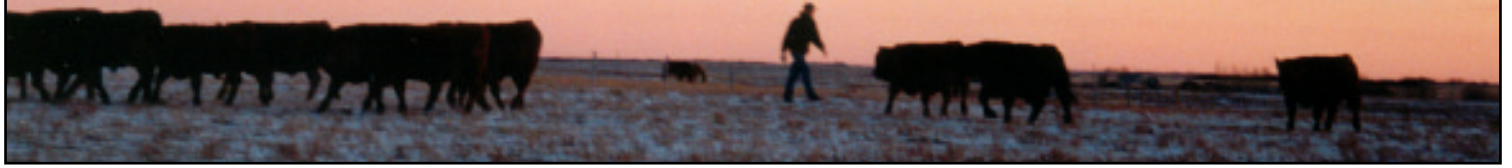


FARM ANIMAL WELFARE NEWS



...CURRENT INITIATIVES, RELEVANT ISSUES AND RESEARCH

January 2002
Issue 2

FARM ANIMAL WELFARE NEWS ...

- Provides credible, timely information on farm animal welfare in Canada and elsewhere;
- Reports on research, current initiatives and issues related to farm animal welfare;
- Provides a link between producers, researchers, government, politicians, animal welfare groups and the media;
- Is a resource for further information searches.

In This Issue

- Fast Food Push for Animal Welfare Standards and Audits
- Benefits of Low Stress Handling
- Handling of Unfit Livestock
- Animal Welfare and Genetically Modified Livestock
- Velvet Antler Removal Program
- The Dehorning Debate
- Humane Labeling
- Expert Committee on Farm Animal Welfare and Behaviour Meeting

FARM ANIMAL WELFARE NEWS

Researcher/writer:
Jackie Wepruk
fawnews@telusplanet.net

Editorial advisors:
John Church, PhD Animal Welfare
Specialist, AAFRD
John Quine, DVM
Susan Church, AFAC Manager

Fast Food Push For Animal Welfare Standards

McDonald's, Burger King and Wendy's - Agenda Setters for Improved Farm Animal Care

Standardized animal welfare audits are becoming a part of doing business with these fast food giants. "It's an idea whose time has come," said Chet England, Chief Food Safety Officer for Burger King during an interview with CBC Calgary radio on this topic.

Dr. Janice Swanson, Kansas State University animal welfare professor states, "We in the academic community can lecture about these things for 15 years, but it takes one news release from McDonald's to bring the issue to the forefront." David Fraser, University of British Columbia animal welfare professor and member of Burger King's animal welfare advisory body says developments in animal welfare have been greater in the last three years than in the previous thirty. "I have never seen such a rate of change."

Why is animal welfare so important to these fast food giants? At a meeting in May 2000 with United Egg Producers, Bob Langert, McDonald's director of community and public affairs, said "social issues are critical for us." "This is being driven by a concern to do the right thing for our consumers, for our brand, and ultimately for the animals themselves," according to Chet England. David Fraser, says, "The fast food industry is positioning itself to avoid potential negatives. Burger King is acting on behalf of their customers and practicing 'harm avoidance'."

Attitudes towards animal care and use are changing and fast food companies are looking to the future to provide their customers with a product that reflects this changing social conscience. Fast food retailers are recognizing the need to implement accountability standards, assuring customers that their product is:

- **Safe (food safety)** and;
- **Humanely raised.**



Animal welfare is integral to quality assurance. The European Commission on Food Safety in it's *White Paper on Food Safety*, states, "the health and welfare of food producing animals is essential for public health and consumer protection." The three fast food giants seem to have accepted this notion.

Burger King and Wendy's animal welfare auditing systems will be implemented in the US and Canada. Burger King plans on starting it's audits by the end of 2001, while Wendy's should be ready by mid-year >>

Fast Food Push ...

2002. McDonald's has so far committed to auditing systems in the US only. However, McDonald's Canada did release the following statement to FAWNNews in April 2001:

... McDonald's Canada has implemented an independent animal welfare audit system with our key beef suppliers. These independent audits are performed annually to ensure our suppliers are following the strict guidelines we have set.

The audits are conducted by Dr. Ron Osborne, Vice-president of Technical Services, Caravelle Foods ... During

audits, a critique of each supplier's animal handling system is provided and suggestions for improvement are offered where appropriate. In addition, the 2001/2002 program includes unannounced audits.

The push for farm animal welfare audits is expanding even further. Both the American National Council of Chain Restaurants and the Food

Marketing Institute (FMI) in the US are looking at developing industry wide standards and auditing systems for farm animal welfare. **Will Canadian food and grocery distributors follow suit?** While the Canadian livestock industry is likely better positioned than its US counterparts to deal with these changes, animal welfare audits will offer interesting challenges. *f*

Website Resources:

Burger King -

www.burgerking.com/company.htm

McDonald's -

www.mcdonalds.com/countries/usa/corporate

Wendy's -

www.wendys.com/animal-welfare.html

Fast Food Animal Welfare Audits

Third Party, Unannounced and Measurable

Animal welfare is now an integral component of the quality assurance schemes for McDonald's, Burger King and Wendy's. The companies have developed protocols, and objective, measurable animal welfare audits for suppliers. Suppliers must adhere to standards for animal housing, handling, transport and humane killing or be terminated as an approved supplier.

Dr. Temple Grandin has been a key consultant for the fast food industry and has developed auditing systems for abattoirs. The audits use welfare performance standards, which can be objectively scored to measure animal well-being. Scores are assigned to each of the following criteria:

- percent of animals inappropriately stunned;
- percent of cattle shot more than once with captive bolt stunner;
- percent of sensible and partially sensible animals on the bleed rail;

- percent of animals falling or slipping;
- percent of animals vocalizing;
- percent of animals prodded with electric prod, and;
- downer animal procedures.

A third party audit system could be the best option, she said.

In 1996, when Grandin and the USDA conducted audits on 10 beef plants, only 3 were in compliance with the American Meat Institute's guide-

Suppliers must adhere to standards for animal housing, handling, transport and humane killing or be terminated as an approved supplier.

"An acceptable level of animal welfare can be maintained if scores at the **critical control points** for [the above criteria] are in the acceptable range," says Grandin.

While the three fast food giants presently have independent auditing systems, Dr. Janice Swanson says, "McDonald's and some of the other food retailers are starting to talk to each other about industry-wide initiatives."

lines for stunning animals. In 2000, when McDonald's got involved, she conducted audits on 19 plants. The compliance rate rose to 74% and continues to improve.

The Canadian federal government and Canadian Meat Council had Grandin do similar audits at Canadian abattoirs. However, the results of these audits have not been widely circulated. *f*

The Benefits of Low Stress Handling

Human Behaviour During Handling Affects the Bottom Line

Livestock handling can be a stressful time for both humans and livestock. Stress affects the bottom line. Dr. Temple Grandin, noted cattle behaviour expert, has been an advocate of lowering stress during handling as a means of:

- reducing bruising,
- increasing productivity, and
- maintaining meat quality.

Dylan Biggs teaches low-stress cattle handling clinics, showing people how their behaviour affects cattle movements. "It's a kind of communication between cattle and people," says Biggs. "It's easy to move cattle when things are going right. It's how you handle things when they go wrong that makes the difference."

Glen and Doreen Hicks run a beef operation in Manitoba and have taken Dylan's clinics. Low-stress handling has made their work easier and safer.

"People have to accept that there is another way of doing things to get results. However, they can get a lot of benefit from changing just a few things."

Glen Hicks notes that, while his results are not scientific, they have experienced lower shrinkage when shipping animals since implementing low stress methods. "If you're in the cattle



Dylan Biggs

(Photo provided by RightNow! magazine)

business it [low stress handling] will be worth it."

Richard Davies of VT Feeders, who has worked with Bud Williams – a noted "cattle whisperer", says, "People have to accept that there is another way of doing things to get results." However, "they can get a lot of benefit from changing just a few things."

The hardest part of the course is getting people to override their own instincts and get into the right mental state. "Humans want to dominate animals. It's our human instinct," says

Davies. "Your mental state and intent are apparent to the animals and will affect their reactions. You can still have disasters, even when you use the methods," says Richard Davies. When that happens you learn from it, fix the problems and move on.

With 20 years in pig production, Nancy Lidster took Bud Williams' low stress handling course and, in consultation with Bud, developed the course, *Effective Pig Handling*. Nancy states, "the manner in which pigs are handled has a major impact on both their behaviour and productivity." The course has been promoted by the Farm Animal Council of Saskatchewan and garnered positive responses in Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario.

The most limiting factor in animal



Low stress livestock handling.

productivity and welfare is the easiest one to change: the human factor, according to Dr. Paul Hemsworth, an Australian researcher. Hemsworth explains that simply showing people how to handle animals is not enough. **Attitude is everything** – pigs that are handled by stockpeople with a positive attitude perform better. The best stockpeople:

- like their pigs,
- are determined to meet the pig's needs,
- have a good understanding of the requirements of their pigs, and
- can translate this understanding through their handling practices into a high level of care, which results in a high level of pig health, welfare and performance.

A relationship exists between human attitudes and behaviour, and this link has a significant impact on livestock productivity and welfare. f

Website Resources:

Dr. Temple Grandin -

www.grandin.com

Nancy Lidster -

www3.sk.sympatico.ca/lidsdo

Tim O'Byrne, Calico Beef Consulting

www.handlingcattle.com

Humane Handling and Transportation of Unfit Livestock

On-farm Euthanasia Necessary When Animals cannot be Humanely Transported

The transportation of unfit livestock is recognized as an animal welfare problem area. Situations exist where unfit animals, that should be euthanized on-farm, or shipped directly to abattoirs, are being sent to auction markets.

Producers and transporters need to be aware that they are legally responsible for the welfare of animals being transported. Industries need standards on what is considered unfit and these standards must be communicated to all involved.

Legislation varies provincially. Federally, the law states that,

... no person shall load or cause to be loaded... and no one shall transport, or cause to be transported an animal (a) that by reason of infirmity, illness, injury, fatigue or any other cause cannot be transported without undue suffering ...

Ontario Pork recently printed a booklet called, *On-farm Euthanasia of Swine Options for Producers*. Crystal

Mackay of Ontario Pork says the booklet provides producers with information on available on-farm euthanasia methods.

An animal deemed fit for transport may still go down while in transit. **Darren Malchow, CFIA inspector**, has developed a *hog sled* for dealing with such animals. His initiative has been well received by industry, with every

Alberta SPCA assures people that infirm animals can be shipped to abattoirs, as long as they can be humanely loaded and unloaded (if not, humanely put down on-farm).

The problem arises when these animals are sent to auction markets, where they may be held for days before being sold. Simmons says, "Be a fly on that animal's back. Think what

Producers and transporters need to be aware that they are legally responsible for the welfare of animals being transported.

federally inspected slaughter plant in Alberta now using the sleds. The sled is now being introduced in Quebec, New Brunswick and California. A video outlines how the sled offers a humane and safe alternative for removing downed hogs from trucks.

Constable **Nancy Simmons** of the

happens when you drop it off at the auction mart and where it may go before being killed."

Drawing a line at which point an animal should not be transported can be somewhat subjective. Decision-making tools need to be widely circulated to ensure producers and transporters know what to do and to help them make the right decisions.

Alberta Pork and **Alberta Milk** are two industry groups that have taken the initiative to develop guidelines that help producers make those tough decisions. Aart Okkema, of Alberta Milk, states, "Clear terms are necessary to ensure that producers, vets and the Alberta SPCA are on the same level in their understanding of what is acceptable."

Karl Chomlak of Alberta Pork shares similar views regarding the pork industry's guidelines development. "Producers were getting mixed messages about what was acceptable. We needed to have a unified understanding of what constitutes unfit for transport and agreement on what is acceptable." f



Animal Welfare Implications of Genetically Modified Livestock

Genetic engineering, or biotechnology, is a hotly debated topic. University of Guelph scientists are reported to be developing a transgenic pig whose kidneys, heart and other organs may one day be safely transplanted into humans. Genetic engineering may also speed the process of genetic selection for farm animals to make them more productive than ever.

Current modes of genetic selection for greater productivity have not come without welfare concerns for the animals involved, e.g., fast growing pigs and broilers, efficient egg layers. What will be the welfare implications to animals whose genes have been modified to further promote productivity?

The **Expert Panel on Husbandry**

of Animals Derived from Bioengineering has developed guidelines and an assessment tool for industry and government for ensuring animals do not suffer from bioengineering. The Expert Panel suggests that a "precautionary approach" should be taken where the neutral effect on ani-

Panel's work to AFAC's 2001 Livestock Care Conference. "We wanted to determine how to address bioengineered animal welfare, especially how it related to pain and distress."

The Panel's report assumes the eventual commercialization of genetically modified farm livestock. However, it

"We wanted to determine how to address bioengineered animal welfare."

mals must be proven first and not assumed.

Dr. Dan Weary, a UBC animal welfare professor and member of the Expert Panel gave a report on the

suggests that if strategies to reduce negative effects on animal well being are unlikely to be adopted by producers, then the animals should not be allowed into commercial production. *f*

Velvet Antler Removal Certification Program

Mandatory for 2001

The *Velvet Antler Removal Certification program* became mandatory in 2001 for all licensed elk ranchers who remove antlers from their animals. The program, developed by the Alberta Elk Association (AEA) in consultation with the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), gives elk ranchers the legal right to remove antlers from their own animals. Dr. Terry Church, a veterinarian and elk rancher involved in the program's development, reports that it also ensures a recognized working relationship exists between ranchers and their veterinarians.

Don Bamber, Past-president of AEA says the program was developed for two reasons: a proactive measure to deal with public concerns on humanness and to deal with the legality of antler removal. Unlike some farm animal management practices, such as dehorning or castration, velvet antler removal was not specifically exempt from requiring a veterinarian under the



Veterinary Profession Act. Dr. Duane Landals, AVMA Registrar, explains that, "as velvet antler removal is the amputation of living tissue, it is considered surgery," therefore falling under the Act. The presence of a veterinarian for removal of velvet antlers in Alberta was an unrealistic prospect, so discussion were held between AVMA and AEA to find a more appropriate option.

Don Bamber believes the program presents a positive image of the

industry. "The price of being the best is a controlled system. The industry believes it is being humane in the handling of elk." The certification program provides further assurances.

Methods of pain control are discussed in the course, along with safe and humane antler removal. Elk ranchers typically had already used some type of pain control as standard practice in removing velvet antlers. Dr. Church, who was instrumental in developing the training course, says while no one method is stipulated as the best, three approaches are covered with the advantages and disadvantages of each being discussed.

The certification program is endorsed by AFAC. *f*

Website Resources:

Alberta Elk Association

www.albertaelk.com

Alberta Veterinarian Medical Association

www.avma.ab.ca

The Dehorning Debate

Largely Centres on the Issue of Pain



Many beef breeds are polled.



99% of dairy cattle are horned.

The Expert Committee on Farm Animal Welfare and Behaviour (ECFAWB) has endorsed the use of polled cattle as a means of dehorning, except in the dairy industry where the population of quality-polled genetics is limited. When dehorning is necessary

producers are gaining markets in Europe for their superior polled genes according to Dr. Joseph Stookey, Professor at Western College of Veterinary Medicine. As the polled gene is dominant to the horned gene, the removal of horns via genetic

dehorning. In adult animals the procedure is painful enough to affect weight gain for up to 106 days post dehorning.

Research involving Herefords, Charolais, Simmental, Limousin and crossbred lines have consistently shown that polled beef cattle are equal to horned counterparts with regard to productivity related characteristics. Individual differences in quality do occur, whether polled or horned, but the polled state is not related to productivity.

Some polled cattle

for and therefore are superior in productivity to the polled population. However, it is not the polled state that reduces productivity and attempts are being made to improve the polled population. "AltaGenetics is testing polled genetics to be able to provide proven polled genetics to our customers," says Mr Blodgett.

Frank A. Bouie, a dairy producer in Ohio is dedicated to the promotion and improvement of polled dairy cattle. He writes, "The resources and tools exist to develop polled Holsteins without making major sacrifices in production or type traits ... it is important that we not just breed polled cattle but good polled cattle."

Joseph Stookey has been an advocate of dehorning via genetic selection. It concerns him that some beef producers have viewed the ECFAWB endorsement with suspicion. "Our motive is to help the beef industries ... to promote animal welfare and maintain a healthy welfare friendly livestock industry in the eyes of the public and for our animals ... we are not the enemies of the cattle industry. I want [producers] to understand that they have choices and they can have superior cattle that are also polled."

Producers know they have a responsibility to be current in livestock management practices, based on the best science that is available. There is no doubt that dehorning causes significant pain, so mitigative measures should be used to eliminate or reduce that pain.

Polled genetics offer one option. Alternatively, dehorning should be done at an early age with appropriate pain suppressants. It is unacceptable to leave horns on cattle destined for the feedlot. ^f

Individual differences in quality do occur, whether polled or horned, but the polled state is not related to productivity.

the ECFAWB, "having reviewed present research, supports the recommendation that a combination of (1) a sedative, (2) a local anesthetic and (3) a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory be used under the guidance of a veterinarian."

The debate on dehorning largely centers on the issue of pain. Studies of the pain response in calves to dehorning indicate that there is significant pain felt for several hours post

selection is relatively easy. However, cattle can still carry the genes for scurs, which are inherited independently from horns. Scurs are horn-like protrusions that can vary in size from small nubs to almost the size of horns.

In dairy cattle, horned animals make up 99% of the Holstein population according to Peter Blodgett, of AltaGenetics, a global livestock genetics company. Horned animals have been intensely selected

Website Resources:

Frank A. Bouie -

www.midohio.net/~fabouic/polled.htm

The Move Toward Humane Labeling

Developing Niche Markets

Humane labeling programs in Britain, the United States, and Australia have developed in response to consumer skepticism regarding intensive farming operations. Adele Douglas, Executive Director of Farm Animal Services for the American Humane Association, believes their “Free Farmed” humane label, “may offer American producers a competitive advantage in international markets that are increasingly concerned with farm animal welfare standards.”

In Canada, three groups are in the process of developing humane labeling programs, the BC SPCA, the Winnipeg Humane Society and Canadian Farm Animal Care Trust (CanFACT). Each program varies in its specific standards, but key requirements of each include:

- no intensive confinement,
- minimum space allowances, and
- antibiotic use for therapeutic purposes only.

Some Canadian producers are developing their own markets in alternatively raised livestock. **TK Ranch Natural Meats**, in east-central Alberta, is building a network of producers to supply beef, chicken, pork, turkey and sheep to consumers concerned about environmental and humane standards. **Sparks Eggs** in Calgary offers conventionally raised eggs and a variety of specialty egg products, including “free run”.

Will consumers buy food with a humane label? A recent consumer survey by Ontario Farm Animal Council suggests that 57% of those surveyed will pay 5% more for a food product labeled “humanely raised.” That number drops to 11% with a 20% price increase.

Meb Gilani, of Sparks Eggs, says their “free run” eggs make up 1-2% of their total egg volume sold. The product has “sold itself” at IGA and Co-op stores, with virtually no marketing.

What do “free range”, “free run” and

“humanely raised” really mean? With the increased interest in humane labeling, Gord Doonan of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency says, “CFIA is considering the possible development of a national policy on labeling and practices in general, including animal welfare and production practices. CFIA would like to see this succeed. We must also proceed carefully and protect consumers relative to claims made on labels and advertising,” says Doonan of the humane labeling concept.

The BC SPCA program will “address human health, environmental and



Free-Run and organic eggs sold in major food chains.

methods.

The Winnipeg Humane Society is working with the organic food industry in developing a humane labeling program. While the Winnipeg program will include additional animal welfare guidelines, consumers should not assume that all “organic” labels equate to humane handling and “enhanced” animal welfare.

CFIA is considering the possible development of a national policy on labeling and practices in general, including animal welfare and production practices.

community concerns,” says Alyssa Bell-Stoneman, Farm Animal Program Coordinator for the BC SPCA. While the public tends to link animal welfare, environment and food safety, they are not entirely consistent ideals. Not all groups have addressed food safety within their programs.

Industry is recognizing the need to ensure that alternative production practices produce safe food. The Canadian Egg Marketing Agency (CEMA) is considering changes to their HACCP-based, *Start Clean Stay Clean Program* (SCSC) to accommodate organic and free run/range operations. The poultry codes of practice are also being revised, likely including guidelines for free range and run production

Ultimately, consumer choice will drive the marketplace. Cornie Luteyn, an egg producer interested in the BC SPCA’s program, feels a humane label will help his free-range operation. “People are moving back to basics and rebelling against hormones and fast growth. There’s more awareness, especially since McDonald’s is looking for new animal welfare standards for its suppliers,” says Luteyn. f

Website Resources:

American Humane Association
www.freefarmed.org
BC SPCA
www.sPCA.bc.ca
Canadian Farm Animal Care Trust -
www.canfact.ca

Articles in our last issue:

- Swine Research Barn Opens
- Animal Welfare and Animal Use
- Cages and Stages
- A Comparison of Dairy Cattle Tail Docking Studies
- Quality Assurance and Animal Welfare
- New Livestock Transport Code
- Cattle Hauling and Handling Training Course
- Expert Committee Faces Criticism
- BC SPCA Farmer of the Year

Issue 1 can be accessed at www.afac.ab.ca/FAWNews.htm

Published by:



Promoting responsible livestock care.

www.afac.ab.ca

Phone: 403-932-8050

Fax: 403-932-8052

Email: info@afac.ab.ca

Highlights of the Expert Committee on Farm Animal Welfare and Behaviour Meeting

Annual Meeting held in Calgary June 8 and 9, 2001

The ECFAWB is a committee of the Canadian Agri-Food Research Council's Committee on Animals, serving as a national advisory body on livestock and poultry welfare issues. Representatives from the livestock industry, animal welfare organizations, universities, government and research groups were present to discuss farm animal welfare in Canada.

Highlights of the meeting include:

- **Codes of Practice**
 - Need to be relevant and up-to-date;
 - Availability and awareness of the Codes must be improved.
- **Funding for Animal Welfare Research**
 - ECFAWB sent letter to Minister recommending increased funding for animal welfare research;
 - ECFAWB research priorities should be forwarded to funding agencies.
- **Humane Labeling**
 - CFIA considering developing a process to allow for humane labeling;
 - Concern expressed by Poultry Industry regarding implications of humane labels.
- **Use of Polled Bulls**
 - The marketplace will determine the adoption of practices;

- Producer support for horned cattle are strong and deep-rooted in some areas;
- ECFAWB promotes the use of polled genetics within the beef industry.

- **Dehorning of Dairy cattle**

- ECFAWB accepted recommendation that a combination of (1) a sedative, (2) a local anesthetic and (3) a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory be used under the guidance of a veterinarian when dehorning.

- **On-farm Euthanasia of Spent Hens**

- Needs to be addressed in upcoming poultry code revisions;
- Need to ensure instant, humane killing of birds with on-farm unit currently in use;
- Further research needed;
- Consideration must be given to on-farm euthanasia versus the transport of hens over long distances – which method causes less stress;
- Note: AFAC, AB Egg Producers, AB Agriculture and Northern AB Processors are looking into issue together. *f*

Website Resources:

Canadian Agri-Food Research Council - www.carc-crac.ca

Why FARM ANIMAL WELFARE NEWS?

Who is responsible for improving farm animal welfare? The answer is all of us. We are all responsible for animal welfare: those closely involved (such as farmers, scientists and politicians) those with special interests (certain philosophers and welfarists) and the general public. Communication on matters concerning animal welfare is vital. Informing ourselves, and letting our views be known, are central to achieving both consensus and change.

- Dr. M. Appleby, author of *What Should We Do About Animal Welfare?*

Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC) Association
Cambrian PO Box 75028
Calgary, AB
T2K 6J8

Canadian Publication Agreement #40042993