

AVMA Passes Resolution Deeming Depopulation “Ethical”, Only One Delegate Abstains

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Since 2022, more than [97.1 million](#) birds have been depopulated due to the highly pathogenic avian influenza outbreak. Depopulation refers to the mass killing of animals during emergencies or infectious disease outbreaks. In large facilities, producers resort to sealing up buildings, pumping in heat, and waiting for the animals inside to die from heatstroke, in a process known as ventilation shutdown plus (VSD+). This language has sparked outrage among veterinarians and animal advocates.

These policies not only hurt animals but cause moral injury and psychological harm to veterinarians as well, with 10% of swine veterinarians [considering](#) suicide because of depopulation.



On June 21, 2024, the American Veterinary Medical Association House of Delegates voted to adopt its new Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics, which added the language, “Depopulation of animals is an ethical veterinary procedure when the [AVMA Guidelines for the Depopulation of Animals](#) is followed.” Only one House of Delegate member, Martha Smith-Blackmore of Massachusetts, was willing to speak out against it.

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While the Board of Directors recommended approval of the Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics, Smith-Blackmore stood to make a comment. But as soon as she mentioned the word “depopulation,” AVMA President Dr. Sandra Faeh stated that Smith-Blackmore was out of order. Comments were only accepted about the amendments proposed. Crucially, comments about the full resolution were not allowed. Smith-Blackmore was only able to make a statement after the vote, and voting on other resolutions, when the floor was opened for comment. [Her statement](#) was the sole voice within the AVMA representing the ethical concerns regarding depopulation and current food systems.

The process by which the amendment was passed seemed to violate the usual process in which comments about the full resolution are heard after all amendments are voted on. Unfortunately, this is not the only time the AVMA has acted with impropriety. The AVMA decision to classify VSD+ as “recommended in constrained circumstances” rather than “not recommended” was [only finalized at the last minute](#) without proper deliberation. The AVMA has also attempted to cherry-pick data that would support the current classification of VSD+, [barred](#) veterinarians opposed to VSD+ from attending its Humane Endings Symposium, [circulated misleading pro-VSD+ information](#) among its delegates, and [refused to consider](#) a petition signed by 278 AVMA veterinarians calling for the reclassification of VSD+ (and also denied its [appeal](#)).

In his [commentary](#) on the recent amendment to the PVME, Dr. Barry Kipperman discusses how “glaring lapses in logic” legitimize economic euthanasia and depopulation. He points out that the very guidelines the new PVME states it is ethical veterinary procedure to follow “explicitly state that ethics are beyond their scope.” These guidelines—including the [Guidelines for the Depopulation of Animals](#) (see Section 0.2, Paragraph 7)—are thus documents which advise on what depopulation methods are available and practical, not on which methods are ethically acceptable. Despite this, the AVMA now considers all methods as described in these documents ethically acceptable.

The resolution to adopt the new Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics was passed improperly. Another vote should be held on the amendment, this time allowing delegates to speak freely and comment on the full resolution. More broadly, the AVMA has demonstrated a lack of transparency and proper procedure in its decision-making and a lack of fairness and respect in its dealings with delegates who raise ethical concerns. The AVMA must address these issues if it is to truly act in the interests of animals and veterinarians.

FOR VETERANIANS:

[Comment on and share Dr. Kipperman’s Commentary](#)

https://news.vin.com/default.aspx?pid=210&id=12159784&f5=1&mc_cid=696b8bbef5&mc_eid=7697b5d939

Will you [contact your delegate](#) and share your concerns about the AVMA’s decision-making process?

You can share this letter with them (inserting the representative's name at the beginning and your own name at the end):

Dear Representative,

I am writing to express my disapproval of your vote on Resolution 8 at the AVMA House of Delegates Meeting. Adopting this new Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics, which states that "Depopulation of animals is an ethical veterinary procedure when the [AVMA Guidelines for the Depopulation of Animals](#) is followed" is highly controversial and harms our profession's reputation as caring advocates for animals.

Within the veterinary profession, there has been significant opposition to the [AVMA's classification](#) of VSD+ as "permitted under constrained circumstances." This is because VSD+ poses significant welfare costs, while other [less cruel depopulation methods](#) exist. Over 2,000 veterinarians have signed a statement urging for VSD+ to be reclassified as "not recommended," and in November 2022, a [petition on this issue](#) signed by [276 veterinarians](#) was submitted to the House of Delegates.

The AVMA has reacted by [refusing to consider the petition](#), [barring veterinarians](#) who opposed VSD+ from attending its Humane Endings Symposium, and [circulating misleading pro-VSD+ information](#) among its delegates. During the vote on amendments to the PVME, the AVMA did not follow the usual process of allowing comments on the full resolution, and AVMA President ruled a delegate's comment regarding depopulation out of order.

This lack of transparency and proper procedure has caused immense harm to the [animals](#) and [veterinarians](#) the AVMA strives to represent. Please do everything in your power to advocate for the restoration of transparency, proper procedure, and integrity within the AVMA.

Thank you for your consideration.

[Contact Your Delegate!](#)

https://www.avma.org/about/house-of-delegates-directory?mc_cid=696b8bbef5&mc_eid=7697b5d939



Image from AnimalOutlook and Veterinarians Against Ventilation Shutdown: Brutal University Researchers Torture Hens in Ventilation Shutdown Experiments So Millions of Birds Can Die in Agony on U.S. Farms



Dead Pigs after "VSD"...