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Representative John Coghill

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 10, 2001

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Livestock Liability Bill Passes House **Coghill's HB 111 Would Protect Farmers, 4-H'ers from Lawsuits**

(JUNEAU) – Alaska farmers and future farmers alike would have some measure of protection against lawsuits from those injured or killed by their animals while attending horse shows, fairs or other livestock activities, under a bill the House passed today.

Rep. John Coghill Jr. (R-North Pole), said he introduced House Bill 111 in response to members of Alaska's 4-H Clubs, who feared people who attend livestock shows without understanding that cows, pigs, horses and other agricultural animals can injure humans might try to hold an animal's human owners liable for any such injuries.

Fear of frivolous lawsuits can discourage families from allowing their children to participate in the 4-H program, depriving Alaska children of the significant benefits of the popular program in which children can raise and sell farm animals to learn about animal husbandry and agricultural economics.

“Some people just don't understand that even though some livestock are cute, they may also have sharp horns and weigh hundreds of pounds,” Coghill said. “You'd think anyone walking into a barn would know and accept the risks, but these days you can't be sure. This bill attempts to make sure we don't unreasonably hold people responsible for the actions of animals.”

The bill does make exceptions for negligence or reckless disregard for safety, Coghill said.

House Bill 111 moves next to the Senate for consideration.

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