



**Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC) Association
Livestock Care Conference
Red Deer, Alberta - March 23, 2007**

Media release and conference presentations are available on AFAC's website (www.afac.ab.ca)

Conference speakers covered a range of topics: science & ethics, New Zealand's approach to Codes, practical research approaches, drivers for animal welfare audits, and effective communication strategies.

Science & Ethics

- Science and ethics always overlap
- Ethics deals with what ought to be, science deals with what is
- Animal welfare is ultimately a question of what ought to be, but decisions in this regard should be based on what is (science)
- Definition of animal welfare includes production, health, stress, pain/suffering, and behaviour.
- Research can tell us how much space an animal needs to engage in a behaviour, but it cannot tell us if the animal ought to be able to perform the behaviour.
- Animal agriculture needs to deal with the ethics of an issue, not just the science

New Zealand Codes of Welfare

- Animal Welfare Act (1999) established the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC) and minimum standards through the Codes of Welfare.
- Recommended best practices in the Codes are not legally binding, but minimums are.
- Evidence of meeting or exceeding minimums can be used as a defence against prosecution.
- Code is formatted to clearly illustrate what are minimums vs. best practices.
- Codes are reviewed every 10 years – the manner for drafting Codes and the period for comment ensures that producers are generally in compliance by the time a Code is released.
- NAWAC develops Codes with government funding

Practical Research Approaches

3 Strategies used to measure welfare in a practical setting:

- Engineering/design/resource – prescriptive features of the environment (e.g., space allowance, # of feeders, methods of castration/euthanasia)
- Performance/animal-based/outcome – biological responses of the animal to housing and procedures (e.g., health, disease, injury, physical condition, behaviour responses)
- Management based – measures of human factors (e.g., quality of handling, daily care, SOP's)

Research on group housing for sows outlined as an example (see presentation at www.afac.ab.ca)
Animal welfare starts with the individual – stockperson, handler, transporter. Quality of human-animal interactions is key.

Drivers for Animal Welfare Audits

- Cultural confusion as to the role of animals in society – pets, meat or part of the family
- Consumers want safe, clean food and good animal care – and some are willing to pay (67% of North Americans buys organic on a regular basis)
- Retailers will respond – they know their markets
- The longer agriculture industries wait to address animal care, the more options will be taken away
- A trigger event will eventually launch animal welfare as a major issue
- Science alone is not going to prevail – need to be accountable
 - Be 100% compliant, one incident ruins it
 - Consider moving beyond compliance
 - Communicate – let the community in on your business
 - Prove what you are doing
 - Think like the people you are selling to

Effective Communication Strategies

3 messages:

- Listen to consumers as we try to tell our story
- Listen to consumers as we try to feed and cloth them
- Listen to your conscience and use your head as you work with animals

“Those who do not know their opponent’s arguments, do not completely understand their own.” – Bender and Leone

“Your opponents are never wrong about everything.” – Steve Allen

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