

New Strategy Needed To Counter Rights Activism



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The strategies that farm and commodity organizations have used to oppose the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and other animal rights groups is not working. That was the message from Dr. Wesley Jamison when he addressed

the Illinois Commodity Conference recently.

Jamison, a professor at Palm Beach University, has wide experience researching the strategies and tactics of animal rights groups. In recent years he has focused specifically on the Humane Society of the United States as it has shifted from an animal welfare focus to an activist role opposing modern animal and poultry production systems.

In recent years the Humane Society has supported referendums in Florida and Arizona to eliminate gestation crates for sows. In California they pushed a referendum to make egg production with cage layers illegal. It supported banning horse slaughter and export of horse meat.

Jamison's key message: scientific and economic arguments will not convince voters in large urban populations to support what producers believe is a humane, efficient and safe way to produce food animals and poultry.

The HSUS has launched a "faith outreach", a strategy based on morals and religion to persuade consumers that modern confinement food animal production is wrong and they should stop eating meat and poultry products when animals and birds are raised under what they consider cruel and inhumane conditions.

As part of their anti-pork campaign, they cite the bible from Leviticus 11: "and the swine...is unclean to you...of their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch...". With this message, they discourage pork consumption for everyone, just as some religions also discourage their followers from eating it.

Jamison pointed out that the animal rights activists ignore this message from Genesis, "Be fruitful and multiply...have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth...you shall have them for food..." .

Pets also fit into the animal rights strategies. A large number of people have pets in their homes. They bond closely with their pets and sometimes they treat them almost like children. The animal rights strategists raise the question, if you would not eat your pets, would

you eat other animals that are the source of the meat that you eat?

If the animal and poultry industries, including producers, want to counter the animal activists propaganda, Jamison urges them to find moral and religious approaches to reach the consumers who like meat, dairy, and poultry products. If they can undermine the biblical mandates used by animal activists they will have greater chances of success.

Jamison showed a cartoon with a dog and a cow with the caption: A dog is not a cow. Animal owners must separate the connections of pets that people love and care for, from food animals that provide delicious and nutritious food. They must emphasize that people treat their pets one way and that food animals must be treated another way to get a final product. They must engender compassion for food animals that give their lives so we can enjoy meat, poultry and dairy products that contribute to good health for both children and adults.

Livestock producers in Ohio have taken an aggressive approach to HSUS intrusions upon livestock and poultry management methods. A law has been passed to establish a livestock commission that will outline humane management procedures for producing meat, dairy and poultry products. The commission will have producer, industry and citizen representation. The commission will have authority to make the rules for concentrated animal and poultry management practices. HSUS has not yet shown how they can get around the commission's rules although it is expected that they will try to continue their efforts to discredit scientific and efficient production methods.

The HSUS and other animal right groups that attempt to destroy modern animal and production methods are in many ways like the terrorists that our country must fight to protect lives and property. This is a long term struggle. Animal owners and related industries must be constantly alert to potential damage and destruction.

Consumer education beginning with school children must be part of the strategy. The nutritional value of meat, eggs, and dairy products is well established. Consumers like animal and poultry products. Farmers, livestock producers, and related industries have an established market. They must not let animal terrorists destroy their favorable reputation and good will that they have established with millions of consumers. Δ

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