“Animal welfare is fast becoming the major challenge of the veterinary profession for this century.”

Dr. Bernie Osborn

*Dean Emeritus of the University of California Davis School of Veterinary Medicine*
“The greatest threat to animal agriculture is a misinformed consumer (public).”

Todd Allen
Former President, Kansas Livestock Association
Center for Food Integrity Survey:
Most credible source of information on farm animal care according to consumers

- HSUS: 16%
- Veterinarians: 12%
- PETA: 12%
- Farmers/Ranchers: 6%
Survey of 5th Graders*

What are the most important issues in the world?
1. Welfare of Animals
2. Protecting the Environment
3. Caring for People

*USAToday 2009 Survey
Welfare

So...we’re pretty smart people.

How difficult can making recommendations on equine welfare really be?
Another Horse-Racing Horror

EDITORIAL
Published: May 6, 2008

There is no reason why a race of one-and-a-quarter miles should be a death sentence for a horse, as it was on Saturday for the 3-year-old filly, Eight Belles. She was euthanized after breaking both front ankles immediately after coming in second in the Kentucky Derby.
What is Animal Welfare?

Animal Welfare - the physical and psychological state of the animal*

*American College of Animal Welfare, AVMA
Good Welfare

Satisfying an animal’s needs*

• **Physiological needs (Function)**
  - Good nutrition, health, suitable environment

• **Safety needs (Feelings)**
  - Protection from injury or abuse

• **Psychological needs (Natural Behavior)**
  - Able to exercise species typical behavior and freedom from stress

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*Curtis SE, Variations in US animal production systems; current trends and their impacts on animal well-being and the economics of production. Food Animal Well-being Conference Proceedings, USDA and Purdue University 1993*
What Started the “Unwanted” Horse Discussion in the U.S.?

• 2000 BSE outbreak in Europe & 2001 Foot & Mouth disease epidemic in Great Britain

• Increased demand for horse meat in Europe

• Drew Media attention to the horse processing plants in the U.S.

• Stimulated the introduction of federal legislation to ban horse slaughter in U.S.
Unwanted Horse Issue
Complicated by:

Horses as livestock vs. companion animals
(labor or food source) (pet or family member)
Unwanted Horse Issue
Complicated by:

Processing of horses for human consumption
Unwanted Horse Issue
Complicated by:

Aggressive campaign by animal activist groups
Unwanted Horse Issue
Complicated by:

US and Farm Populations: 1900 - 1990

Urbanization
Speakout from Jan. 4, 2009

It’s really sad. And another thing is you could really use a stupid meter in this column because I can’t believe the stupidity of most of the people that call into this column.

To all you hunters who kill animals for food, shame on you; you ought to go to the store and buy the meat that was made there, where no animals were harmed.

Speakout is an anonymous 24-hour phone line. The Daily Journal edits remarks before publication. Comments are not verified for accuracy; therefore, readers are advised not to rely on assertions of fact. To reach Speakout, call (815) 937-3878.
Unwanted Horse Issue
Complicated by:

American Public’s love affair with the horse
Unwanted Horse Issue
Complicated by:

American Public’s love affair with the horse
What is an “Unwanted” Horse?

“Horses which are no longer wanted by their current owner because they are old, injured, sick, unmanageable, or fail to meet their owner’s expectations.”*

*AAEP hosted Unwanted Horse meeting, 2005
Demographics of the “Unwanted” Horse

- Generally horses:
  - Old
  - Incurably lame
  - Behavioral problems
  - Dangerous
  - Un-adoptable feral horses (mustangs)
  - Fail to meet owner’s expectations
    - Unattractive
    - Not athletic
    - Unmarketable
    - Wrong color (no color)
    - Cost too much to care for
  - Normal, healthy horses of various ages and breeds
Horses Processed in U.S.
2001-2005
(USDA, Veterinary Services)
Number of “Unwanted” Horses

≈15,985 feral horses & burros in BLM adoption pipeline*
  • $1,392 cost to remove

≈33,524 un-adoptable feral horses & burros in BLM funded sanctuaries*
  • $43 Mio spent each year
  • Budget $72.4 Mio

≈31,500 feral horses on range*
≈ 5,800 feral burros on range*
  • 11,000 over range’s capacity

*Bureau of Land Management
Number of “Unwanted” Horses

~48,455 exported to Canada for processing in 2012*

~110,202 exported to Mexico for processing in 2012*

16% increase over 2011

Others?
• Native American herds?
• Neglected, abandoned, abused?

*USDA, Veterinary Services
Unwanted Horse Contributing Factors*

- Downturn in the economy
- Closing of nation’s processing facilities
- High cost of euthanasia/carcass disposal
- Indiscriminate breeding

*UHC’s National Assessment Study of Contributing Factors Surrounding the Unwanted Horse Issue, 2009.
www.unwantedhorsecoalition.com
Unwanted Horse Demographics*

Most likely to be sold
• Show or competition horse
• Failed to meet expectations
• Quarter Horse; Paint; Thoroughbred
• 3-10 years of age
• 45% mares; 48% geldings

Most likely to be donated
• Race horse
• Failed to meet expectations
• Thoroughbred; Quarter Horse
• 6-20 years of age
• 33% mares; 63% geldings

*UHC’s National Assessment Study of Contributing Factors Surrounding the Unwanted Horse Issue, 2009  www.unwantedhorsecoalition.com
Unwanted Horse Demographics*

Most likely to be euthanized

- Recreational; riding horse
- Horse old or terminal illness/injury
- Quarter Horse; Thoroughbred; Arabian
- 10-21+ years
- 55% geldings; 42% mares

*UHC’s National Assessment Study of Contributing Factors Surrounding the Unwanted Horse Issue, 2009
Unwanted Horse Issue:
Primary Lesson Learned

Our views on animal welfare are conditioned by our personal knowledge base and life experiences.
Horse Use & Care Decisions

How did we get to such different places?
Housing Laying Hens*

Laying Cages

- Caged at 72 in²/hen, movement restricted
- No nest box or litter for dust bathing
- Easy access to feed trough and water
- Aggressive interactions infrequent, cannibalism minimal
- Individual birds easily observed
- Eggs protected and easily collected
- Minimal disease

* Dr. Gail Golab, AVMA Welfare Director
Housing Laying Hens

Laying Houses

• Floor-raised in barn
• Nest boxes, litter for dust bathing
• Evidence of aggression, cannibalism, flighty (easily startled)
• Difficult to observe individual birds
• Increased disease risk
• Nest box gregariousness, floor laying
Housing Laying Hens
Free Range Chickens

- Large space, freedom of movement
- Enclosures for sleeping and nesting
- Natural substrates, multiple opportunities for expression of natural behaviors
- Aggression and cannibalism moderate
- Exposed to elements, pests, predators
- Increased incidence of soil-borne disease
Which Environment is the Most Welfare Friendly?
Why You Chose As You Did: Why We Don’t All Think Alike

Function

Feelings

Measures of health, growth and productivity

Measures of affective states (pain, suffering, contentment)

Quantitative and qualitative comparisons to wild or free-living counterparts

Our choices are conditioned by our life experiences.

But..............there are other experiences & viewpoints.

• Others in the horse industry
• Your cousin in the city
• Animal activists
• Public officials
Another Viewpoint:  
**Animal Related Businesses**

Welfare is important—they care for animals, but........

- Production efficiencies
- Cost
- Competitive pressures
- Return on investment
- Tradition (habituation)

May view animals as *instruments* for human use

Often viewed as ‘cold’ or ‘uncaring by the public
Another Viewpoint: The Public

Urbanization

Animals move from utility to companions

Pet “parents” vs. owners

Are moderate animal rights advocates

Vision of animal welfare similar to their own, personal welfare
Another Viewpoint: The Public

Urbanization

Animals move from utility to companions

Pet “parents” vs. owners

Are moderate animal rights advocates

Vision of animal welfare similar to their own, personal welfare

Want to protect animals........but not sure what that means
What Resonates With The Public

Thank you for choosing our eggs. These eggs were produced on small, Amish/Mennonite, family farms where the traditions of being a good steward of the land are passed on from generation to generation. In many cases the eggs are gathered by hand, and much of the family is involved in the care of the birds and the collection of the eggs. You can be assured that the eggs you are buying come from chickens that are allowed to roam freely about the hen house, and are fed a vegetarian diet.
small, Amish/Mennonite, family farms

Thank you for choosing our eggs. These eggs were produced on small, Amish/Mennonite, family farms where the traditions of being a good steward of the land from generation to generation are upheld. In many cases the eggs are gathered by hand, and much of the family is involved in the care of the birds and the collection of the eggs. You can be assured that the eggs you are buying come from chickens that are allowed to roam freely about the hen house, and are fed a vegetarian diet.

eggs gathered by hand
allowed to roam freely
fed a vegetarian diet
Another Viewpoint: Animal Protection Activists

Come from all walks of life with varying experiences

Many not familiar with animal industries and animal care practices

Most driven by genuine desire to make sure animals are used appropriately

But........their organizations need to survive/ raise money
Another Viewpoint:
Public Officials

Come from all walks of life/experiences

Most not familiar with animal use industries and animal care

But........they need to be re-elected/appointed

Tremendous potential for stakeholder influence
Science — The Five Freedoms

*Ruth Harrison book on intensive farm practices, 1964

- Freedom from thirst, hunger, malnutrition
- Freedom from discomfort
- Freedom from pain, injury, disease
- Freedom to express normal behaviors
- Freedom from fear and distress

For Laying Hens…

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<th>Cages</th>
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“The greatest deterrent to freedom (animal welfare) lurks in the insidious encroachment by men and women of zeal, well-meaning but without knowledge or understanding.”

Louis Brandeis
Supreme Court Justice, 1916-1939
Unintended Consequences:

Overemphasizing a singular welfare criteria

2008 California Proposition 2
Prohibits confining animals so that they cannot turn around freely, lie down, stand up, and fully extend their limbs.
Overemphasizing Singular Criteria

Adapted from the LayWel Report
Welfare Solution: Science??

In a perfect world...

All welfare decisions are science based—biological function, health, normal behavior

The reality...

Science can only determine what type or level of risk exists

Society determines what type or level of risk is acceptable

If society perceives something is ‘wrong,’ science and logic are unlikely to change
Why?

Animal welfare is viewed by the public as a **moral** issue, not a **scientific** one.
Why?

Animal welfare is viewed by the public as a moral issue, not a scientific one.

Therefore,

Decisions regarding animal care, use & welfare must be made by balancing scientific knowledge with ethical and societal values!!
How Do We Do That?

Understand that science informs decisions, but people make them
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Recognize that others’ experiences and expectations may not match our own.
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Recognize that others’ experiences and expectations may not match our own.

Accept that differing perspectives are valid.
How Do We Do That?

Look at welfare challenges as an opportunity to find common ground
How Do We Do That?

Look at welfare challenges as an opportunity to find common ground

• Keep in mind that emotion & misinformation will often override science & fact
How Do We Do That?

Look at welfare challenges as an opportunity to find common ground

• Keep in mind that emotion & misinformation will often override science & fact

• Understand we have to communicate with lots of different types of people... including some we may not like very much
How *(not)* to communicate

2006 - Arizona Prop 204
- September field poll-passes 65%
- Research to support use of gestation crates
- November Ballot-passed 62%
Will Rogers

“Everybody is ignorant, only on different subjects”

- Become the focal point for equine welfare information

- Continually work to improve the use and well-being of our horses
  - Ask - why do we do this?
  - Not - we’ve always done it this way, what’s wrong with it?
“If you don’t like change, you’re going to like irrelevance even less”

- Explain why current approaches are best, if we have information to prove it
- Make changes, even hard changes, when they are indicated
Questions/Comments??

Two of the greatest qualities in life are...
Patience and Wisdom