Animal Welfare—How To Respond

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It is indeed a pleasure for me to participate in my first Reciprocal Meat Conference. I look forward to presenting to you ideas relative to how to respond to animal welfare issues, which seems to be a hot issue in agriculture today. Let me say first, as a member of the Meat Board Staff and Vice-President of Veal Programs of the Beef Industry Council, I believe the real issue relating to facing up to animal rights/welfare concerns of producers, meat scientists and agriculture relates to perception vs. reality.

We in animal agriculture are faced with answering two major questions: "Is the food we eat safe and has the animal been raised humanely?"

As a meat scientist, you are viewed as the meat science expert from the consumer perspective. The food industry, media, community leaders, government officials and ultimately the consumer all view you as the best qualified to answer these important questions on meat safety.

Before I begin to discuss these issues, you should realize that the checkoff has been established to fund research, promotion and information programs for the beef and veal industry. The mission statement of the Beef Industry Council is to build greater demand for beef and beef products. It is important that we recognize many factors that affect the use and continued consumption of our products. In the long-range planning process of the beef and veal industries, we have identified several key factors in the environment that affect beef and veal consumption. These include the legal/political, economic, social/cultural, technological and competitive factors in the consumption of our product. Since we are in the business of promoting our product, we also recognize perception of our product is an important factor in the consumption of our product. If the product is viewed as nutritious, wholesome, low in fat and cholesterol, it is viewed as good. If, on the other hand, it is viewed as the opposite, you know the results will be lower consumer confidence in the product which will create a negative attitude and cause consumers to eat less meat (beef/veal).

How do we deal with animal rights/animal welfare issues at the Meat Board? First, there is a significant difference between animal rights and animal welfare. My discussion will center on how we address animal welfare issues. Bob Kauffman, facilitator of this session, has assured me there are resource people to discuss the ethics of animal rights. However, the focus of my presentation will be on how we respond to animal welfare affecting us today.

The premise I will use in making my presentation is that for one to be successful in addressing these issues with any public, we must know the facts (grounded in the science) and be able to communicate or deliver these key messages on animal welfare issues and food safety.

Success, in my opinion, can be measured by evaluating the public "take-away" from how we have addressed the issues. I am confident that people who are grounded in the science of these issues will have a distinct advantage over those who do not have this knowledge. Knowing how to communicate the proper message to our public is by far the greater challenge.

This trend toward more consumer concern over animal welfare has been developing over many years. With the advent of environmentalism and people's concern over the way we treat the environment, we see the consumers asking some rather pointed questions of the animal agriculture industry.

Can we assume that the general public knows what we do on the farm results in a safe food? Are we prepared to defend our production practices with animal rights groups condemning the way we treat our livestock?

We as agriculturalists must remember that the general public is becoming further removed from the farm with each new generation. We see society today wanting to receive more information, not only about how we produce the livestock but why we use antibiotics, hormones, and other production practices for the safe production of meat for consumers.

What do you think these practices look like to the consumer? Are they positive? Negative? Do you think consumers even care about these production practices as they relate to their food?

The veal industry has been under attack recently by animal rightists who believe veal producers mistreat their animals by cramming them in boxes, so they cannot lie down, walk, turn around and interact with others like them.

Activists say that veal calves produced in crates are anemic, pumped with antibiotics and consequently cause a human health hazard to the American public. Perception vs. reality. The veal industry is in the middle of explaining how their industry is handling these misperceptions about veal production practices.

The Veal Committee of the Beef Industry Council devel-
developed a Veal Issues Management Program to assist the veal industry in addressing these animal welfare and food safety issues. The first step in evaluating where these issues were with the public came from market research conducted by the Beef Board, American Meat Institute, and the Meat Board in January 1987.

When we knew these issues were important to the public, the Veal Committee formed a Veal Issues Management Team who have been involved in media issues as they relate to animal welfare and food safety. Once the team was formed, the Veal Committee decided to do the research to develop key positions on these issues. *Modern Veal Production: An Industry Perspective* is the new position paper developed by the Veal Committee to establish our position on animal welfare and food safety. Taking a positive stand on these issues helps us redefine these issues on our terms. Once these positions were established, a Communications Forum was developed to help industry leaders communicate to the public about these positions.

A part of the Issues Management Program is to assist industry leaders in addressing these issues. The "How To" and proper training are critical to the success of the speaker.

**Steps in Addressing Animal Welfare Issues**

1. Know how to speak on the issues by understanding the facts/science of the issues.

2. Evaluate the perceived risk by looking at the potential benefit of being involved in addressing these issues.

3. Learn how to speak effectively on these issues through communication training.

4. Practice communication training in different situations.

5. Help develop an Issues Management Team.

6. Develop a proactive strategy.

7. Learn to say "no" in some situations when the interview may be too one-sided against agriculture. Evaluate public take-away from the event.

8. Establish a base of support/sharing experiences with your colleagues.

9. Learn how to discuss industry positions.

One of the most important things to remember in dealing with the public is to recognize the listener's point of view. Their attitudes, feelings, socio-economic background and perspective on food safety will have an impact on how they view these issues.

A booklet entitled *Issues Management*, published by the Meat Board, is available here at the Reciprocal Meat Conference for your use.

If you have any questions about the Meat Board "Issues Management Program," please contact Wendy Pinkerton, Science Information Coordinator for the Meat Board, who is in our audience.

**Discussion**

*Apple:* The issue (I know from PETA's — People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals — standpoint because I attended the Animal Activists 101 Workshop) is sucking behavior. The first thing noted in your video was the veal calf licking the man's hand; on their side, that's a victory for them. Secondly, your "seven steps" for how to battle is the exact seven steps they taught the group I was in. Their fact sheets come from the Humane Society, and the PETA Fact Sheets are full of great statistics that have no meaning. You can get those if you want to write PETA about that.

*Conklin:* Regarding the steps, their methods of communicating with the public are very similar to ours. They have as good or better communications philosophy on how they reach the public. Certainly, they have one advantage that we probably don't have and that is they can create a lot of emotion in their message. We have to deal with the facts up front. And the facts often times are not as emotional.

The answer to the first part of your question in regard to the suckling nature of calves, I think we have to go back and address the science of how these animals are raised. The concern they have is animal welfare. Of course, they are defining animal welfare as any animal that is taken from its mother (they use the term "ripped" from its mother) at a very early age. Using those terms suggests that we should not be taking the calf away from its mother. We are saying farmers concerned with animal welfare are doing their best with the concerns over animals and how they are affected when they are removed from their mother. Some of the benefits of removing a calf from its mother is that it benefits both animals, the cow and the calf. Yet a lot of consumers who are away from the production of farming don't realize that a calf should not stay with its mother for an extended period of time. Certainly, in the dairy industry, that's not the way things are today. The way we are trying to rephrase the question is to direct the question and the comments back about how the animal is raised, and why the animals are raised in that individual manner.

*Harkness:* As a laboratory animal veterinarian, I have confronted these challenges and at times have been literally bashed into the ground, not only by the animal rights people but by the people who use animals, who have sometimes seen my specialty as kind of a nuisance, middle ground. I would like to comment on some aspects on what has been said and how my experience in a somewhat different arena interfaces with your's. It's been my conviction that a reliance on facts and science is not the only formula for success. We biomedical scientists in our laboratory coats paraded our facts and science about the lives saved and the benefits and we weren't taken very well. It's important to have the facts correct and the science immaculate. But we have come to rely on emotion.

The most effective defender of animals in research is IIFAR (the Incurably Ill for Animal Research). In almost every courtroom where these issues are presented, the best wit-
ness is a child with leukemia, who will die unless an animal is used. That kind of impact is extraordinarily effective. How it can be transferred to the farm animal situation is more difficult, but we have relied on that issue of emotion. We have appealed to people's fears: "You want to die of cancer, do you?" "You want to pay a terrific amount of money for medicine, do you?" We appeal at an emotional level, and we've been rewarded for that kind of activity with more and more success.

I think Dean understands what I'm saying that you have to balance these facts and science with a gut emotional smack the same way that they use to hit us. I will also say that I was called immoral and unethical. The risk/benefit approach; you use it all the time in making the decisions yourself. You compare the risks and benefits of a particular course of action. That is an ethical formula. That is a part of ethics called the "utilitarian ethic," where we weigh the short- or long-term outcomes, and compare risks and benefits and proceed. We, as scientists, use that when we evaluate animal use protocols: What are the benefits of this, what are the risks, what are the downsides?

The animal rights people use the same thing. They also can use this "utilitarian ethic," in that they can compare the risks and benefits of a particular course, but they see them differently from us. They say there have been few productive results of studies of cardiovascular systems in animals and its transfer to humans. Rats are too different from people, etc.; the risks far outweigh the benefits, so we won't use animals in research. The animal rights people in a way use the risk/benefits approach. But animal rights people also have another approach and we use that in our own decision-making daily and that is the "moralistic" or deontological approach. That is simply to say that a certain minority group of our population does think that some things are inherently wrong with the way animals are used. This is just a universal acceptance that some things must not be done. The animal rights people say that we should not under any circumstances, regardless of the benefits, use or kill animals. There may be nutritional benefits of eating meat, certain vitamins unavailable elsewhere. There may be certain benefits to using rats in research, but there is a code higher than that, that of taking an animal's life. That kind of approach, adhering to a moral code, we all do in making some decisions. Thou shalt not do this, period. That's hard to argue against when someone is so convinced in that way. That audience should be politely received, but the real movable block is the 70% to 80% of the American population who sits on the fence because the issues are so difficult, and it's up to you to convince them to go in your direction. It can be done. I think the people in laboratory animal science are turning a corner. I can tell you that we in laboratory animal medicine share with many of the concerns that you do and take them all very seriously, so be honest and don't lose your tempers. I compliment you on including this subject in the program.

R. Kelly: I'm interested, Dean, in your remark about getting information out to the people. When Time magazine ran that ad, I was upset about it. I wrote them a letter trying to say that the stunts were adequate and all that sort of thing. Because I am not a prolific publisher, my "letters to the editor" were never answered.

D. Kroft: I have two comments. One, the sow in the farrowing stall. I think the question we can always raise, who are you for? Are you for the baby pig's survival? There is no doubt that this management tool increases the baby pig's chance of surviving. Another issue we hear about is all the methane gas and the cows are responsible for all this and it's terrible that we raise them for meat. These people are telling me that we have no place in this world for cows. What I see them really telling me is that we do away with livestock. I don't think they are saying that we need to do like they do in India, and let the cattle go where they want. But what they are saying is no more cattle, we can't use them in any way and let's do away with them.

Griffin: I think some of us are fence-sitters because we're not sure what to do. What I'd like to know in particular is: "How do you combat the violence that is occurring, relative to people being killed, animals being killed and facilities being destroyed?"

Conklin: That issue is one of the very serious aspects of the animal rights movement. We certainly recognize that there are laws that should prevent and protect not only animals (in many states, there are animal welfare laws in place) but also the rights of people. In several situations where fur, biomedical research and even veal operations have been attacked, we have to say to local authorities "that is your business" and they have to deal with that issue. Of course that is a major problem. In several situations they wanted to create headlines and in order to do that they had to go to that drastic a measure. We have to depend on law enforcement agencies just as much as we do ourselves, hopefully to prevent it. If that does happen, or if the disturbances occur, and we've had them in our meetings within the last year or so, you have to know how to deal with those issues and let the law enforcement officers deal with the other aspects. It's unfortunate that those things happen. It drives their awareness up but believe me, we've done a lot of research at the Meat Board and throughout the industry and these issues are still low among consumers. They are not as concerned as you might think. One out of ten consumers are concerned about veal in this country today. With all the negative publicity about veal in the last three years, one out of ten!

The two feet ad that you mentioned earlier is a classic example. If that would have been effective in raising awareness and concern among consumers, we would have been in real trouble. We have attempted to get that ad stopped from the newspapers or periodicals. It has not been stopped. The issue is deeper than that, it's how do you deal with those issues. Yet, if they are saying something untrue, we ought to challenge them. They've used the tactics of not only creating that ad, but they've gone out and picketed. That gets back to the issue of whether you can run your business without the interference with other people thinking the way they want to or trying to project their views toward you, the restaurant owner or as a food service operator. The food industries are going to be the biggest ones under attack because that is where consumers buy their food. If we don't do something proactively with them, we are going to be in much deeper trouble with the issue. It may be low level now, but it could grow and it is instant-driven, as you can tell with instances like what occurred yesterday in Washington, DC.

Wimmer: From my limited experience, the animal rights
activists don’t want to know what you have to say. How do you make them listen to you and once they do, how do you convince them that our facts are correct?

Conklin: We don’t try to approach them because they are primarily the ones whose opinions are not going to change. The misinformed or uninformed public are the ones we are trying to reach, not that person who feels strongly about animal rights. We’d like to change their minds but probably we are not going to. The focus of our whole communications effort is on the consumer, it’s not on them, because if it is on them we are going to miss the mark of communicating with the consumer. If there is a commonality we have among them, it’s concern over animal welfare. We’re not going to be able to have common ground when we talk about animal rights. Animal welfare is such a broad issue, if we want to talk about that issue, we can. But we’re not going to try to change them over night, and that’s not our goal.

Westendorf: When are we going to become pro-active instead of reactive? You say on June 22 we are going to have veal ban, yet nothing has been done, no unified effort has been made with producers, meat packers and nutritionists to say, “Look! This is the way they’re raised. We’re doing this for this reason. This is how we’re handling the animals and the meat humanely. Once they get to the slaughtering plant, this is how we watch out for our people inside the slaughtering plant and this is what meat is actually doing. It is healthy and nutritious.”

Conklin: One of the biggest concerns we have in our industry is to get around the pro-active philosophy and strategy. We are doing some of those things right now. What you saw in the news this morning was the result of a more pro-active approach. The story on CNN, on the animal rights march, was very balanced because of the news conference held Thursday in Washington, DC. It was held because biomedical research and animal agriculture got together and said we’re going to have a news conference before the June 10 march. We’re starting to see that it pays off to do some things pro-actively before they happen.

We’re going to have a news conference next Monday at the Annual Veal Association meeting in Milwaukee, and you can bet that there are going to be protestors there throughout the convention. We’ve already advised the media ahead of time that we’re going to be there. We’re going to give you positive things to talk about in terms of veal. One of the biggest challenges we have is to get on the positive, pro-active side and do something about it.

D. Beermann: In answer to Marty’s question concerning how we effectively engage some of these animal rights people, one method I found effective was to agree to a prearranged set of questions to which each of two individuals could agree to respond in a set amount of time, then allow for questions and answers at the end. In advance, try to discover the motives and the background information of the individuals who are seeking your involvement in the debate or discussion. I had the opportunity to debate Alex Hershef at Cornell and found it to be a successful and effective approach to the situation. We do need to be prepared in terms of having factual information that can be also physically and orally disseminated at the point of the debate to support your contention. You accept that there are people in the audience whose opinions you will never change, but try to provide good, sound information to those who will listen and respect that information.

Secondly, we’ve also found that effectively improving our communication with the media has some positive benefits. I cite, as an example, a recent Food Safety Conference held at Cornell organized by Bob Devaney in Food Science. The New York media was invited in for a two-day conference to address the issue of residues, animal welfare, biotechnology implications on society and so forth. I think we need to see more university personnel involved in that kind of activity.

Conklin: Right! Doing your research first will often help you prepare for any kind of media situation.

Pike: We haven’t had a lot of trouble in Louisiana, but we did have one gentleman write a letter to our paper who is from the group “Earth Save.” They ran an ad in the New York Times some time back, and I wrote a rebuttal to this. His response was to call me at home and question me on the phone. Is this common practice?

Conklin: In the veal industry, we’ve had limited exposure to our industry people. One thing we are concerned about is identifying our industry people, yet you have to identify them when working with the media. You ask the media right up front, when writing a letter where you have to sign your name and say where you are from. We’ve told the media they should respect the rights of those they are interviewing, where there is terrorism. Respect the rights of those you are working with, and often times they will say only the name of the person and won’t give any address. There are people in this animal rights group who will do almost anything to drive their point home. That’s not saying that anything will happen. It’s just saying there is a risk involved. We get phone calls and hate mail every day from these people.

J. Kemp: Last week I talked on the Larry King show. He was interviewing a couple who were vegetarians. That they were good looking, smiling, happy people was the message they were getting across to the public and they looked like they meant it. They were tying in the anti-meat program and vegetarianism and ecology with saving the world. They had plastic bags there. “We don’t use these, we don’t use styrofoam and we don’t eat meat.” By doing that they were going to be able to save billions of tons of topsoil and keep the forests green. They were planting trees and selling their vegetarian cook book. Along with Larry King, who agreed with them, it made a good show! Now we need some good shows on Larry King or other types of talk shows that millions of people watch.

Hicks: Yesterday on the news, I saw the animal rights march in Washington. They commented that for the congressmen in Washington the number 3 issue in correspondence from the public concerns animal rights issues. How does the Meat Board work with Congress in keeping them informed on the issues?

Conklin: In terms of the check-off, we cannot do any lobbying. You cannot use check-off dollars to lobby; consequently, if there is any issue related to legislation, we are not going to get involved as an organization. However, if you are dealing with the public, materials have been developed for consumers, congressmen, their aides, and people they work with and they can receive this material. Often times industry people who have responsibility of lobbying will do that. However, you have to be very careful in answering questions on
legislation. You've got to know that basically, trade organizations are dealing with those issues. We work closely with the American Veal Association, American Cattlemen's Association within the beef industry, Milk Producers and others. There is a group at the national level called the Farm Animal Welfare Coalition. Several states are developing their own welfare coalitions to deal with these issues on the pro-active lobbying side as well as the public information side.

Essig: In the list of terms you had that should and should not be used, you used the word "humanely." I think this word should have also been included on the "not to use" list because when we use the word "humanely" we tend to humanize the animals. This then could present problems.

Van Horn: I'm representing a newly-formed federation, which includes the American Meat Science Association, that has come together partly because we feel scientists are ready to enter into public issues a little more than in the past and we're struggling to know where that might go. So as you went through many of the things you listed, these are some of the same things scientists are going to have to think about and where we come into public issues. I'm wondering where that might be for a federation or where scientist's response teams and the like might fit. As scientists, if we form response teams, we don't want to duplicate what's going on from other areas. I'm interested in identification of some scientists who might be good in veal or many of the other issues, even within animal welfare. How would our group fit or what we do benefit if we did it separately? If you have any suggestions or discussion from others, I would appreciate it.

Cox: One of the subjects that we haven't talked about is slaughtering methods and packing plant animal facilities. I wonder what your organization is doing for that?

Conklin: We would like to work with other groups that are dealing with those issues. We've employed and received counsel from animal scientists in the past. Dr. Jack Albright from Purdue, Dr. Stan Curtis from the University of Illinois, Dr. Virgil Hayes, University of Kentucky, Dr. Dick Warner from Cornell, have helped in developing our program. It's important to share that information on the science with all of our industry. There are other groups that need to be a part of that; the American Meat Institute and other groups that have national focus and statewide responsibilities. What you're really talking about is, how do we network and share information because we're all dealing with the same issue?

Van Horn: That issue has not been a major one with us at this point in the veal industry. However, we've talked about dealing with the slaughtering issue from the standpoint of what happens at the processing plant level. It's a big concern among consumers about food safety. The Humane Slaughter Act that protects animals in terms of humaneness of slaughter is in effect. But we have not come across that as the major issue so far. There is a driving force behind using animals for meat production, and slaughtering practices fall into that discussion. In terms of how animals are treated in the slaughtering plant, a good example is a veal plant in the state of New York who modified their actual practice processing veal calves to be accepted by the Humane Society and also USDA. They developed a procedure in fact, that was done with Dr. Temple Grandin, to deal with that issue.

Mann: Reason Magazine had an article about this, and they said animal rights were a misnomer, that animals do not have rights, only sentient-cognizant creatures like humans have rights. Animals have welfare though, so the proper term is animal welfare. One of the commentators made the statement that scientists have to go to the emotional appeal. I would question a decision to fall back to the emotional appeal. It tends to remove the decision-making from the individual level to the policy level. You start getting people involved like congressmen and lawyers who have no idea what you're talking about. Things like drugs, legal and illegal, alcohol, cigarettes, fast cars, furs, etc. at one time had negative publicity, yet they tend to thrive in our society. Veal and the use of animals in research is something getting a lot of negative publicity. Do you feel that the utility of such a thing in the market place would sustain, whether you defended it or not?

Conklin: The issue that you're talking about here which relates to veal, fur, meat, and meat in general, is basically a philosophical question about personal choice. If you deal with the ideology that you have a personal choice in what you eat, and what you wear, and what you do with your life, then you should respect the rights of others who have that personal choice as well. What we have a problem with is that one segment of society is trying to tell other segments of society how to choose. We don't have a problem with any animal rightists in that they don't want to eat meat. We do have a problem with what they say about our industry which will affect other people. We don't get hung up on their personal choice, that's their right, and we would not challenge that. The whole issue of not dealing with their rights and the rights of animals is the point you were bringing out earlier. It's perception versus reality. What they see and what they believe is what they will see on TV and understand from the standpoint of what's right and what's wrong, how it's presented and how we deliver the message. Think about the consumers; think about the perception of how they feel. Fifty percent or more of consumers are concerned about fur. That's why they went out with a hard-hitting campaign. Consumers should have a choice. You saw the vote in Aspen, Colorado, or Vail. This made me think that those people are not going to let somebody tell them whether they're going to wear fur or not, particularly in Colorado. Think about the personal choice you have whether to eat meat or not. That's the whole issue, and that's why we have to be careful how we frame an issue, because they have their right to talk about how they feel and what they do. However, let's not start transferring their beliefs onto someone else.

R Kauffman: Dr. Harkness, one of your other comments was on emotions. Would you address this?

Harkness: I think the diversion toward emotional responses was an action of desperation. We were losing. We may not be losing now, but we were losing a few years ago. My job description was written by Congress, my once-scientific life is now devoted to pushing papers, forced on me by the federal government. As you might know, the FDA in 1966 got authority to regulate the biomedical use of all warm-blooded animals. They can write regulations to include other animals and they are writing regulations and having discussion now about your animals. About farm animals used in biomedical research subject to standards, I haven't seen yet, but if they come out and they resemble those I have for hamsters and the monkeys, we are in difficulty. Congress will write the pen
sizes for you, if the animals are used in biomedical research.

Now what's the definition of biomedical research versus agricultural production research? It's going to be up to some committee. I have the sense that biomedical research is going to have a far broader preview than what we want it to be. Even horses used for riding are going to be included in this. My friend and colleague, Pat Manning at the University of Minnesota, gave me good advice. He told me not to panic. I think many administrators and vice presidents panic. They see marches of 24,000 people; remember they expected 200,000 and they got 24,000. Pat Manning says "Don't panic." I recognize that many of you represent multi-million dollar industries, and it's a far greater dimension than I have. Insofar as the protection and security of our enterprises, Senator Haplan from Alabama and Congressman Stenholm from Texas support what is called the "Research Protection Act" which makes it a federal crime to interfere with the facilities or programs of federally-sponsored research. That could protect universities that receive federal funds, but again, private industry has some difficulty.

A couple of years ago, the biggest expenditure for animal care in the laboratory was on security devices. When I entered animal facilities for creditation purposes, it was like entering a prison. We have crisis response plans and we have media training. We also have emphasized honesty and openness. We don't lie. The moment we start misrepresenting what we do is when we really get injured. We have media training. We also have emphasized honesty and care in the laboratory was on security devices. When I entered animal facilities for creditation purposes, it was like entering animal facilities for creditation purposes.

Conklin: Yesterday, the executive committee sat down, and I was invited to that meeting for an hour or so, and we talked through issues management. As animal scientists and meat scientists, we are not immune to protests any more. We could become a target, so yesterday in planning, we addressed the issue of what to do if we are protested. We set up a team; we had a person available if we had media questions. Security had been alerted for possible situations. But if they come bursting through that door right now, we do not confront them. They may have a right to be here, they may be standing on good legal ground, but we don't confront them. They don't want to hear our side of the story; that's not why they would come into this meeting. They would be here to cause a disruption, to draw more attention to their cause, so we don't debate those people. We bring out our issues and practices on our own terms, in our own time. That's how we deal with the issue.

Conklin: I might add, Wendy's a part of the team that's developed this booklet for industry to use, and has become very actively involved in this with Donna Schmidt and other members of our staff in the Information Department at the Meat Board.

Lewis: I would question the video in which you indicated the veal was receiving iron supplementation. We realize that veal is lower in iron in the muscle. A person knowing those facts questions the accuracy of the whole video.

Conklin: The real issue that we're dealing with is the issue of anemia. The key aspect of anemia centers around iron supplementation. In order for veal calves to grow, they must receive adequate amounts of iron. Research shows calves that receive excess iron do not exhibit any additional benefits, either from a nutritional or behavioral standpoint.

The amount of myoglobin, (iron level in muscle) determines the color of the meat. Given the fact that these animals are young and are raised predominately on milk or soy-based diet, I would say iron levels in veal calves prove to be adequate to provide adequate growth for calves (2½ pounds weight gain per day is achieved with special-fed calves).
Anemia is one of several key issues affecting the veal industry. Other issues include tethering, the light/darkness issue of barns, size of stalls, and use of antibiotics.

R. Cassens: This morning a speaker mentioned that science should be leading the train, and we've heard this afternoon from you about the value of good science. Is there more science required in this issue, and if so, is there a list of the science projects that should be done?

Conklin: In my perspective coming from the veal industry, more science needs to be done on animal behavior. I don't think there has been much science done on the issue of testing animal stress and behavior in different environments. In fact, that's one of the greatest needs we have right now in the veal industry. It may also exist in the beef industry and dairy industry as well, but I would say we probably need a greater body of knowledge before we can become pro-active on those animal welfare issues that are related to space and stress and behavior.

Van Horn: You made the comment about the animal rights people having the right not to eat meat. That prompts the other side of the question in that since we are producing food for consumers, do consumers get their rights met with equal due? Specifically, veal has probably an ethnic background. Where people want veal, can that question be put, do they have the right to eat veal?

Conklin: We have to remember that consumers don't know enough about our product. Veal is something unique to them. I'm highly connected with ethnic populations, and because of the western European influence where veal was raised, a lot of cultures have had veal for many years. We're not used to veal because we don't know as much about the product. The nutritional benefits of veal are strong, yet people don't know that and we have to communicate that to them as well as its versatility and its nutritional aspects. We've got to understand that what people eat will be their decision. Proper nutrition, though, plays a major part in their decision. I think we have an obligation to tell them what the facts are about the meat that they eat.

Graham: Back to the discussion of perception versus reality, it appears that many of the proponents of animal rights espouse that animals should be neutered. Please tell me the difference in the welfare of the animal if they undergo this as compared to the other treatment they receive.

Conklin: That's an issue with which we really haven't dealt. To get to that issue, you have to get back to the science of why that happens in the production of livestock today, but that's not one we really have to deal with in the veal industry.

R. Usborne: On the neutered question, just an interesting comment. In Guelph, Canada, the Humane Society gives us a subsidy for neutering our dogs and cats, so that's something to think about. Certainly if it's done in a proper way, there's nothing wrong with it, and it's a good way, in that instance, to control the population.

Riemann: We've noticed in our area of the country that many of the animal rights and welfare groups have launched campaigns in connection with Earth Day, etc., and they've gone on with their campaign about all the torture of animals and grain being used to feed cattle that could be used to feed all the starving people, etc. Their bottom line is that we really need to be vegetarians and all of these problems would go away. It's interesting that we take the approach of needing to get science and truth out in front of the people but there never seems to be a campaign that promotes the positive aspects of vegetarianism. They promote vegetarianism using the emotional issues of animal rights and animal welfare. Would it put consumers to sleep if we responded by pointing out the nutritional benefits and the good health benefits we get from the animal production programs that we have in place?

Also, it seems that all the animal rights and animal welfare people have to do is accuse. They never bear the burden of proof. We are always the ones who have to come back and say, "Now this really is not true for these reasons." It seems to me that an aggressive, pro-active approach could knock this group off balance and make them come back and be accountable for the statements they make.

Conklin: Remember that these groups are often considered public-interest groups. We, as an industry, are often viewed as commercial speakers. They are non-commercial speakers. The breadth of what they can talk about and get away with is much broader than what we can. We have to base our statements on fact, and the nutritional benefits of eating meat have to be based on fact. We have a different arena to work from than they do. The other point I'd like to make in regard to this ad and the negative emotional ad that's come out is that we are taking steps right now to challenge that ad, based on the science, based on the facts that we know, and we hope to see someone take an active role and stop that ad from running. That is a big one to take on because it is an emotional issue, a food safety issue and an animal welfare issue. That's the step of going after, being pro-active and doing the right things, hopefully, to get people to say "That shouldn't happen." We are not going to stop them from making the claims, but we're going to say "You can say your own piece about animal rights but not false statements about the way these animals are raised."

D. Kinsman: One of my concerns has been whether the animal rightists are using their concerns as a method of instituting vegetarianism? I had the "honor" of being on a panel at Yale University, sponsored by ARF, Animal Rights Front. There was a philosopher from North Carolina, University of North Carolina, who has written a book in that vein, representing the animal rights attitude. There were some people representing medical research and myself, representing animal science and meat science aspects. Without any question, their full approach was that of promoting vegetarianism. They are not willing to see the other side of the issue. They zeroed in on their intent, whereas my approach has always been to honor their attitude, respect their opinions, but not necessarily agree with them. I don't think we're going to change them, but through a process of education, I believe we're eventually going to at least educate the public and this is what it's all about. It's an interesting challenge and we need to address it calmly and with a logical approach. It's a matter of educating the public.

Jones: Do you think it's time the universities or the extension service took a hard look at hiring someone who would do some in-service training or training programs for county agents and people who have to answer these questions from day-to-day? Maybe we need some intensive training at the university level throughout the states.

Conklin: It would seem to me that would be very appropriate for people like county extension agents and others who
are dealing with the public every day. We have trained over 100 people to be spokespersons in our industry, but there may only be a handful that you could put into a tough media situation. In a "48 Hours" call, we’d have 10 or 12 people we’d feel comfortable with in that situation. I believe people become more sensitive to those issues if they go through a training program. It’s important to know how the consumers feel about the issues.

Booren: Would you share with us some things that we, as educators, can do? We’re all educators in this room, whether we’re working with students or adults. It’s important that we begin educating that 85% to come across to our side. One of the things I see in many of the adult education programs is that 85% are easily swayed to what I perceive to be the negative. What do you feel that we can do and incorporate in our everyday teaching, to get this job done?

Conklin: You will have to do some research and find out how your students feel about these issues. Learn what the facts are if there is a particular issue they need to know more about. You also need to do research in terms of understanding what the motives are behind the animal activists so you can counter with the positive, the pro-active positions. Look at the terminology you use, the vocabulary you use in your everyday teaching. If there are terms you feel may be negative, look up alternatives, terms that may be able to be used to describe the way we do things. There’s a lot to be said about taking a positive position. The bottom line is that they’re going to want to know more about animal welfare because they probably don’t know much about production.

They want to know even more about food safety, because food safety is something they all have concerns about. Keep in mind the animal welfare issue, even in the veal industry. One out of ten people have a concern over the veal issue. An incident can drive consumer awareness up quickly, and you have to recognize that consumer awareness is one issue, consumer concern is another. If you create additional awareness, you may create additional concern. You’ve got to be able to understand where the consumers are coming from first, then try to address them and the issue. If it’s 85% who are unclear about what’s going on, then you had better educate them on the facts. There are ways to emotionally deliver a message with the facts, and that can be very effective. A survey can be an effective way of reaching the public, but don’t get in a trap of communicating with the animal activists, because that’s what they want you to do. They want to pull you into that emotional debate, and that’s a no-win situation as far as we’re concerned.

Harkness: I deal with veterinary students and veterinary students are becoming increasingly sensitive. In fact, on the screen we saw a veterinarian a few moments ago, and I will take a note from the Dean of the Veterinary School at Tufts regarding the veal calf industry in a minute, but I convince students, over the four years that I’m exposed to them, that I care, I convince them that everything I do in word and deed, shows that I care about animals. I admit that there are problems. I never say that there are no problems in the animal industries. There are things that go wrong, not many of them, but there are things that go wrong. I listen to their complaints. If they see or read something that bothers them about animals and their care and use, I listen to those very carefully and I look into their eyes as they’re talking to me, not at a book or the telephone. I state the positives of why animals are used.

I do want to show you why some things are very difficult. This is from Frank Lowe, the Dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts, a board certified laboratory animal person and quite a famous spokesman, an international spokesman on animal welfare. He does defend the use of animals in research but this is a letter to Dr. Zimbelman, Executive Vice President, American Society of Animal Science, regarding congressional testimony over HR 84, the Veal Calf Protection Act. This is a Dean of a Veterinary School writing to the Executive Vice President, American Society of Animal Science, "I have received a copy of your June 9, 1989 memorandum 'Hearings on The Veal Calf Protection Act', and it is hard to believe we were at the same hearings. So paranoid, in my view, is your report, the elected officers of ASAS might be misled. They might wish to seek other reports than yours about what went on."

Now these are people who should be in the same camp. "The fact is, Americans are buying less veal; the industry can either bury its head in the sand or dig its heels in while the industry goes down the drain. Or, enlightened groups can stop confusing the messenger with the message and make some changes that will lure urban customers back. Industry postures such as yours seem to me guaranteed to fail. Why not do what GM, Chrysler and Ford finally did in the face of Japanese competition? They changed their product." So this is not a letter directed from an animal rights person, it’s from a person influential in what we do. It further expands the dimensions of the problem we face.

Henning: First of all, I want to answer Bill Jones’ comments. We did have a training session for county agents whom we addressed with just what you’re talking about. These are the people who are going to be on the firing line to a large extent. We’ve reached the point where we talk about county fairs and livestock shows and having a position, rules and regulations. We’re in the process now of writing animal care and use regulations for all of our livestock shows, even to have a pro-active stance on that. As a result of our in-service training this year at our annual conference, we developed two video tapes and Ken Kephart is now in the process of developing a slide tape set, so hopefully, those will be available soon. We faced this animal rights thing for quite a while. Every year our Block and Bridle Club has a “Red Meats Spectacular” which is a two-day meat promotion out at the Mall in conjunction with National Meat Week. The last two years, we’ve been picketed by one of the local animal welfare, animal rights groups here in town, so we’ve had to deal with it pretty directly with our students. We’ve had pickets at our livestock auctions in state! We’ve had pickets at 4-H sales. Therefore, we’ve had to deal with it a lot more than some of the other states. Right now our farms are pretty much open. We allow free access to most of our farms and people bring their kids out there on weekends and that sort of thing. If anyone has any regulations or policies developed on allowing people into these, or access to the meat lab, I’d like to hear them.

Conklin: In regards to media training, I think it’s important. We need to recognize again; where the listener is coming from, where the point of view is, because there are students who are consumers, there is media, and they all may be
driving at a different point of view.

Schaefer: In response to what Bill said and tying it in to trying to reach the other 85% as Al Boreen mentioned earlier, it sounds like we have a persuasive argument right now. All of our population have the right to visit and enjoy what their state dollars are providing, but if they are going to take advantage and either do illegal activities or be on the verge of illegal activities, all the rest of the people will lose the opportunity to have that right. Someone mentioned the use of the word "humane" and that may have actually connotations we don't want to relate to. For years we've used the term "humane slaughter." Slaughter is one of your no-no words too. How do we convey this concept if we're asked to respond in other terms?

Conklin: Slaughterhouse is a universal term that's been used where animals are processed or marketed. We've used the word "marketed" in a true sense of talking of how animals are actually marketed today. That includes the transportation issue, the marketing issue of slaughter, processing and marketing that product to the consumer. Consumers can identify with that word. Slaughter has a different connotation and it represents one aspect of the marketing process. When you're talking about animals and how they're handled in terms of being humane, and again, humaneness is the term consumers use and animal rightists will use it just for that very reason. They want to put those animals on the same plane as humans. That's why we want to get away from using human terms to talk about our industry, because that in itself causes problems in communicating.

Kruel: I'd like to add another dimension to this conversation that has not been addressed. Both at Iowa State and Oklahoma State, I've been involved in assisting in teaching students who are involved in hotel and restaurant trade, which is an important market for our product. Do you have any comments on how specifically graduate students such as myself, and faculty members can address these people? We have a one-semester course to educate these people who distribute, process and sell our product. How do we educate these people who look at it more as a food commodity?

Conklin: I'll start with veal. This year we have become much more pro-active with food service and retail people because they are the ones who are going to be asked the questions consumers will have. We've developed a brochure, "The Truth About Veal," for the food industry. We've also gone out and talked to food service media; food service media have gone out on tours just recently to talk about what they saw on a veal farm. It has been successful for us to talk about what they saw, what their perceptions were before they went, what they saw and how they felt afterwards. It was helpful in sharing with them the information about what they thought existed on the farm, then when they saw healthy animals raised in a healthy environment and producing a safe, wholesome product, they took away a totally different perspective.

They really don't have much information, if any, about the way animals are produced, and how they are actually marketed. Our issues management program this year in veal will concentrate on the food industry, getting to them, because they're the ones to whom consumers will ask questions. We are developing issue alerts. For instance, June 22 will be a National Veal Boycott Day. We're sending out nationwide an issue alert to all major restaurant owners (over 10,000) who serve veal. We're also going to be sending out materials to all the major retailers in the country so they don't get caught off-guard. This pamphlet can help them get through consumer affairs.

People that operate at the retail level are going to be pressured. They already have been in some states by being asked to take veal off their menu, or take it out of their meat case. They may do it just because they don't know what to do. They don't know the industry is out there to help them, and you're part of that. You're part of the answer to their questions. If you offer them assistance, I think you'll find they'll be calling you when they need help.

Olson: I've been dealing with food irradiation and have some of the same issues because there are activists against food irradiation. When we're dealing with land-grant colleges and people in agriculture, we don't need a great deal of education for them. We really have to deal with the 78% who are in the urban population. They're the ones who are going to be shut off. Therefore you have to deal with the activists, in that you have to know what their motives are, and their motives are not really to sway the consumer. Their motives are to get legislation in so the consumer has no choice. They are doing that with irradiation as well. Where are these activists getting their money? What are the roles in the organizations behind them? We're facing this with irradiation and I think the animal rightists are trying to legislate vegetarianism.

Campbell: One of the things that worries me is limiting public access to the farms and the animals, because if we do that, some people will perceive that we have something to hide.

Conklin: That's why we've gone to the media to encourage them to come and see the veal farm. We have to protect the rights of those individuals who own those farms. We ask the reporters to respect the rights of that individual. If you are going to use their name, do not indicate where they live.

Huffman: We saw some excellent handling facilities but we all know there are some weak spots in the veal industry. How do you handle those things, where we have animals that are not humanely treated?

Conklin: We have a couple of good examples. I can tell you of one in Pennsylvania and of another one in California. They became public issues, and in those two states they passed animal welfare laws. The industry has established guidelines for the care and production of veal calves. In those two cases, the industry came out and said, "we cannot support that activity." Those two people have been taken to court and been fined and one put in jail. We won on both sides because they agreed with veal producers and consumers that this isn't the responsible way to handle livestock. We need to come out with a positive, pro-active statement saying the veal industry does not support irresponsible handling of livestock.

Schaefer: Related to the restaurant editors for the restaurant communications pieces, did you allow them to take pictures if they didn't show people or the owners of the operations?

Conklin: Yes, we did. You have to be very careful, though. When you bring in big spotlights and put them in the face of an animal, you're not going to get a very good picture of that
animal because it’s scared. Therefore we ask them to try not to induce some sort of behavior that you’ve noticed in other pictures and other tapes where they have really scared the animals to make them look like they’re under additional stress.

Schaefer: Does our livestock industry have a code of handling practices, or should we have one if we don’t?

Conklin: The veal industry has guidelines for the care and production of veal calves; poultry producers also have them. Possibly other groups may have them as well. The fur industry has guidelines for the production of fur, and most industries are going to have to look at that as a standard. Most industries probably have guidelines but they haven’t formalized them.

Kauffman: What is the USDA saying about all of this?

J. Wise: I can only speak from our side. We have had some congressional inquiries on our veal standards as to why our veal standards promote the rearing of veal, which they don’t like (the pro-rightist groups, etc.). Other than that, we haven’t been involved in any mess at this point in time. I don’t know where it’s going to come from. Most of it’s going to be done in Congress. They are trying to dictate more of what gets done. What you are looking at in the way of research and the way of management, particularly on veal, because again, that is going to impact on things we’re doing.

Conklin: At this point, there has been no research conducted through the check-off. There has to be additional research to answer some of these questions on animal behavior and stress. There has been concern about using check-off dollars for production research. The attitude has been that we don’t necessarily want to spend a lot of money in that area. I continue to believe there needs to be research done because this is not a production issue, it’s a consumer marketing issue that’s been driven, based on how animals are perceived to be produced. There is a big distinction between production research, of which I think the goal is to produce more of that product. How can you produce more of that product more efficiently, versus the marketing issue, like veal, where you’ve got to deal with the prospect of how people feel about the end product, and how it’s produced? Right now we hope to have some standards developed so we can look at additional research. They voted down some research just recently, through the Beef Operating Committee. The perception was that it was production research and not marketing research. I think we can do it, but we’ve got to package it in a careful way. I think the industry’s going to have to do some of that research, perhaps jointly, through USDA, and through other sources, in order for us to deal with those animal welfare behavior issues.

Reynolds: Lean Trimmings Newsletter used the terminology that the abattoir at San Luis Obispo was using a livestock conversion facility for a livestock slaughter facility. They also used the term “harvest” to replace the term “killing” of animals.