TO: Village of Ridgeland, Dunn County District Attorney, Dunn County Sheriff, Governor Tony Evers, Wisconsin Department of Justice, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, Dairyland Cafe, Dunn County Tax Service, Johnny’s Meats, Luck Lions Club, Link Implement, Drunk’n Monkey Bar & Hotel, Crosby-Nelson Inc., Lampert Lumber, Wirth Brothers Excavating

VIA: Regular Mail
      Certified Mail

To whom it may concern,

We write to you in reference to the annual event held by the Village of Ridgeland known as “Pioneer Days” which is scheduled for February 15th, 2020. For years, animal advocates have documented the needless cruelty to animals wantonly practiced and celebrated at this event, which this year includes a “greased pig contest,” a “chicken fly,” and a horse drawn parade.

Advocates have assembled extensive video and photographic documentation which includes footage of the “chicken fly” during which hundreds of chickens are thrown forcibly off of a roof into a crowd of people below. The crowd then fights amongst themselves in order to tackle and capture the birds. Whoever successfully seizes a bird is then allowed to keep them. The process of capture is so violent that many birds are terribly crushed and injured by the time they are finally “claimed.” We further note that posters advertising this event specifically denote that “no nets” are to be used in the capture of birds, which virtually eliminates all possibility of these terrified birds being captured without violent contact from one or more humans. Obviously this is also beyond traumatic to them mentally.

Some birds die on the site from this cruel treatment. Those that escape immediate capture have been documented as being targeted by participants throwing beer cans at them in an attempt to knock them from their roosting spots. Furthermore, advocates have also documented participants in the event putting their surviving “free chickens” in plastic bags, where they slowly suffocated to death. The very few who escape entirely almost certainly perish from exposure and starvation.

Over the years advocates have successfully negotiated the surrender of some of these birds to be brought to animal sanctuaries for veterinary treatment, follow up care, and a safe home to live out their lives. Veterinarians and caretakers have noted and documented among other conditions that the animals are ill, traumatized, often exhibit signs of crush injuries, and are very frequently badly frostbitten. Many of the birds ultimately lost digits or entire limbs due to the severity of their frostbite and other injuries. All of this suffering and pain is not only needless, it is patently illegal.

Chapter 951.01 of Wisconsin’s “Crimes Against Animals” statute defines “animal” as every living warm-blooded creature (except a human being) reptile or amphibian, and is construed as to include birds. Additionally it defines “farm animals” as “any warm-blooded animal normally raised on farms in the United States and used or intended for
use as food or fiber.” 951.02 goes on to prohibit the treatment of any animal “in a cruel manner.” The term cruel is
defined as “causing unnecessary and excessive pain or suffering or unjustifiable injury or death.”

Please note that there is no exemption for “farm animals” from the prohibition against cruel treatment, except insofar
as such treatment may relate to “the slaughter of animals by persons acting under state or federal law.” The conduct
described above and documented by advocates is obviously not incidental to the legal slaughter of these animals,
and thus does not fall under this exemption.

Please also note that Chapter 951.08 of the Crimes Against Animals statute further provides that “no person may
intentionally instigate, promote, aid or abet as a principal, agent or employee, or participate in the earnings from, or
intentionally maintain or allow any place to be used for a cockfight, dog fight, bullfight or other fight between the
same or different kinds of animals or between an animal and a person.” [Emphasis added.] “Greased pig
contests” in which pigs are oiled, chased and forced into submission by a human clearly constitute a fight between
an animal and a person, as does the cruelty inflicted on the birds attempting to escape in the “chicken fly.”
Therefore these events not only constitute illegal mistreatment of animals, they also meet the statutory definition of
“instigating fights between animals,” which is punishable by Class I felony charges. Finally, note that subsection 3
of this section of the statute forbids mere attendance at animal fights, providing that “No person may intentionally be
a spectator at a cockfight, dog fight, bullfight or other fight between the same or different kinds of animals or
between an animal and a person.” Violators may be charged with Class A misdemeanors.

This year, attorneys, advocates, and sanctuaries nationwide have come together to demand an end to this
unnecessary, illegal and cruel event. We demand that the Village of Ridgeland, the Drunk’n Monkey Bar, and the
sponsors of Pioneer Days immediately cancel the “greased pig contest” and “chicken fly” events, and cease and
desist from promoting these violent and illegal activities. If this unnecessary animal cruelty persists, we will
respond with all legal measures available to us to end it permanently and to hold those who have perpetuated it
accountable to the fullest extent of the law. There is simply no acceptable reason to torture animals solely for the
purpose of human entertainment.

Signed,

UNITED AGAINST CRUELTY

Sanctuaries: Farm Bird Sanctuary, WI; Chicken Run Rescue, MN; Rooster Redemption, MN; Anna Lake Animal Sanctuary, MN; Bruno’s Barn, MN; Georgia’s Place Bird Sanctuary, IL; Iowa Farm Sanctuary, IA; Kanda Farm Sanctuary, IN; Rooster Haus Rescue, WA

Advocates: Autumn Farm Sanctuary, WI; Jenkins Forever Farm, Inc., IN; Uplands PEAK Sanctuary, Inc., IN; Save the Gallos, KY; Sol Creations Farm Sanctuary, WI; Erin’s Farm, IN; Wedrose Acres Farm Sanctuary, IL; Rachel Hipp, Sanctuary Operator, MI; Chicago Chicken Rescue, IL

Attorneys: Animal Rights Coalition; Chicago Roo Crew; Chicago Animal Save; Milwaukee Animal Save; United Poultry Concerns; Ashley Lyon, WI; Julia Magnus, IL; Maria Mulvihill, MN; Barbara Holzmann, WI