hold on to your bacon.

Ballot initiatives against common, modern livestock production methods, launched under the guise of caring about how animals are treated, are aimed at driving up the cost and complexity of raising farm animals to the point where a farmer can't make any money.

So far, initiatives have passed in Florida, Arizona and California to ban certain types of animal housing. As a result, two hog farms that existed in Florida before the ballot initiative have since closed. A university study says there probably won't be any egg production left in California after Proposition 2 goes into effect. That initiative passed last November and banned the type of poultry cages used on most egg farms. The next ballot campaign could be in your state.

By the way, most farm animals are treated very well. A lot of country folks grew up in drafty old houses, where the bedrooms got frosty at night. The animals on many modern farms snooze comfortably in state-of-the-art, climate-controlled facilities.

While some have a problem with the fact that a lot of farm animals are "confined," or raised indoors, that production practice puts a roof over the animals' heads and protects them from the harsh elements and predators.

Some don't like that animals are sometimes housed in individual pens. If you were living next to a sow with an attitude, you would probably be glad if her pen kept her from kicking and biting you. If there was a sick hog in the barn, you'd be glad the farmer could keep him away from you so you wouldn't get sick, too.

If you enjoy your meat and potatoes, your spaghetti with meatballs and your schnitzel with noodles, here's what you can do. Farmers, tell your friends and neighbors and anyone else who will listen about all the things you do to take excellent care of your animals. Consumers, be aware that there is a movement afoot to limit your food choices – to make it more expensive or difficult for you to have some of your favorite things.

If this article made you hungry, go eat a hamburger (while you still can). And if you want a more accurate picture of how farmers care for their animals, visit the Web site [www.conversationsoncare.com](http://www.conversationsoncare.com).