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NEW DEMOCRAT COALITION  
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DEMOCRATIC WOMEN'S CAUCUS

June 24, 2026

The Honorable Brooke Rollins  
Secretary  
United States Department of Agriculture  
14000 Independence Ave, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins:

As New World Screwworm (NWS) continues to spread across Texas for the first time since the 1960's, there is an urgent and potentially catastrophic threat to dogs, cats, and other companion animals. While much of the public discussion has rightly focused on the threat to livestock, I am deeply concerned that the potential for NWS to lead to mass euthanasia of companion animals is a crisis we have not yet prepared for.

For Texas shelters, the stakes are dire. Animal welfare advocates have cautioned that quarantine restrictions could prevent shelters and rescue organizations from moving animals out of affected areas, forcing already overcrowded shelters to euthanize animals that have never been infected as a direct consequence of inadequate space, funding, or veterinary capacity to safely quarantine them<sup>1</sup>. That outcome would be unconscionable.

Texas already faces a severe animal shelter crisis, with hundreds of thousands of animals entering shelters each year in communities that already lack adequate funding, staffing, veterinary access, and shelter space.<sup>2</sup> Without additional federal support, Texas shelters are not prepared to respond to an outbreak of this magnitude. While quarantine orders may help slow the spread of screwworm, containment alone is not a strategy. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) cannot treat this as an isolated livestock health measure while ignoring the devastating consequences for the shelters, rescues, veterinarians, and local governments that will be forced to carry out the response on the ground. If the federal government's approach leaves shelters with no humane option but to euthanize innocent pets, then USDA will have abdicated its responsibility. It's crucial that USDA works with animal welfare groups and animal shelters in Texas to ensure that there are adequate resources to support proper quarantining of infected animals, while also serving the existing shelter populations.

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<sup>1</sup> ["Mass euthanasia's": Screwworm could have deeper implications for Texas' already crowded animal shelters](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Animal welfare advocates will please with Texas lawmakers to help cities control stray pet population.](#)

To better understand how USDA plans to support animal shelters and the animals they serve, I respectfully request your response to the following questions.

1. What is USDA's comprehensive strategy to support Texas shelters affected by New World screwworm quarantine restrictions?
2. Is additional federal funding needed to prevent mass pet casualties and ensure Texas shelters have the space, staffing, veterinary support, quarantine capacity, and temporary shelter expansion necessary to safely care for exposed or infected animals? How much funding is needed? Has USDA requested or identified those funds?
3. How will USDA prevent mass euthanasia in rural and under-resourced shelters as quarantine restrictions worsen overcrowding even as new animals continue to arrive?

Texas pets, shelters, and families deserve leadership, resources, and a clear strategy before shelters are left with no real choice but to decide which animals they have the capacity to keep alive. I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



Veronica Escobar  
Member of Congress