

Animal Welfare: Responding to a Changing Culture

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The following is a summary of group discussions from the workshop sessions on "Animal Welfare", held at the 2001 Banff Pork Seminar.

▪ What are the impacts of addressing, and not addressing different perceptions about uses and treatment of animals?

Impact of Addressing Issue

- ▶ are able to generate your own solution rather than one being imposed
- ▶ improved public image

Impact of Not Addressing Issue

- ▶ lose opportunity to resolve the issue yourself
- ▶ solutions are imposed or regulated
- ▶ alienate public/consumers even more

What changes or shifts are required by industry?

- ▶ shifts in research emphasis and increased funding to address these issues (example: identify whether loose housing actually does reduce stress and increase comfort of sows)
- ▶ need more open dialogue with those in opposition
- ▶ need to find out exactly what the public's perception is of specific pork production practices
- ▶ producers need more knowledge of animal welfare standards and parameters
- ▶ define animal well-being

- ▶ be more pro-active about the positive things the industry is doing - rather than reactive
- ▶ school children and teachers need to be shown the positive side of agriculture
- ▶ increase opportunities for urban people to interact with farm operations
- ▶ make substantive changes in practices (i.e. farrowing crates) to address public's concerns - before changes are legislated
- ▶ make the industry aware of the range of diverse opinions of consumers
- ▶ create interpretive centres for public education
- ▶ incorporate more natural behaviors in care standards i.e. alleviate boredom, family units, quality of life
- ▶ be more open about animal handling and care practices commonly used
- ▶ don't deny that we use certain practices - educate the public in why we do it

▪ **Changes the industry could undertake to address issue**

1. Take a hard line - zero tolerance - towards those who violate animal welfare regulations.

<p>Barriers to making changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - how to enforce this, considering bio-security issues - cost of implementing - rules aren't well defined 	<p>What would need to happen to remove or reduce these barriers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - educate producers - clarify legislation and rules
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2. Improve transportation of animals, including achieving better training for truckers

<p>Barriers to making changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cost of a training course - cost of equipment modifications, both in design and maintenance - stock densities on truck - steep slope of ramps in trucks 	<p>What would need to happen to remove or reduce these barriers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - get together with all partners (truckers, farmers etc) to come up with solutions - share costs
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3. Inform the public and consumers about good features of animal agriculture in a pro-active way.

Barriers

- - cost
- - know that we may not have impact on some people, individuals make their own choices

Reducing barriers

- - industry and government funding

4. Achieving industry investment in new technology

Barriers

- - cost
- - resistance to change
- - valid and proven options in new technology

Reducing barriers

- - costs need to be fairly distributed

5. Replacing practices that raise consumer concern (castration, gestation stalls) to keep up with standards in countries that could be export markets.

Barriers

- castration - consumer acceptance is a barrier
- gestation stalls - lack management knowledge of a replacement system in Canada

Reducing Barriers

- castration - consumer education and acceptance
- gestation stalls - need a system, experience and training with loose housing systems

6. Building stronger connections between consumers and the producers of their food.

Barriers

- - distance between consumer and producer
- - denial, apathy
- - media bias - bad is better
- - extremist group sensationalism

Reducing barriers

- - target perceptive groups (i.e. students) and provide hands on or video exploration
- - education of public
- - check off to fund initiatives
- - keep positive, repetitive messages by knowledgeable spokespersons

7. Improving handling of animals before stunning at slaughter plants

Barriers

- - cost
- - training, education and participation
- - de-sensitization that happens in that work environment
- - human nature @out of sight, out of mind@
- - design of the facilities

Reducing barriers

- - increase monitoring of workers - video cameras
- - increase education of workers
- - take a zero tolerance approach, immediate consequences