Letters

Producers Respond to HSUS Veal Campaign

An advertising campaign of The Humane Society of the United States against veal consumption is a slap in the face of the livestock industry, which has attempted to explore concerns of animal welfarists about confinement production of livestock and respond to them. This campaign, if successful, would jeopardize the livelihood and investment of some 1,200 U.S. family veal producers.

Producers and others in the livestock industry, and particularly the veal industry, have been listening to the animal welfarists in an attempt to understand their concerns. The veal industry has responded, with a study of the system the animal welfarists have proposed as an alternative to the traditional calf-raising system. That study is just now getting underway. For HSUS to embark on an attack merely on a boycott of veal, completely ignoring attempts by the livestock industry to respond, and without waiting for the results of that study, makes one wonder about the real goals of the organization.

Is HSUS really interested in the welfare of farm animals? Or is this attack merely a thinly disguised membership drive by the organization. Some livestock producers feel it is part of a campaign to discourage the eating of meat, with a final goal of imposing vegetarianism on the public. This advertising campaign certainly supports that conclusion.

The results of the test of the British calf-raising system endorsed by the HSUS ad campaign indicate that the system is better and economically practical, veal producers have indicated that they will adopt it. However, the British developer of that system has told U.S. producers it cannot be transferred intact to this country, but must be studied to determine which portions might be applicable under U.S. conditions.

While livestock producers feel many of the practices being objected to actually contribute to improved conditions, they deny they are treating their animals cruelly, they have been willing to listen and to fund research to obtain scientific measures of these issues. Until the research results are in and studies such as the trial of the British veal system have been completed, livestock producers feel it is totally unfair for animal welfarists to attempt to influence consumers with emotional campaigns not supported by scientific evidence. The 1,200 farm families who raise veal calves deserve better than this cruel attack on their livelihood.

When LCI asked animal welfarists to specify their concerns at a recent meeting, the welfarists admitted that some of their charges regarding veal (related to conditions of darkness and anemia) in the past have been false.

Livestock Conservation Institute is a livestock industry trade association dedicated to reducing livestock losses from disease and improper handling of livestock.

John A. Hoyt
President
The Humane Society of the U.S.

HSUS Counters

Concerning the LCI letter on the Institute's reaction to the HSUS veal campaign, I wish to clarify one point.

The letter suggests that HSUS was not aware of the announced intention of Pro- vimi, Inc., to undertake a study of the Quantock group-pen production system for milk-fed veal. This is not the case. We were informed of Provim's important role in facilitating evaluation of the group-pen system under U.S. conditions. That this company has begun such testing is a welcome sign, and one we acknowledge in our campaign materials.

Yet, this activity bespeaks the interests of only a fraction of the industry. And even while this effort proceeds, a million more animals will be processed under the current system. Eventual adoption of group-pens—or any other alternative—is, at this point, speculative.

Furthermore, we find this industry's continuing efforts to foster public demand for pale or "white" veal inexcusable, particularly as industry leaders have acknowledged that the color of veal has no effect on taste. To subject calves to the current regimen partly to perpetuate what is in essence a marketing device suggests an insensitivity to animals and disregard for the sensibilities of consumers.

The public needs to be made aware of how its food animals are being produced, and the veal industry needs to know the extent to which the public values humanity in animal production. These are the goals of our campaign.

John A. Hoyt
President
The Humane Society of the U.S.

Reply to Edward Ludwig


Edward Ludwig really interested in the welfare of animals? Or is the attack merely a thinly disguised membership drive by the organization? Some livestock producers feel it is part of a campaign to discourage the eating of meat, with a final goal of imposing vegetarianism on the public. This advertising campaign certainly supports that conclusion.

His statement that it is unrealistic and counterproductive to promote animal liberation raises a question about whether Ludwig realizes that the animal rights/animal liberation movement seeks merely to free animals, since they are considered sentient beings, from being cruelly and greedily exploited for pleasure and financial gain, rather than cruelly exterminating them as pests whenever their interests conflict with human interests. Ludwig correctly states that in this man-made world, animals are in need of our protection (versus "subjugation," which is a debatable concept), and that their protection requires a great deal of effort and expense. But so does our protection of the rights of the human members of "the protected" and "the combattted" minority groups. We spend vast sums on protecting the rights of criminals (at the expense, too often, of the rights of their victims, actual and potential). Surely we are equally responsible for the protection of the rights of the innocent and voiceless animals that we are breeding or displacing or exploiting.

Ludwig, I think, is considering the matter of benefits that may accrue to custodians. These seem to me irrelevant to the moral issue. The best criterion for distinguishing right from wrong is, I believe, the entirely objective one given by Tom Regan: Does the destructive act prevent a greater evil? If not, it is morally indefensible. Even this principle puts a tremendous burden on the protectors of the rights of minorities, human and non-human. There must be no question of introducing the idea of accrued benefits to the custodians to complicate and confuse the real issue.

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In Defense of Pound Dogs in Teaching and Research

The use of dogs from civic pounds in medical research and teaching is the