

VETO OF H.R. 2521

MESSAGE

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

VETOING

H.R. 2521, AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE MANDATORY INSPEC-
TION OF DOMESTICATED RABBITS SLAUGHTERED FOR
HUMAN FOOD, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES



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To the House of Representatives:

I am returning, without my approval, H.R. 2521, an Act "To provide for the mandatory inspection of domesticated rabbits slaughtered for human food and for other purposes."

This Act would establish a new mandatory federal inspection program for domesticated rabbits and rabbit products processed for human consumption. The program would be similar to that already applicable to poultry products, and would apply to imported rabbit meat as well as rabbit meat processed in the United States.

In my view, the costs to the general taxpayer associated with H.R. 2521 cannot be justified on several grounds:

- A voluntary inspection program operated by the Department of Agriculture, but paid for by the processors of rabbit meat, is already available to processors wishing to enjoy the marketing benefits of federal wholesomeness certification and grading. Moreover, rabbit meat marketed in the United States (including imports) is subject to inspection by the Food and Drug Administration to ensure sanitation and wholesomeness. Neither the Agriculture Department nor the Food and Drug Administration has been able to substantiate a significant health problem with rabbit meat in this country.
- Existing federal inspection programs are intended to apply to meats consumed by large numbers of Americans. Rabbit is essentially a specialty food purchased by a relatively small number of consumers. I believe that it would be inequitable to require all taxpayers to support extension of federal inspection of specialty meats to include rabbits. While the initial federal cost is small, once in the law, the subsidy may grow increasingly over the years. Moreover, signing this bill would provide an incentive for federal payments for the inspection of other exotic or specialty foods.
- Requirements for on-site inspection of foreign processing facilities by Department of Agriculture employees would strain relations with the People's Republic of China, a major exporter of domesticated rabbit meat to the United States. Extensive Food and Drug Administration inspection of Chinese imports have uncovered no health problems.

The primary beneficiaries of this special interest legislation would be a few large processors of rabbit meat which would no longer be required to reimburse the Federal Government for inspection services required to market their product as USDA inspected and graded. A significant source of competition from the People's Republic of China also would be severely restricted or eliminated with little or no improvement in consumer health protection.

Accordingly, I do not believe that approval of H.R. 2521 would be in the best interest of the American people.

JIMMY CARTER.

THE WHITE HOUSE, November 9, 1977.