

Animal Care Council Report

2016 NIAA Annual Conference

Wednesday, April 6, 2016



The Animal Care Council met on Wednesday, April 6, 2016 from 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. during the 2016 NIAA Annual Conference in Kansas City, Missouri, with approximately 45 people present. Jim Fraley and Ernie Birchmeier served as Co-Chairs.

The Animal Care Council session focused on tail docking, consumer perceptions, and biosecurity. The following speakers presented relevant information:

Tail Banding in the Beef Cattle Industry

Jim Fraley

Farmer data shows a tremendous reduction in the numbers of infected tails by farmers who practice routine tail banding of beef cattle in feedlots.

Tail Docking in the Dairy Industry

Jamie Jonker, NMPF

Tail docking in the dairy industry started in New Zealand due to concerns of leptospirosis. AABP first started looking at this 1998. There was a void of literature to support the practice of tail docking. The research that came later, showed that producer claims were not supported by the literature. The NMPF did not want to be “out-of-synch” with the veterinary leadership, who was not supporting tail docking. NMPF has accelerated the implementation of a tail docking ban and will be implementing in January 2017. Several states already have bovine tail docking bans. There are changing customer expectations and the number-one issue retailers come to milk processors on is the issue of tail docking. They believe you shouldn’t redesign the cow by tail docking. There is no compelling research that shows tail docking improves milk quality, worker safety, or cow cleanliness. We simply can’t defend tail docking. Dehorning is defensible, for example. NMPF recommends safety glasses and switch trimming.

Tail Docking in the Sheep Showing

Ria de Grassi, California Farm Bureau Federation

California’s Department of Food and Agriculture has language in their show books that state a lamb’s tail must not be scarred, fully healed, and have the ability to be lifted. Unfortunately, animals that are coming into their county and state fairs have no tails. In fact, most are “dimpled” or “vee’ed.” Research has shown that an ultra-short tail dock does make the animal more susceptible to rectal prolapse. Commercial breeders and ranchers to dock tails, but it is a long-tail dock and is done to prevent “fly strike.” The UK discourages this practice. If done for animal welfare reasons, it must cover the vulva or anus. In California, they are still seeing unhealed wounds and ultra-short tails.

Why Does Consumer Perception Trump Science?**Jim Fraley, Illinois Farm Bureau**

There are many practices that agriculture has adopted and due to “consumer concerns” some have abandoned. The use of bST in the dairy industry has been abandoned in the fluid milk industry, cage-free egg laying is becoming the norm (despite scientific evidence that it is less humane for the hen), and allowing animals access to the outside or pasture. The best way to build consumer trust is to build relationships with influential consumers. Consumers trust farmers, they want to know more about how farmers raise food, it’s just that they don’t know about what we do. Illinois Farm Families works with “mommy bloggers” to start conversations with farmers and to learn about their practices first-hand.

Update on the Common Swine Industry Audit**Patrick Webb, DVM, NPPC**

The goal was to reduce the number of audits conducted on farms and to consolidate them. The audit is in its second year. Farmers are assessed on five critical areas: animal benchmarking, caretaker, facilities, records, and transport/loadout. The Common Industry Audit was based on the original PQA program. The assessment is good for a three-year period.

ABF and NAE, What is in it for Me?**Dr. Leah Dorman, Phibro Animal Health**

ABF is “antibiotic free” and NAE is “no antibiotics ever.” The consumer sees a very small portion of what we do. There is a rush to judgement. Agriculture can have a “shut up and eat” mentality on some issues – we tend to be defensive, or show them science. Relying on science will not change consumer beliefs. Science says we can use antibiotics, but consumers are saying “should” we be using antibiotics. Consumers don’t care how much we know, until they know how much we care. CFI data shows that people will eat meat, milk, and eggs if it’s treated humanely. Those same consumers will support laws to ensure the treatment of animals is humane. Consumers want transparency. We need to be open and honest. Consumers hold food companies responsible for this transparency. GMOs, preservatives, supplemental hormones, and antibiotics are the four top areas people want to know more about regarding their food. We are phasing out the use of medically-important antibiotics fed for growth promotion purposes – this is a good opportunity to talk to consumers. Treating animals to relieve suffering is an important point to tell consumers. When we go NAE, we have three options: treat the animal and divert production; withhold treatment and sell those that don’t die (very unethical and provides a very low standard of care); and dig a hole (waste of animal life and protein).

AVMA’s Humane Endings – Panel on Depopulation**Cia Johnson, DVM, AVMA**

Since 1963, AVMA has issued eight editions of their euthanasia guidelines. It now recognizes societal expectations for animal care. It is now a living document that is changed on an ongoing basis. The original document was geared to dogs, cats, and small animals. Over time, laboratory animals, equine, and farm animals were added. Euthanasia is not equivalent to slaughter or depopulation. AVMA convened a panel on humane slaughter, for those veterinarians who oversee the harvesting of animals. The proofs are being reviewed now, and will be published on their website soon. It covers the design of history of regulations, facilities, and techniques for performing euthanasia. Horses are included, because the slaughter of horses is not illegal in the US, it is effectively banned, however. The do address unique species and situations in this document. Religious and ritual slaughter is also included. The panel on depopulation will also employ euthanasia techniques. Some of these depopulation methods may not meet AVMA’s euthanasia guidelines. They are expected to have draft ready for member comment by November 2016. Once the regulatory agencies sign off on it, it will go to the board for final approval. The depop panel is looking at ventilation shut-down as a means of mass euthanasia. They will need to look at the science and there is not much research out there at this point.

Animal Care and Biosecurity. Is there are Crossover?**Danelle Bicket-Waddel, Ph.D. DVM, Iowa State University**

Spend money on biosecurity so you don't have to depend upon indemnity. Keeping diseases out, mean healthy animals and healthy people. These things together make a safe food supply. Furred, hairy, feathered, or bare... there are biosecurity risks. You can't completely eliminate biosecurity risk. There are many ways risk and organisms can enter a farm. Some are zoonotic risks. She tries to get farmers to think about their clothing, gloves, and footwear cleanliness. It is so important to keep your hands clean if you are working with dairy cows. Most of what we present to farmers is pretty common-sense information. For information to be useful, it has to be in "farmer speak." ISU has biosecurity posters for each of the major species in both English and Spanish. preventingdisease.org is a risk-assessment tool that is available to farmers.

No resolutions submitted.**Animal Care Council Session adjourned at 12:05 p.m.**