

# Meatonomics: The True Costs of Factory Farming

## 2017 Voiceless Animal Law Lecture Series

### David Robinson Simon Keynote Presentation Abstract

The author of *Meatonomics*, David looks at how the legal and economic forces underlying the animal food system affect our health, the environment, and animal welfare.

In the U.S., the past few decades have seen a spate of new legislation including ag-gag laws, cheeseburger laws, food defamation laws, customary farming exemptions, right-to-farm laws, and eco-terrorism laws.

These sweeping protections surround American meat and dairy producers with a valuable cocoon of protection that makes it increasingly hard to investigate, criticize, or sue them.

Alarming, in some cases, similar laws are now being proposed in Australia.

This legislation is part of a legal framework that lets producers “externalise” most of their costs, or impose them on society. Animal food producers offload hundreds of billions of dollars in expenses onto consumers each year. The result is to lower retail prices and drive higher levels of consumption, which in turn means higher levels of human disease, environmental damage, and animal suffering.

Fortunately, there are ways to fix this broken system. Most importantly, if producers were forced to internalize their costs instead of shifting them onto the rest of us, prices for animal foods would nearly triple and consumption would fall to historic levels.