SPEAK OUT

June 2009

Creating Animal Agriculture Activists

Objectives

- To encourage discussion regarding the animal welfare movement.
- To help council members understand the current situation in Ohio regarding animal agriculture.
- To encourage council members to share their values and positive experiences regarding animal agriculture with others who are unfamiliar with the Ohio livestock industry.

In most people's mind, today's top adversary or challenge for livestock farmers in their plight to produce safe, nutritious, affordable food is animal activists. These people are not on the same page as farmers or many others for that matter. Most people believe that humans have the right to use animals, whether it be for food, work, pleasure, etc… BUT they also believe that with that use is the responsibility to provide for the animals' well-being. Animal rights supporters believe that humans have NO right to use animals. The challenge is that these animal activists are not usually interested in finding solutions but prefer to focus on problems and dramatic examples to generate funds and support.

According to Dr. Candace Croney, Animal Bioethics and Behavior Specialist at OSU College of Veterinary Medicine, there are quite a few conditions that have led to the collision between livestock farmers and animal activists. These include heightened animal activism, animal abuses being revealed, an emphasis on the technology and facts of why farmers do what they do and a failure to address the values, ethics and social issues the consumer wants to address, an urban society with an emphasis on pets and their concerns about welfare, and an idealized picture of animal agriculture and what it should look like. All of these things are what the animal activists are using to try to drive a wedge between livestock farmers and the reasonable majority (consumers).

There is good news and bad news. First the good news - the average person in the United States 1) Trusts farmers which is very important to agriculture and what we do; 2) Is relatively uninformed and unaware on most subjects and especially on agriculture and food production, and 3) Doesn't want to be an antagonist unless he feels he needs to. However, some recent polling done by the Center for Food Integrity showed that 70 percent of U.S. citizens agree that farm animals raised for

food should be treated the same way household pet owners treat their pets. Also, 90 percent of them would support a law in their state to ensure the humane treatment of farm animals. This is what the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) is focusing on in Ohio right now. Representatives from HSUS met with agricultural leaders back in February to ask them to join HSUS in supporting and passing legislation in Ohio that would ban gestation stalls, veal crates and cages for laying hens.

The animal activist groups are working hard to change animal production standards through legislation and ballot initiatives. In the last seven years: Florida voted to ban gestation stalls in 2002; Arizona banned gestation stalls and veal crates in 2006 with the support of a well-known, much loved Sheriff Arpaio who spoke in favor of the ban even though he loves to eat a good pork chop; and just last November Proposition 2 in California banned gestation stalls, veal crates and battery cages for laying hens.

The key message that the animal activist groups are using to appeal to the emotional side of people is this – "This is a modest measure (banning stalls and cages) that simply allows animals to stand up, lie down and turn around. Is that too much to ask?" Truly they are asking a lot more than that. In the case of chickens, they would need almost 3 feet of cage space per chicken, and sows couldn't be in stalls – both would have to be free range or in extra large pens or group housing. There are scientific, animal welfare reasons why livestock production went from group housing to individual or small numbers of animals per stall or cage but no one wants to hear the scientific side of the story.

We, in agriculture, have some options at this point in the game. Choice #1 - We can be repressive, mask our feelings, avoid our adversaries and walk away. Choice #2 - We can become aggressive and label them as radical, crazy people, attack them and try to control them. Choice # 3 - We can begin to have **Critical Conversations** with everyone we know and anyone we come in contact with about animal agriculture and the livestock farmers who produce the safe, affordable, nutritious food that they enjoy every day without considering where it comes from or whose livelihood depends on it.

It is important that you share your values and why you (or livestock farmers if you are not one) do what you/they do and what your relationship to animal agriculture is. Find out what shared values you have with others by asking questions like, "Do you enjoy meat, poultry, eggs and dairy products?" "Is food safety important to you?" and "Do you take care of your animals?" If they answer yes to any or all of these questions, share with them that you agree with them and they are really very similar to a livestock farmer. This is a perfect example of shared values. Honestly discuss these values as well of the values of today's farmers with them. Figure out what values you have in common. "I enjoy hamburgers, grilling pork chops and coloring and hunting Easter eggs with my nieces and nephews. Wow, so do you. Great!" Recognize and respect that there may be differences in how we feel farm animals should be cared for – tail docking, castration, gestation stalls or laying hen cages, but ask them if they buy free range pork or free range eggs. If they don't, explain to them that if legislation would pass in Ohio banning some of the scientifically proven current livestock production practices, they wouldn't have a

choice but would have to buy free range products and would undoubtedly have to pay a higher price. Do they want their choices at the grocery store taken away from them and have to pay a higher price? If they say no, you have a win/win dialogue.

If you start to have these critical conversations and connect to others on a values level it is the first step in becoming an animal agriculture activist. It will begin to tell our story about livestock production in Ohio and do it in a way to appeal to the emotions of the public and connect with what is valuable to them. We can no longer sit back and rely on the fact that we do the right things for our animals and our environment to ensure that the consumer has safe, nutritious affordable food – we must tell everyone what and how we do this for them and why it is critical for us to continue to do it.

Questions:

1) Are you comfortable calling yourself an animal agriculture activist? If yes, what does it mean to you?
2) What rights, if any, do you believe animals possess? What are our obligations as food animal caretakers? Are those obligations different than for companion animals?
3) If a ballot initiative similar to California's Proposition 2 comes to Ohio, how do you think Ohio voters would respond and why?

July Topic: Social Media

Information Sources:

Matt Sutton-Vermeulen, President, Unison Resource Company

Dr. Candace Croney, Animal Behavior/Bioethics, OSU Veterinary School

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CONNECTIONS

COMPARE YOUR RESPONSES

The following is a representative sample of the responses to the February Speakout Guide on the issue of the *Climate Change*.

1. **What type of greenhouse gas reduction program would be the most appropriate and beneficial for Ohio agriculture? Market-Based? Regulatory? Cap and Trade? Carbon Tax? Other?**

- We need to know more about each program.
- None. Stay away – too much bureaucracy!
- Market-based with cap and trade.
- Carbon tax.
- None-we are over regulated as it is.
- Market-based is better. Both cap and trade and a carbon tax will add cost to consumers.
- We do not buy into this man-made climate change theory! One large volcanic explosion puts more CO2 into the atmosphere than decades of man-made CO2.
- This will be another government program that will cost the American people a lot of money and nothing will be accomplished.
- Market-based is the least evil.

2. **Did you know that opportunities existed in Ohio for farmers to participate in carbon trading programs to address environmental quality concerns? Yes? No? If "Yes," where did you learn about it?**

Responses were mixed. Those who had already heard about carbon trading programs referred to Ohio Farm Bureau and other agriculture organizations and publications as their source of information.

3. **If given the opportunity, would you be willing to install new conservation practices to become eligible to enter into a multi-year (three-year to five-year) carbon credit trading contract? Why or why not?**

- No, we need more information.
- Yes, if it would make a profit.
- Yes, especially if costs were covered and the opportunity for a little profit was available.
- Definitely maybe, what are the specifics and how are we going to benefit?
- We feel there is a lot of paper work and not enough incentives to make it worth all the headaches it creates.
- Maybe, depends on the terms of the contract. If you had a washout, could you till it to fill it in?

- No, keep government out of our business.
- Yes, depending on if it makes sense from a profitability standpoint without excessive effort.
- No, Farm Bureau should be securing less government, not more.
- Yes, we think agriculture needs to be involved.
- No, we don't want to tie ourselves down to specific farming practices for the minimal compensation we would receive.
- Yes, all things considered it would not be much of a sacrifice although we do not believe that climate change is man-made.

PUBLIC POLICY

Policy Development
Just because your Advisory Council completed the March guide on policy development doesn't mean that your input has to stop there. Over the next several months your county Farm Bureau Policy Development committee will be meeting with public officials and others to discuss issues that could result in new Farm Bureau policy. If you are interested in being more involved with the County Farm Bureau policy development process you should contact your organization director.

COMMUNICATIONS

Upcoming OFBF summer events

June 15: AGRICULTURE FEEDS OUR NEEDS, Nationwide & Ohio Farm Bureau 4-H Center
Teachers & OFBF volunteers will learn about educational resources to promote Ag in the classroom & in local educational programs. Register by June 8: $25 for OFBF members; $35 for nonmembers. More info: 614-246-8243

July 18: Grow & Know seminar, Bob Evans Farm
Twelve interactive sessions to help gardeners & farmer wannabes learn techniques in the garden, food canning & preservation and more! Register by July 1: $25 for OFBF members; $85 for nonmembers (includes OFBF membership). More info: OurOhio.org or 614-246-8276

Through July 22: OFBF/Bob Evans Recipe Contest
Win free Bob Evans grocery products for a year by submitting your best recipe using a Bob Evans product and one locally grown product from the OurOhio.org Buying Local Directory. Winner to be featured in *Our Ohio* magazine and receives "A Day with the Chefs" at Bob Evans. More information: OurOhio.org

ORGANIZATION

Ohio Farm Bureau Amusement Park Ticket Program

Take your kids and grandkids on a grand adventure, or two this summer - Ohio Farm Bureau members can save big on admission

tickets to the following Ohio amusement parks:

- *Cedar Point* - Visit the Cedar Point Web site at http://tickets.cedarpoint.com/shop/shopping.cfm and under the Corporate Partner Section enter the Farm Bureau Member password, ***iron0205***.

- *Kings Island* - Go to www.visitkingsisland.com/ofbf .

- *Wildwater Kingdom* - Go to http://tickets.geaugalake.com/shop/shopping.cfm and under the Corporate Partner section enter the password ***coral 3402***.

Explore each Web site for information on season schedules, as well as additional features to combine one- or two-day admission packages with other special attractions associated with the respective amusement park. Also, each Web site allows you to enter the number of tickets required into your own Web site shopping cart, as well as gives you the opportunity to print your tickets from home using the E-Ticket option.

Feel free to check the *Member Benefits* section at www.ofbf.org for more information.

HONEYBAKED WINNER

Happy Dozen Advisory Council
Putnam County

OHIO FARM BUREAU

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Discussion Leader's Notes

June 2009

TIPS FOR LEADING THIS MONTH'S DISCUSSION

- Scope out the recent agriculture publications for animal welfare articles (there have been plenty). Bring them to your meeting as supplemental materials.
- If you have internet access, check out some of the animal rights organizations' Web sites and share what you learn with your council.
- Consider inviting a livestock producer or a large animal veterinarian to your meeting to get their insight on animal agriculture.

CONNECTIONS

Public Policy

Policy development is just beginning.

Communications

Upcoming OFBF summer events.

Organization

Ohio Farm Bureau amusement park ticket program.

COUNCIL ROSTERS

Please take time to update your council's roster this month. It is important that we have accurate and updated records in our office. You can also complete and send the roster electronically. Just visit www.ofbf.org and go to the Advisory Councils section of the Web.

HONEYBAKED HAM WINNER

Happy Dozen Advisory Council
Putnam County

FUN SHEET

SUBMITTED BY: COUNTRY SQUIRES
WAYNE COUNTY

Musical Terms

Clue:

1. A vegetable	1. Beet
2. Something a man wears	2. Tie
3. Something to support the aged and infirm	3. Staff
4. An army officer	4. Major
5. One under his parents' control	5. Minor
6. To insert in the lock	6. Key
7. Something sticky and black	7. Pitch
8. What an athlete jumps over	8. Bar
9. A short letter	9. Note
10. A device used in weighing	10. Scale
11. What a chair gives	11. Rest
12. A home in the city	12. Flat
13. What a knife should be	13. Sharp