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TO: Hon. Agriculture Secretary Veneman
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PUBLIC CONFIDENCE AND WORLDWIDE CUSTOMER PERCEPTION OF US BEEF SAFETY IS DEVASTATED BY MAD COW MEDIA REPORTS IN THE LAST WEEK. OPENING THE CANADIAN BORDER FOR LIVE CATTLE IMPORTS TO US, AS THIS RULE PROPOSED IS RECKLESS AND CRITICALLY DAMAGING TO VITAL AG INDUSTRIES.

RECENT FEDERAL COURT AND JURY DECISIONS HAVE HELD USDA AND USDA OFFICIALS PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR CONDUCT AND ACTIONS. TO OPEN THE CANADIAN BORDER AT THIS TIME WILL BE EGREGIOUS TO THE EXTREME. THE DAMAGE WOULD BE NATION WIDE AND HURT SMALL OPERATORS/PRODUCERS HARDEST. THE NEGATIVE IMPACT IN RURAL AREAS CREATING ECONOMIC DISASTER WHICH MAY NEVER RECOVER.

1 THE PROPOSED RULE MUST BE RESINDED AND THE SECRETARY EXPLAIN TO THE NATIONAL MEDIA THIS ACTION WILL REDUCE RISK OF MORE MAD COWS.

ENCLOSED: DR. TEMPLE GRANDIN meat + poultry Dec 2003
MY FAMILY HAS BEEN FEEDING CATTLE SINCE 1949 AND

1 HAS ABOUT 700 HD ON FEED NOW.
ENCLOSED 2 RESPECTFULLY, Kurt M. Schmitz Jr.

RECEIVED

JAN 05 2003

Reality provides incentives

By Dr. Temple Grandin
www.MeatPoultry.com

The conclusions of a study conducted earlier this year by the National Pork Board indicated animal welfare was not a consumer priority. One problem with this survey is that only pork consumers were questioned, while data about non-pork eaters was excluded.

Also, the wording of the questions asked of consumers was too general for a topic as sensitive as animal welfare. The questions used were very general about "welfare" or "cruelty." No specific questions were asked about issues such as sow gestation stalls, transporting animals or slaughtering. I have observed that people become much more responsive when asked to address specific issues. A TV show that shows animal cruelty generates a lot more concern than vague

abstractions about animal welfare. Consumers' top concern is food safety, but even this issue was on the back burner until *E. coli* O157:H7 incidents made headlines in the early 90s.

I witnessed an abstraction become reality while working with McDonald's, Burger King and Wendy's as they began conducting animal welfare audits of their suppliers' meat plants. In the beginning the welfare issue was an abstract concept. When the executives visited the meat plants, however, the welfare issue became real.

It was amazing how abruptly the welfare issue stopped being abstract. I remember the day when one executive saw a half-dead, emaciated dairy cow. He was disgusted and became more motivated to improve welfare immediately.

(Continued on Page 69)

A view from the trenches

Why have the political activities in the government become more polarized? On every issue there is always a right or a left view, but today people have a tendency to be less cooperative and to have less bipartisan cooperation. One cause of this problem is people on both sides of every issue have become separated from doing work in their field of interest. People who have worked in the field tend to have more moderate views compared to those who have spent their entire career in an office. People who have worked in a meat plant or on a farm understand the practical realities in a way office dwellers cannot.

I was shocked when I learned there are people in the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture creating food safety policy who have never been in a meat plant. How can somebody create a reasonable policy if they have never visited a plant or talked to the scientists who are doing food safety research?

These people need to get out, visit plants and interact with the people in the trenches. Administrators and politicians, who are far removed from the field, make decisions that might help them politically, but do little to help the people in the field. People who are too far removed from what is real drift into a level of abstraction that is separated from the reality of a plant or farm.

My advice for people working inside the Washington beltway is to get out and see the world. It can be done with a small travel budget by piggy-backing trips to plants and farms with leisure trips or scheduling visits as part of training or meetings.

In almost every state there are many agricultural operations that could be visited within a short drive of just about any destination. The lobbyists for private industry also need to go on these trips.

This would help bring politics back to reality.

People inside Washington who work for both government and industry need to get involved with things that are real. This past summer's blackout in the Northeast was a jolt of reality that stopped partisan politics on the subject of power. When the legislators were hot, tired, and thirsty reality took over and, for a few days, there was more cooperation.

Getting people out into the field is more important now than it was 10 years ago. More new employees entering the Beltway may have come straight from college to a job in an office. They have never worked on a farm or had relatives who had a farm. The people my age who have had field experience will be retiring in the next five to 10 years and we need people with experience in the field to replace them.

My first contact with U.S.D.A. was in the 60s, when I visited my aunt's ranch in Arizona. The government's brilliant screwworm eradication program had eliminated screwworms from the state.

On the ranch we would often find the boxes that had contained sterilized screwworm flies. My aunt would tell me how horrible screwworms were and how they could eat cattle alive. I wonder if this program could have been put together today. I think it would become mired in politics. Field staff that knew what they were doing put this program together and they were allowed to do it.

To get back to doing things in a practical manner every administrator and politician needs to get out in the field. Whatever the issue is, it needs to be viewed from the trenches.

Dr. Temple Grandin

Editorial

(Continued from Page 66)

During the past five years I have trained the auditors that do meat plant audits. Most restaurants use their food safety auditors to do the welfare audits. In the beginning, some food safety auditors had little interest in welfare because the issue was abstract. However, most became motivated after they started doing the audits and saw the improvements that occurred. The plants are scored using an objective scoring system and most of the improvements in welfare also helped to improve meat quality.

The welfare issue is not going away. I wanted to find out how the general public would react to a survey that was more specific about the issue. I showed pictures of sow gestation stalls and pigs in groups on an indoor, slatted floor to some fellow airline passengers during some of my many flights. When I talked to each person I was careful not to ask questions that would bias their responses. I simply told them I was working on standards for proper pig housing. After making that statement, I would put the photos on the tray-table and encourage the person to talk about the pictures while I said as little as possible.

The sow stall pictures were the most attractive I could find. In one picture a nice man was petting a sow in a stall. All the pigs were clean and the facilities allowed sunlight in through white curtains.

People I talked to were bothered by the fact that the sows could not turn around in the stalls. One-third of the people disliked sow stalls, while another third was uneasy about them and still another one-third had no opinion. Women were much more concerned than

men. A typical statement from the uneasy group was, "It just does not seem right." Almost all of the people liked the pen with the slatted floor. Many commented on how clean the pigs were.

There are other indicators that the animal welfare is here to stay. Florida legislators recently passed legislation to ban sow gestation stalls. In other parts of the country, pets are gaining legal status. In Boulder, Colo., dog owners are now called dog guardians. Many law schools teach students classes in animal rights law. Divorce proceedings now often include custody battles over pets, similar to child-custody suits.

Advances in science will also motivate interest in animal welfare. The genome projects are showing that people and animals share many genes. Papers published in *Science* and *Nature* are showing that animals can actually think and even solve problems. Throughout the industry people say that we must be science based. Science is showing that animals can think while also feeling pain and fear.

The author operates Grandin Livestock Systems, Inc., Fort Collins, Colo., and is a faculty member in the animal science department at Colorado State Univ.

We would like to hear from you—

your comments and questions about this article are welcome.

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