Animal Agriculture’s Response to Animal Activism Groups

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Introduction

Animal agriculture is targeted on many fronts: specifically environment, food safety, disease, antibiotic use. The underlying issue is the methods used in modern animal production. Those attacking are activist groups opposed to animal agriculture and use of animal products to benefit humans.
Animal Agriculture History

- Confinement production began with domestication of livestock
- Required husbandry increases with intensity of confinement
Animal Needs
(UK Farm Animal Welfare Council, 1979)

• Freedom from thirst, hunger or malnutrition
• Freedom from thermal and physical discomfort
• Freedom from injury and disease
• Freedom to display most normal patterns of behavior
• Freedom from fear and stress
Animal Rights vs Welfare

HSUS
PETA
Over 40 Other Activists Groups

VS

Animal Research
Animal Production
Companion Animal Owners
Animal Rights

• To end all human "exploitation" of animals - this includes, but is not limited to:
  - raising and slaughtering of livestock for human or animal consumption,
  - eating meat, drinking milk
  - hunting,
  - or using animals for any medical or veterinary research, zoos, circuses, rodeos, horse shows, dog shows, animals performing in TV commercials, movies, guide-dogs for the blind, police dogs, search & rescue dogs, and the practice of owning pets.
Animal Welfare

• To prevent suffering and cruelty to animals.
• This includes
  - Use of good husbandry practices,
  - Adequate health care,
  - Adequate feed and water,
  - Painless euthanasia practices.
• Humane Care
Activist began their work as early as 1950’s.

In the 1970’s these groups began taking eccentric tactics to gain recognition for their cause.

In more recent years tactics have changed.
- Today, the most effective groups tactic play on emotion.
- This group, HSUS, has become very wealthy.
Times Have Changed

- Laws have been passed
- Changes in animals for research – 1980’s (AUP’s)
- Changes in animals for production
  - Some of these changes occurred because of laws
  - Others have occurred by pressure from activists/public
Humane Society of the United States

- HSUS defines themselves as:
  - the world's largest animal protection organization
    - 471 Staff
    - 80 Lawyers
    - $131 million budget
  - mainstream voice for animals
- Founded in 1954
- Significant growth in last two decades
- Rapidly grown in recent years
Current Tactics

• Some groups continue to conduct outrageous activities

• Most effective strategies have been to take small steps chipping away at their agenda ‘one bite at a time’
HSUS works through Legislation

• Wealthy organization: All funds are raised through donations playing on the publics emotions

• State HSUS directors hosts meetings around their state referred as ‘Grass Roots Meeting’ to fight
  - Factory farming
  - Euthanasia practices (gas chambers) for animal shelters
  - Horse slaughter
  - Animals in religion
  - Many other issues on their agenda
Alabama Legislation

• 2008 – HSUS worked to submit a cock fighting bill in the Alabama Legislature
  - The way the bill was written poultry production as we know it in Alabama would have totally changed.
  - ALFA worked to get bill rewritten to be a true cock fighting bill.
  - Bill got bogged down in committee.

• Alabama Coalition of Farm Animal Care and Well Being was formed.
Coalition for Farm Animal Care and Well Being: Members

- Alabama Agribusiness Council
- Alabama Land Grant Universities
  - Auburn University Ag Program - AAES, ACES, COA
  - TU - Ag Program
  - AAMU - Ag Program
  - Alabama Veterinary Schools - AU, TU
- Alabama Beef Cattle Improvement Association
- Alabama Cattlemen’s Association
- Alabama Poultry and Egg Association
Coalition for Farm Animal Care and Well Being: Members (cont')

- Alabama Horse Council
- Alabama Feed and Grain Association
- Alabama Farmers’ Federation
- Alabama Livestock Marketing Association
- Southeastern Livestock Exposition
Coalition for Farm Animal Care and Well Being: Associate Members

- First South Farm Credit
- Alabama Canine Association
- SUDIA
Coalition for Farm Animal Care and Well Being: Purpose

- Serve as a body of knowledge and advocacy for legislatures on issues and political groups pushing for audits of farm premises which are not pro-animal agriculture.
- Provide a unified approach on animal care and well-being.
- Be an advocacy for a safe and abundant food supply.
- Serve as a spokes group for animal care and well-being in Alabama agriculture.
Coalition for Farm Animal Care and Well Being: Purpose (cont’)

• Be proactive in education for producers, consumers, and policy makers.
• Provide a science perspective on issues effecting animal agriculture.
• Provide a training forum on issues of animal agriculture to producers, regulators, and society.
• Be a forum of consensus building on animal agriculture.
Third Party Verification of Farm Animal Care

- Numerous agencies/boards have come on the scene to provide third party audits.
- Professional Animal Auditors Certification Organization – certifies audits.
PAACO
Professional Animal Auditors Certification Organization

• Founded by Professional Farm Animal and Veterinarian Associations
  - American Association of Avian Pathologists
  - American Association of Bovine Practitioners
  - American Association of Swine Veterinarians
  - American Registry of Professional Animal Scientists
  - Federation of Animal Science Societies
The mission of this organization is to promote the humane treatment of animals through education and certification of animal auditors, as well as the review and certification of animal audit instruments, assessments and programs.
Changes Will Occur

- Throughout the use of farming animals for human food, changes have occurred in animal management and production with respect to care and well being.
- Changes will continue to occur in animal management and production with respect to care and well being.
Developments in Animal Welfare

• Horse transport for slaughter
  - No packing plant operational in the US.

• Proposition 2 in California
  - Passed 67% in favor 33% opposed.

• Ohio legislation
  - Passed 67% in favor 33% opposed.
What do we do?

QUIT REACTING TO ISSUES AFFECTING ANIMAL PRODUCTION - ADDRESS THEM BEFORE THEY BECOME ISSUES!
Producer Code

Provide

• Adequate food, water and care
• Disease prevention
• Adequate and appropriate facilities
• Humane euthanasia
• Personnel training
• Regular observations
• Safe transportation

Adopt this philosophy

PERSONS WHO WILLFULLY MISTREAT ANIMALS ON MY OPERATION WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!
Statement of principles

• I believe in the humane treatment of farm animals and in continued stewardship of all natural resources.
• I believe my cattle will be healthier and more productive when good husbandry practices are used.
• I believe that my and future generations will benefit from my ability to sustain and conserve natural resources.
• I will support research efforts directed toward more efficient production of a wholesome food supply.
• I believe it is my responsibility to produce a safe and wholesome product.
• I believe it is the purpose of food animals to serve mankind, and it is the responsibility of all human beings to care for animals in their charge.
Summary

- Animal activists groups will continue to attack animal agriculture.
- Animal agriculture must be pro-active in directing change.
- Education is a key to our success.
- Alabama animal related associations, agencies, councils, and universities are ‘playing in the same ballgame’ with respect to addressing farm animal care and well-being through AL Coalition of Farm Animal Care and Well Being.
- Animal agriculture will never be able to compete head to head with the funding from major animal activist groups. Therefore, we must be proactive. We must ensure that our animals are cared for with the highest standards possible.