

An Overview of Farm Animal Care & Welfare Approaches in the United States

Janice C Swanson, PhD
 Professor & Director of Animal Welfare
 Department of Animal Science
 Department of Large Animal Clinical Science



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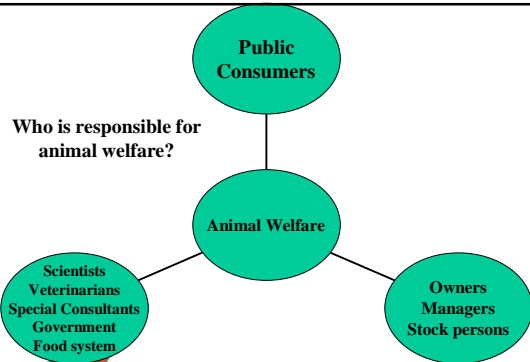
Public Issues

- **Quality of life**
 - Production conditions for animals
 - Working conditions and training for workers
- **Quality and safety of food product**
- **Use of environmentally responsible & sustainable animal production practices**
- **Verification for food animal production practice**



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Who is responsible for animal welfare?



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Regulating Behavior

- **Voluntary**
 - Only one cup of alcoholic beverage is recommended during a 24 h period.
- **Involuntary**
 - Only one cup or glass of alcoholic beverage may be consumed during any 24 hour period. Violators are subject to penalty by law.



Big Cup Syndrome

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U.S. Environment

- **Current approach to ensuring farm animal welfare on farms & ranches is voluntary**
 - Processors have Humane Slaughter Act
- **State legislative initiatives have largely focused on banning specific equipment used in production**
- **Attempts to regulate farm animal care at the federal level have historically failed**
 - Considerable infrastructure & budget to enforce



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Voluntary Regulating

- **Guidelines**
 - Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Agricultural Research and Teaching
 - Producer/Commodity developed best practices
- **Standards**
 - Certified Humane Raised & Handled
 - Free Farmed Certified



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Involuntary Regulating

- **State legislation/referendums: instituting bans**
 - Several passed or currently proposed
 - California – three different titles proposed
 - New Jersey - lawsuit
- **Recent Federal activity**
 - Banning horse slaughter
 - Road transport of livestock



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Current Assurance Strategies

- **Variety of products & new business claims regarding animal welfare**
 - Production system
 - Specific features of a system reflected in end-product
- **Use of labeling, branding and certification processes**
- **Private sector taking the lead**



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Animal Welfare Assurance

- **Current modes of action**
 - Food retailers or associated trade organizations/councils programs
 - Animal producer/commodity group programs
 - Animal protection programs
 - Independent professional audit organizations
 - Government programs
- **Requires the development, implementation & audit of the guidelines/standards**



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A Variety of Program Specs

- Historical breeds + alternative system + small family farm + organic or natural + audit/certification
- “Animal Friendly” specs + alternative system + selected food specs (ex. hormone free) + audit/certification
- Conventional production + animal welfare specs + assurance/audit/certification
- Commodity level production no specs + conventional production + no assurance/audit/certification



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Concerns for the Consumer

- **Confusion over terminology: animal care, humane, animal friendly, process verified, etc.**
- **If special labeling or brand – by law required to provide consumer with details of the program**
 - Typically tie back to a website where consumer may access information or brochure available from retailer
- **Differences in philosophy has resulted in lawsuits and claims against labels**
 - Government intervention could be useful in providing a definition of humane or setting an appropriate baseline



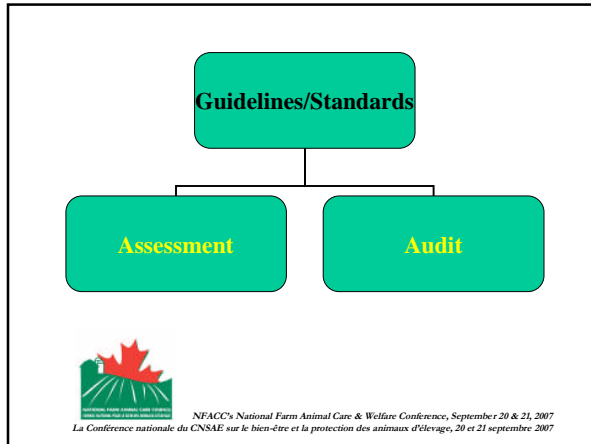
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How is best practice determined?

- **The formulation & acceptance of science-based guidelines or standards of animal care**
 - A guideline/standard is a statement of criteria that define a desired outcome
 - Typically composed of engineering and performance criteria
 - **Engineering criteria:** specific techniques/processes are named to achieve an outcome: ex. cage specs
 - **Performance criteria:** describe the desired outcome without specifying a particular technique for achieving the outcome: ex. percent lameness



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Animal Welfare Assessment

- **Assessment instrument**
 - Built from accepted guidelines or standards
 - Collects data associated with actual practice
 - Purpose is to evaluate producer practice against guideline criteria
 - Problem identification and correction
- **Self or professionally administered**
- **Educational problem-solving tool**
 - Ex. Pork Quality Assurance Plus
- **Assessors actively participate in problem solving process with the producer or processor**

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Audits

- **Utilize a data collection instrument**
 - Carefully worded questions
 - evaluate conformance
 - Objective observation of practice
- **Identifies producer compliance with guidelines or standards**

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Types of Audits Used in the U.S.

- **First Party Audit**
 - Conducted by a designated employee or manager on site at a designated random frequency
 - Recommended for identifying problems and areas for improvement: Self study
 - Preparation for a second or third party audit
- **Second Party Audit**
 - Conducted by a paid consultant or affiliated industry organization - less frequent than primary
 - Provides outside expertise and evaluation
 - Preparation for third party audit

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Types of Audits.....

- **Third Party Audit**
 - Uses evaluation instrument
 - Independence from party to be audited
 - Auditor does not participate in problem solving or education of the producer: They are there to audit

Note: Neither primary nor secondary audits qualify as independent

- Conflict of interest

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Current Strategy

- **Conduct all three types of audits**
 - First: provides real time monitoring
 - Builds familiarity with standards and audit process
 - Second: shadow audits by retailer provides necessary market pressure to comply
 - Third: assures independent oversight of compliance
- **USDA -AMS** – verifies the audit process has integrity – especially if labeled or branded

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Other Considerations

- **Auditors must be trained & certified as competent**
 - Professional Animal Auditor Certification Organization
 - National Organic Program
- **Conflict of interest criteria enforced & code of ethics**
- **Professional auditing organizations are engaged in animal welfare assessment too**
 - Several offering independence from producer or retailer
 - Bundling of food safety & animal welfare by processors
 - Bundling of environmental & animal welfare on-farm



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Harmonization of Auditing?

- **Animal Welfare Audit Program (AWAP)**
 - Commissioned through FMI and NCCR
 - Database and third party audit program
 - Producer or Processor owned the data
 - Query system
 - Prevent over-auditing of processors and producers
 - **Program failed**
 - Industry not ready to accept coordinated approach
 - Preferred choice of auditing firms
 - Anti-Trust concerns



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Voluntary Regulating

- **A Learning Curve**
 - How do other audited industries operate?
 - Does voluntary adherence increase public trust?
 - Can we agree on labeling/marketing rules?
 - Do all current standards/guidelines have integrity?
 - Do the parties engaged in the voluntary effort have integrity?
- **Program maintenance: long term commitment**
 - Guidelines/standards are living documents
 - Also requires assessment and audit process/documents to change
 - Public concerns and mandates generate revision too
 - Must be responsive to ethical concerns



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Inherent Problems

- **Proprietary issues with animal care guidelines, standards, or audit process**
- **Recognition of universal rules for developing standards/guidelines**
 - Primary model is based on federal process and recognized guidelines for animal care of research animals
 - National Research Council – ILAR Guide
 - Federation of Animal Science Societies – Ag Guide
- **Audit exhaustion**
 - Too many audits for units that supply multiple retailers



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Will a hybrid system emerge?

- **EU Welfare Quality Project**
 - Attempt to standardize across boundaries
 - Trade objectives

Welfare Quality
Science and society improving animal welfare



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Has the Welfare of Farm Animals in the United States Improved?

- **Yes – Processing sector**
 - Religious slaughter struggling
- **Yes, Maybe, & No – On Farm sector**
 - Conventional sector still working through implementation of changes
 - Egg producers leaders
 - Overall attention to animal welfare is positive
 - ? Non-conventional programs



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Today & Future

- **A consumer/public driven food system**
 - Challenge: injecting objective trustworthy discourse
- **Non-governmental standards currently rule**
- **Impact of global animal welfare standards**
 - World Trade Organization and World Animal Health Organization (OIE) – trade & food security
 - Impact of multinational corporate policy on animal production practices – consistency & integrity
- **Food safety & quality impact on animal welfare**
 - Could pose a barrier to change if heightened animal disease or food pathogen loads



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Today & Future.....

- **Environmental issues: affect conventional & non-conventional programs**
- **Legislative/ballot actions: state level with potential for federal intervention**
 - Finding common ground & common sense to make decisions: Mission Impossible?
 - Will the desire to exert power actually result in poorer welfare?
 - Limitations of using involuntary regulation: little flex & long transaction periods



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Goal

- **Innovative systems that will:**
 - Provide an acceptable quality of life for agricultural animals
 - Achieve sustainable production
 - Produce affordable, safe, and socially responsible products



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