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Animal rights activists threaten our health and food supply

That confined animal feeding operations follow veterinary-approved codes of practice means they are exercising 'reasonable care' under the law, a fact conveniently overlooked by animal rights activists.



Concentrated animal feeding operations, like this one pictured in Missouri, U.S. in 2013, are susceptible to disease which is why extraordinary sanitation measures are required, writes Robert Sopuck. *Photograph courtesy of Socially Responsible Agricultural Project via Wikimedia Commons*

OPINION | BY ROBERT SOPUCK | November 8, 2023



Recently, Riana Topan, an animal rights activist, published an [opinion editorial](#) in *The Hill Times* denouncing Bill C-275, *An Act to Amend the Health of Animals Act (biosecurity on farms)*, put forward by Conservative MP and agriculture critic John Barlow.

The summary for C-275 reads: “This enactment amends the *Health of Animals Act* to make it an offence to enter, without lawful authority or excuse, a place in which animals are kept if doing so could result in the exposure of the

animals to a disease or toxic substance that is capable of affecting or contaminating them.”

Concentrated animal feeding operations are susceptible to disease which is why extraordinary sanitation measures are required. Threats to our food supply include African swine fever, avian influenza, foot and mouth disease to name a few. To enter a modern hog or poultry facility you must shower, don a sterile suit, and special boots. Then you walk through a trough of disinfectant to ensure extra-sterile footwear.

You may ask why producers raise animals in this manner. Confined animal feeding operations are part of the panoply of modern agricultural practices that have provided Canadians with inexpensive food relative to the rest of the world. For example, in a [2016 report](#) by the World Economic Forum, Canadians spend 9.1 per cent of their income on food while Nigerians spend 56.4 per cent of their income on food. The miracle of modern agriculture is that it has allowed people on modest incomes to eat well for the first time in recorded history.

Animal agriculture is governed by veterinary codes of practice that guide the treatment and welfare of farmed animals as well as the Criminal Code, of which Section 445 (3) reads: “...evidence that a person failed to exercise reasonable care or supervision of an animal or a bird thereby causing it pain, suffering or injury is, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, proof that the pain, suffering or injury was caused or was permitted to be caused wilfully, as the case may be.”

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The fact that confined animal feeding operations follow veterinary-approved codes of practice means that they are exercising “reasonable care” under the law, a fact that is conveniently overlooked by animal rights activists.

Furthermore, Section 8 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects individuals from unreasonable search and seizure of their property.

Section 8 focuses on the restraints that are put on the government. But the Charter also states that we are all entitled to privacy on private properties such as the home we reside in. Private property also includes farm outbuildings and land.



However, Topan and her ilk feel that they are above the law, and can freely enter private property, especially farms and ranches. In her article she said: “Ag-gag laws typically prohibit whistleblowers from **gathering evidence without farm owner consent** [my emphasis] and gaining employment under ‘false pretenses.’”

Robert Sopuck represented the Manitoba constituency of Dauphin-Swan River-Neepawa as a Conservative Member of Parliament from 2010 to 2019. *Photograph courtesy of Robert Sopuck*

The arrogance is truly breathtaking. She is complaining that C-275 prevents them from breaking the law and lying to gain access to a private farm. They must think that they are some paramilitary entity that can freely flout the law,

trespass, and terrify rural residents as they see fit. Not to mention potentially introducing disease into animal feeding facilities.

I represented the large Manitoba farming constituency of Dauphin-Swan River-Neepawa as its member of Parliament for nine years. The majority of the land is privately owned farm and recreational land, and property rights are sacrosanct. In Manitoba, permission must be obtained to access farmland for recreation; permission is readily given in many cases, but you must ask. Unless you are a landowner, it is hard to describe the passionate attachment to one's land and property. This is because the work and toil required to own and operate a farm and livestock operation is truly monumental. The hours are long, and one's life is dictated by weather, machinery, and markets. Therefore, the intrusion into that space by arrogant, entitled, and self-righteous criminals who think they are better than you are is insufferable.

You may think that this has nothing to do with you. Wrong. Animal rights groups are also working hard to eliminate animal-based medical research. AIDS, heart disease, and many other ailments have been successfully treated by procedures that were developed on animals. Having a stent put in one of my coronary arteries means that I am one of the beneficiaries of such research; I would be dead without it. Think of your loved ones who are still with you because of modern medical treatments before you give one nickel to an animal rights group.

But there is another dimension regarding Bill C-275 which is the rise in rural crime across Canada. Rural residents are usually safer than city dwellers, but the fact that confined animal feeding facilities are somewhat remote means they are vulnerable to criminal activity, especially since response times from law enforcement can be between 30 minutes to an hour. What is a farm family supposed to do when descended upon by the animal rights mob?

Furthermore, rural people are generally right neighbourly. That Topan and company would take advantage of that to lie to gain farm employment for the purposes of destroying that farm operation is beneath contempt. Bill C-275 must pass.

Robert Sopuck served as the Conservative Member of Parliament for the Manitoba constituency of Dauphin-Swan River-Neepawa from 2010 to 2019.

The Hill Times

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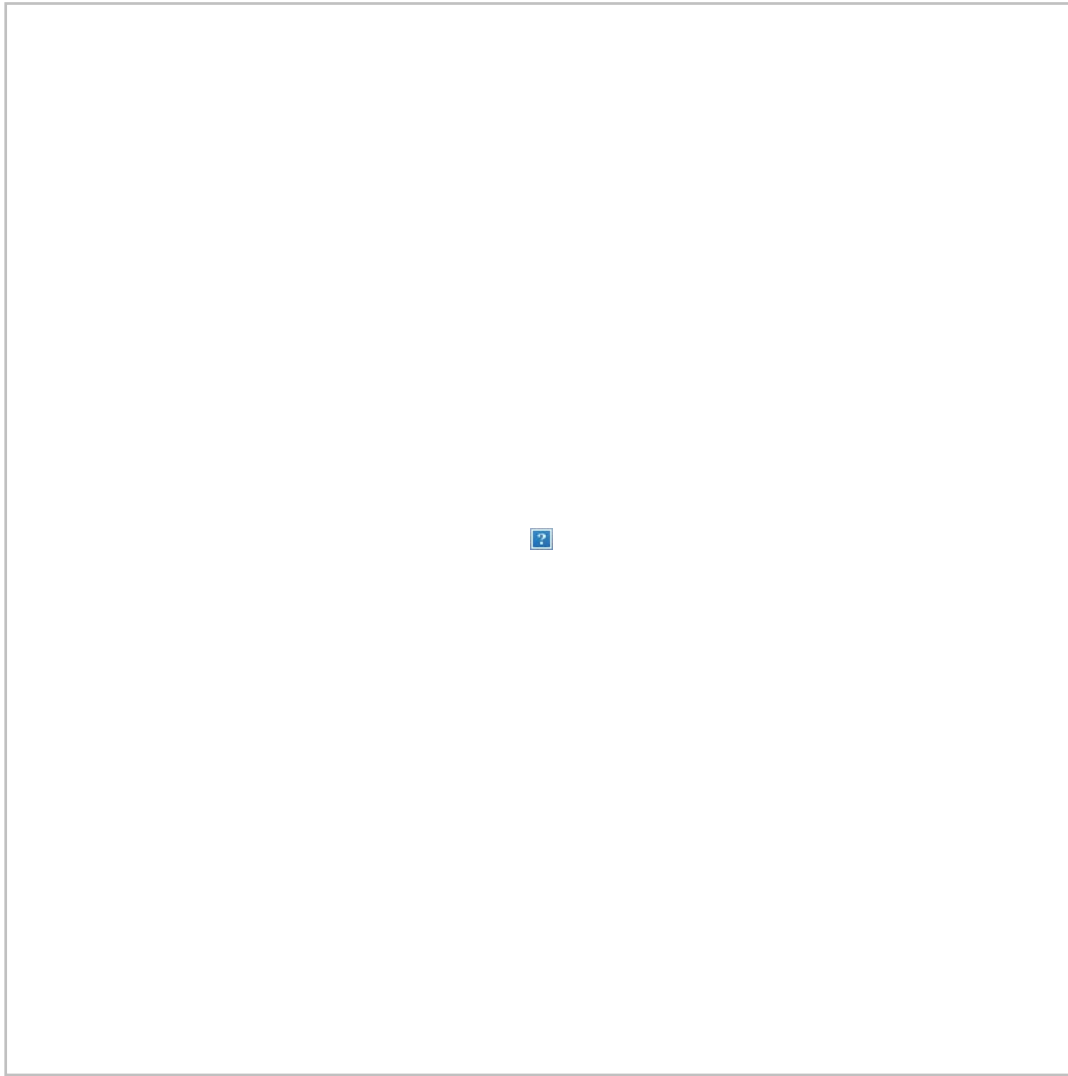
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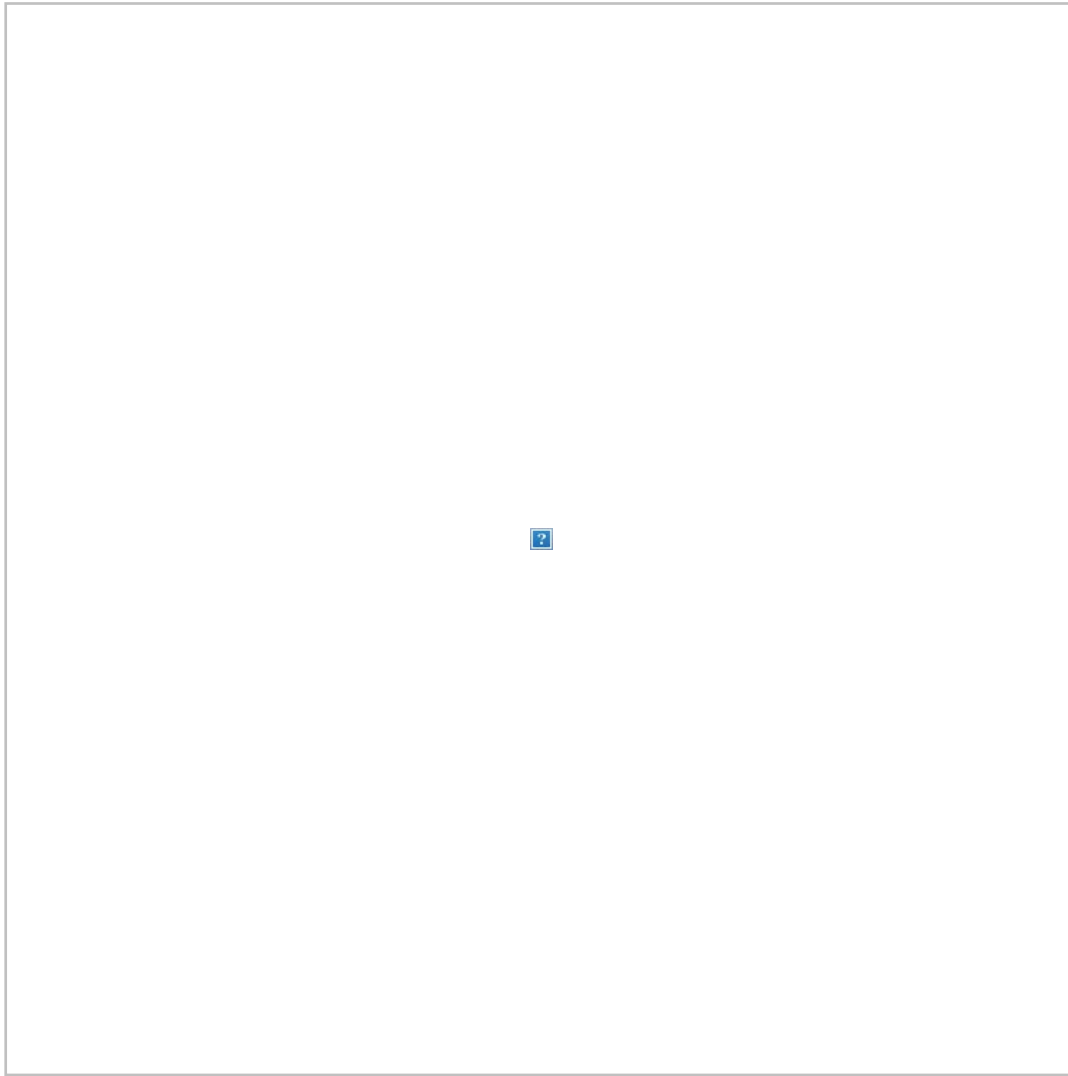
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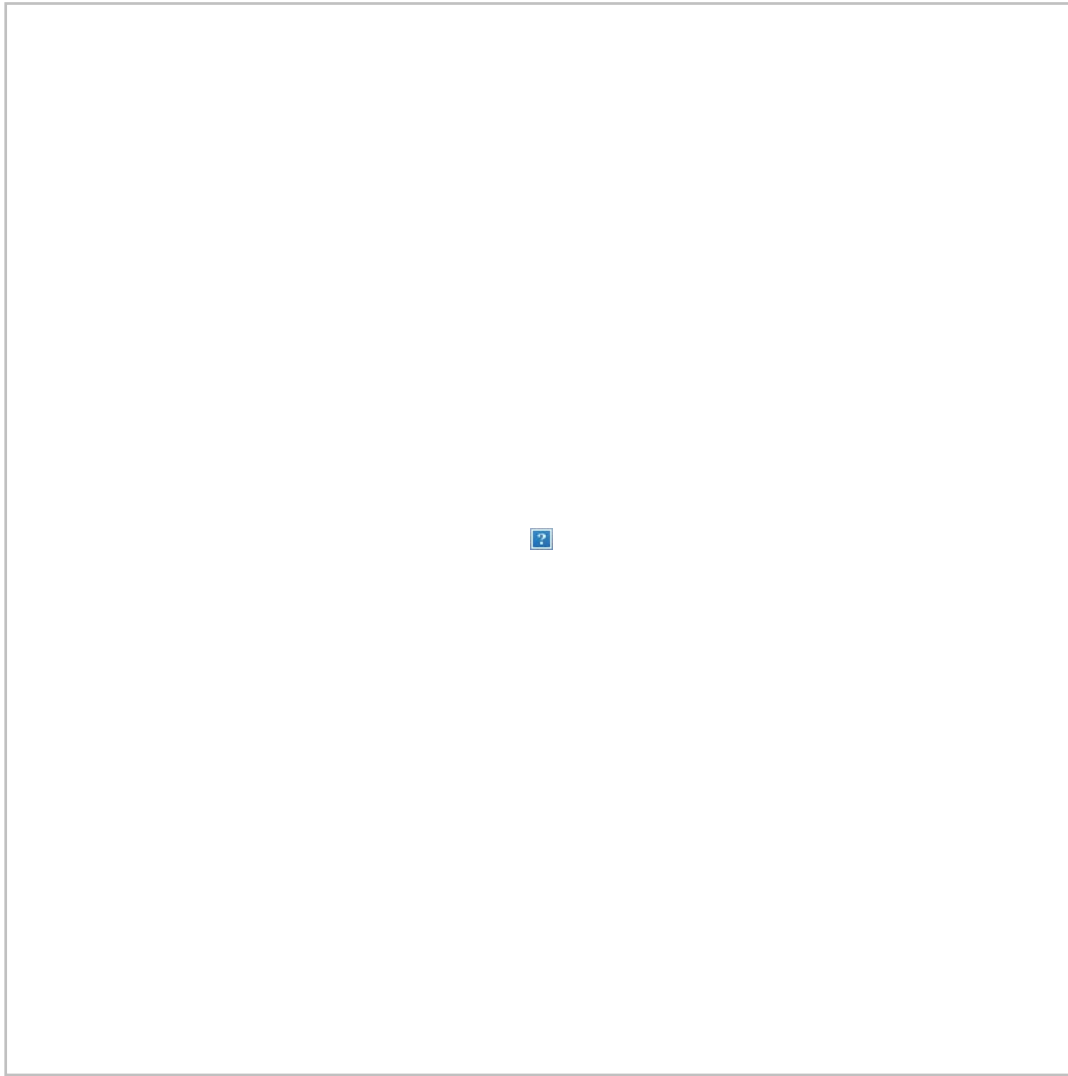
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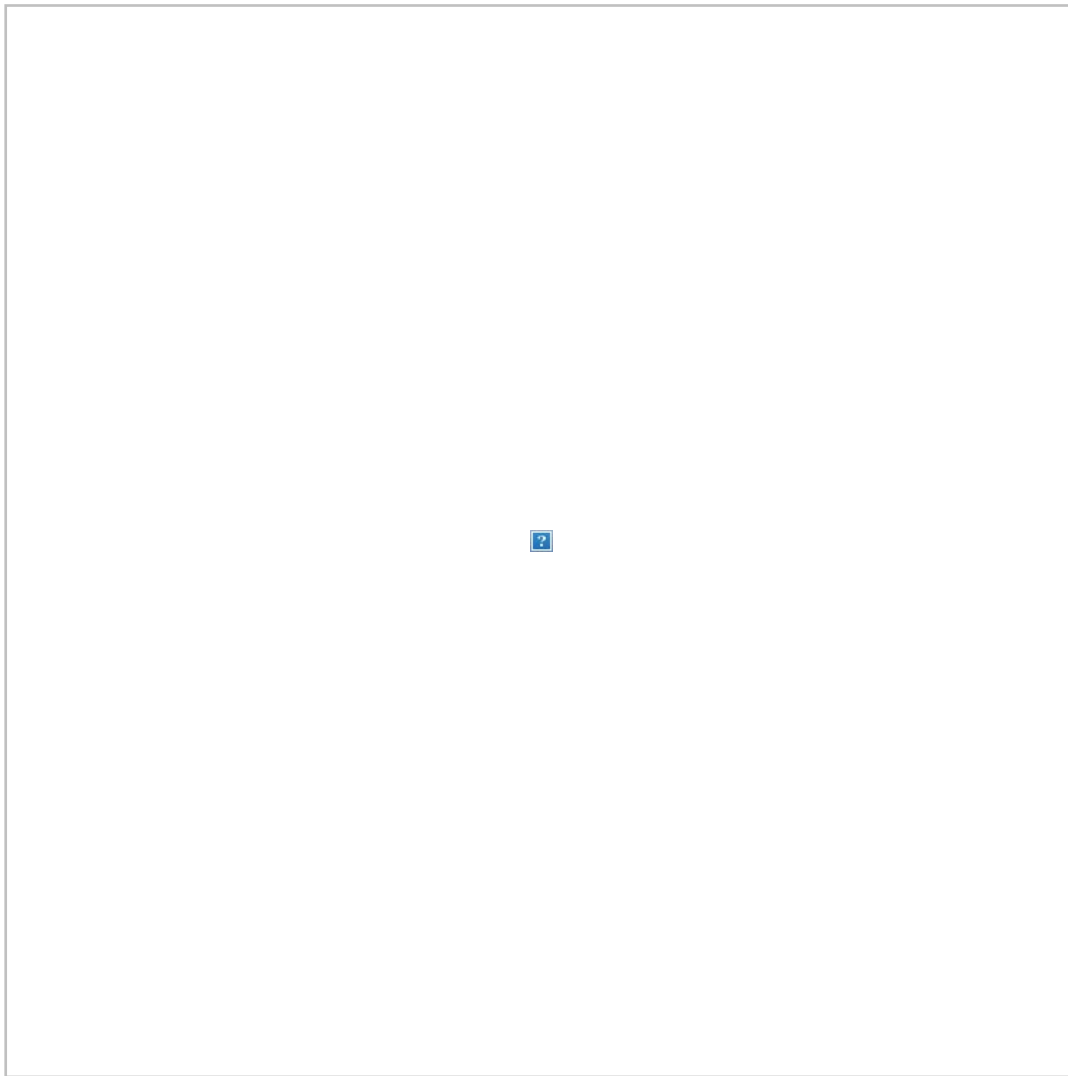
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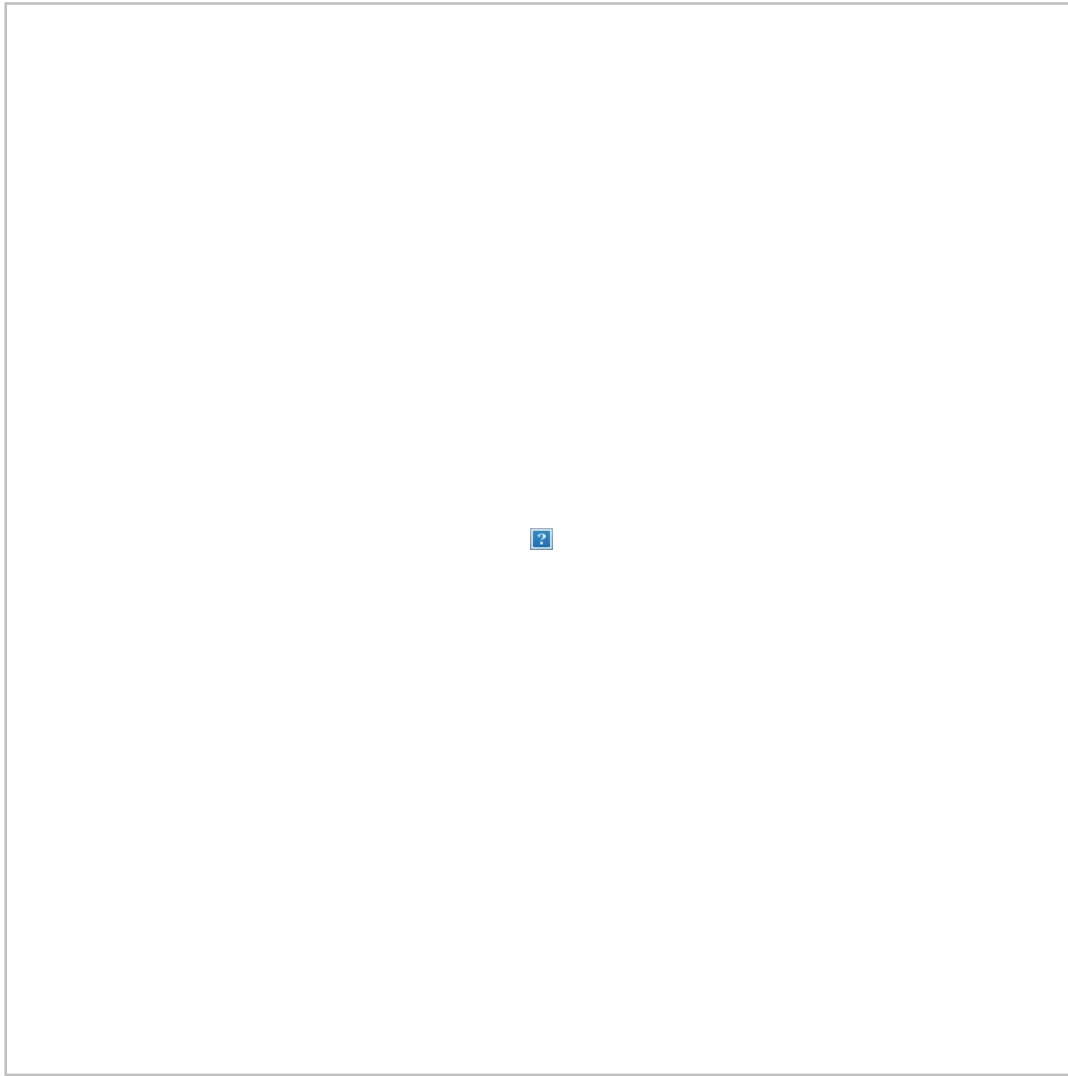
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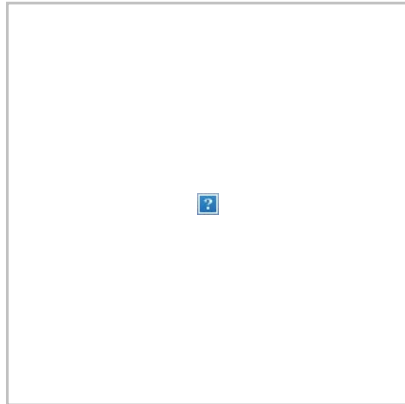
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