

Animal Care Council Report

2017 NIAA Annual Conference

Wednesday, April 5, 2017



The Animal Care Council met on Wednesday, April 5, 2017 from 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. during the 2017 NIAA Annual Conference in Columbus, Ohio, with approximately 25 people present. Mr. Ernie Birchmeier and Chelsea Good, J.D. served as Co-Chairs.

The Animal Care Council session focused on Animal Care programs, audits, and assessments. The following speakers presented:

Craig Morris, PhD – Deputy Administrator, USDA, presented on “USDA International Standardization Organization – 34700 Animal Welfare Assessment”

USDA ISO TS 34700 Animal Welfare Assessment Program, a voluntary program administered by Agriculture Marketing Service with the intent that if widely adopted by the private sector it could facilitate the adoption of the OIE animal welfare standards in developing countries and improve the living conditions of animals raised for food production around the world. Establish a minimum threshold for programs purporting to be an animal welfare system and minimize cost to small and large livestock producers and other market participants by not having to participate in multiple audits.

ISO: the International Organization for Standardization – develops industry minimum standards so that international companies can compete on a level playing field. Process based.

OIE: The World Organization for Animal Health – the intergovernmental organization responsible for protecting animal health but has taken a role in animal welfare standards. – although science based standards are dependent on government bodies to implement and governmental regulation of animal welfare varies around the globe. Outcome based.

TS34700 published December 1, 2016

34700 Animal Welfare Assessment Program announced December 27, 2016 – purpose is to allow existing animal welfare programs to be assessed by AMS to determine if they conform to TS34700 – voluntary.

Goals: to ensure that any program purported to be an animal welfare program is science based and meets the requirements set by OIE. Facilitate international trade, accommodate animal welfare programs that exceed the OIE standards, establish a framework for other countries to assess existing animal welfare programs, provide easy to use checklists and support materials.

Program is now in implementation period 2017-2019, Review of program in 2019.

Power of the Animal Care Review Panel:

Sample Expert Panel report was shared with the room

- **Moderator: Ms. Allison Perry – The Center for Food Integrity**
- **John Deen, DVM, PhD – University of Minnesota**
- **Janice Swanson, PhD, Chair, Dept. of Animal Science – University of Michigan**

Ms. Allyson Perry – The Center for Food Integrity – Animal Care review panels what they are / what are the benefits? Review panel process gives timely responses to hidden camera investigations from industry experts, providing a balanced approach and analysis to the videos. Provide analysis of video,

test legitimacy, engage recognized experts to provide perspectives to retailers, industry, media, demonstrate commitment to “do what’s right”. Panel includes a veterinarian, ethicist and animal scientist with a goal of reporting within 48 hours. Report is drafted and released without sharing with commodity group.

John Deen, DVM, PhD – University of Minnesota – serves as a veterinary expert on call for panel review process. As a panel expert and in interaction with media following release of a report is to explain the complexity of the issues and not allow the media to take an issue such as gestation stalls down to simple terms. In production works to address systematic issues that can be addressed once an updated system is in place. Describing his intent and ensuring that all critics understand that care is the intent.

Janice Swanson, PhD, Chair, Dept. of Animal Science – University of Michigan – serves as animal scientist expert on call for panel review process. Watching process and conversation evolve about animal welfare, the types of questions have greatly evolved. Have observed that there is now a more multidimensional approach by animal welfare groups (political and now through the food retail community). Believes that farmers and ranchers have become more receptive to the assessment process. Looking from a systems perspective – it’s not just animal welfare, it is a multidimensional full systems approach.

? How many times have you found actual abuse vs “unattractive practices” – Dr. Deen – early on it was actual abuse, a criticism of employees on the farm. The critics have since changed the weighting in those videos. Dr. Swanson – early it was the most egregious acts caught on film and would lead that someone within the organization tipped off the investigation. These days seeing far more of the standard ag practices criticized (dehorning, castration, standard accepted practices). Additionally, the environmental piece is being raised – particularly water use.

? How many abuses that you’ve seen could have been avoided with timely euthanasia – Dr. Swanson – most of us don’t want to have to make that decision to put an animal down. It’s always in the back of the mind that maybe it/they will recover. It focuses on our experience and what we are feeling not necessarily what the animal is experiencing. The destruction of an animal is not a simple thing. A decision tree is necessary to determine when you cross over from recoverable to non-recoverable. Dr. Deen – in his experience the videos don’t focus on timely euthanasia as an issue because the activists don’t want to be associated with euthanasia. It’s a quick clip instead displaying the animal in question.

? Who do you work with for forensic video analysis and process for referral to justice system – Ms. Perry – we do not have a forensic video analyst and do not refer anyone to justice piece. Would hope that the commodity group would refer on as appropriate. Dr. Swanson- we only talk about what we see.

? If clip you are commenting on could potentially have been falsified or staged should you be commenting? – Dr. Swanson referenced a past legal case with Barnum and Bailey. Ms. Perry – it may be difficult to quantify the monetary value of loss.

? Frustration in Ohio is the overlap of animal care standards, which are law, with county humane society and the lack of an interest by prosecuting attorney to pursue a case.

? Why do you think the tactics of the videos are changing – Dr. Swanson – there was a time when we did have conversations with the activist groups, what used to be an organization you could work with was completely restructured. Beginning in the 80’s with efforts on the cosmetics industry have been picked up by PETA and others to pursue direct pressure on the retailers. Dr. Deen – thinks we have a conflict in the argument with critics, critics want to argue a systematic vilification of decision making. We have to

come back to an argument that animal agriculture is made up of people. It's more difficult to vilify individuals than corporate structures.

Ms. Emily Meredith – Chief of Staff, National Milk Producers Federation, presented on “Taildocking Update”

National Dairy Farm Program - FARM was started in 2009 as a joint partnership with the dairy checkoff and National Milk. Goal to assure consumers and customers that dairy farmers raise and care for their animals and land in a humane and ethical manner. Animal care will always be the core of the FARM program, have come to recognize that members and customers are looking for assurances in antibiotic stewardship an environmental stewardship. Voluntary program. Animal Care – 105 participating Co-ops and or processors, 98% of the domestic milk supply in 49 states, more than 45,000 2nd party evaluations completed to date. More than 370 trained FARM evaluators. Tail Docking – a lot of pressure points around the issue from research, dairy customers, animal rights, legislation, animal care leadership. Studies show that there is no significant difference in cow cleanliness or pathogen transmission between docked and undocked cows. Farm evaluators are typically cooperative field staff. Program is about continuous improvement and the cooperative field staff allows opportunities for continuous checkbacks for improvements.

Eric Gordon, DVM, Diplomate ACVPM – The Ohio State University, presented on “Bovine Castration/ Dehorning Update”

Current ideas and methods for bovine dehorning, castration and pain management. Cattle dehorning / disbudding is a necessary management practice to reduce injury to animals and handlers. The younger the calf, the less painful and invasive. Provided explanation of disbudding vs dehorning. It is generally recommended that if cattle are one year of age or older, local anesthesia and possibly general sedation are warranted. Dehorn cattle as early as possible to decrease stress, goal of breeding for polled genetics. Does not recommend banding as a solution in dehorning. Hot-iron vs. chemical disbudding vs. Dehorning provided details of method results, timeline and plasma cortisol concentration. Key is doing them young and using systemic pain relief and then any of the three methods can be successful. Bovine castration – should be done as early an age as possible, prevents inappropriate breeding and is necessary to meet market demands. There are now some markets for intact beef bulls but as of now generally speaking we need to get them castrated. In his opinion leaving them in tact longer makes no difference of rate of gain. Get them done early and gain will be recovered. We must protect against tetanus during castration especially if banding. Surgical castration – can be sure it was completed, can be an increased risk of hemorrhage but does not outweigh the success of the method. Pain management – castration and dehorning are painful and pain management must be provided by use of local anesthesia, anti-inflammatories, flunixin meglumine (not labeled for pain relief), meloxicam.

Mr. Mike Bumgarner, President & CEO, United Producers, presented on “Regional Perspective & Update on Livestock Marketing Channels”

Provide marketing solutions that enable a sustainable future for the cooperative, our members and end-users. Farmer owned cooperative with 3 key business units and facilities in 7 states. 2.75 million head of livestock annually. Board adopted a policy on animal care in 2009. All employees are required to complete animal handling training, they must sign a safe and responsible treatment of animals policy and acknowledge guidelines from employee handbook. In house and 3rd party audits (LMA). In general facilities are older and there are things that we have learned in animal handling that have changed since those facilities were built.

Challenges – slow or impaired livestock is an issue. Typically with problematic animals we do not move through the sale ring. There is additional cost associated with that and the challenge of teaching the consignor that they still have competitive bidding if the animal did not come through the ring.

Down livestock – we don't accept but still an issue.

Transportation – is an issue for markets on a lot of different levels. Hours that some drivers will spend in drivetime and will be an issue that industry has to deal with. Livestock waiting to be unloaded at delivery at plants, breakdowns in transit, requests to offload livestock at our facilities for rest or break down issues.

Employee awareness – employees have to be aware of what's going on around them. Is there a new face or person, are they recording.

Education of producers and truckers - Animal care and handling starts at the farm. For most of our producers this is not their primary income. Those individuals look at issues differently.

Perceptions – general public in our facilities. We expect employees to engage customers and the public, be polite and understand who they are.

Complacency – It's easy to get complacent. We cannot allow ourselves to get complacent.

Ms. Kristen Parman – V.P. Membership Services, Livestock Marketing Association, presented on “National Perspective & Update on Livestock Marketing Channels”

Old Business:

New Business:

General Discussion:

Animal Care Council Session adjourned at 12:20 p.m.