Memorandum

Date: November 15, 2006

To: Dave Krueger, AEE 110 Instructor

From: Amanda Sollman  

Subject: Animal Welfare Position Paper Audience

The purpose of this paper is to define my opinion on the lack of understanding about the treatment of livestock animals in the agricultural industry. I am relaying this message using several sources that can be referred back to at the audience’s convenience.

The audience of this paper is the community of Sanilac County, namely those that have been recently introduced to an agriculturally-heavy community. I chose this audience because, with the expansion of cities into rural areas along with the movement of American citizens out of the city and into the “country”, there are those people that are suddenly emerged in animal agriculture and don’t understand what procedures are followed or why. The letter is written as an editorial in response to another fictional editorial. I used a number of facts and examples that will hopefully give the audience something real that they can get a handle on.

I believe the following is a very possible example of how a farmer or other member of the agricultural industry would bring to light the steps that ag has taken to improve animal welfare and the view of animal treatment in the food industry. It is my hope that these ideas come across clearly.
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November 14, 2006

Eric Levine  
Editor  
Sanilac County News  
432 South Sandusky Road  
Sandusky, MI 48471

Dear Editor,

My name is Amanda Sollman and it has come to my attention through a recent editorial that, with the recent arrival of citizens not originally from a rural county, there has been a certain amount of concern raised about the treatment of animals, livestock in particular, in agriculture. As a lifelong citizen of the agricultural community, I would like to bring to light several efforts by the branches of the livestock industry to raise the standard of animal welfare in the United States which affect those of us in Sanilac County.

Livestock organizations, such as the National Pork Board and the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, have developed programs to educate their producers about the safe handling and treatment of animals and have strived to hold their members to a higher standard when it comes to animal welfare. The National Pork Board has developed an educational program known as Pork Quality Assurance (PQA) that “emphasizes good management practices in the handling and use of animal health products, and encourages producers to review their approach to their herds’ health programs.” Both producers and young showmen can be PQA certified and, in many cases, are required to be. In Michigan, both the Spartan Classic and Green & White hog shows—state-level shows held at Michigan State University—require their showman to be PQA certified. Additionally, the Pork Board has created a program called the Swine Welfare Assurance Program (SWAP) to “objectively assess and benchmark the care and welfare of…pigs” (Pork.org). The National Cattlemen’s Association has a similar program to PQA known as the Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) program. “BQA influences the management of 98 percent of fed cattle and 90 percent of the nation’s cow-calf producers” (Beef.org). Programs like these are raising the bar at which our nation’s largest livestock industries function.

Steps to get animal welfare under control have also been taken on the federal level. The Humane Slaughter Act of 1978 was developed to create strict rules as to the handling and slaughtering standards for packing plants. Violating the Humane Slaughter Act can result
in the plant being shut down. It highlights rules about the handling of animals, their requirements for food and water, and the regulations on downer and crippled animals. By creating laws like this, the federal government is holding not only our producers, but the country’s packing plants, to a high standard.

While these are just a few examples, the steps that today’s livestock farmers have taken have been enormous. We are creating a world in agricultural where animals have their place, yet are treated in a way that protects their well-being. We understand that there have been incidences of the extreme opposite; however, those are quickly disappearing as consumers, and the industry itself, raises the standards in production. For those that are still concerned, talk to your local farmer; have them explain their business to you.

Learning is the first step to understanding, and I think that is the only wall between the agricultural world and consumers.

For Editor’s Use: Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you need to contact me, please call (810) 537-2517.

Sincerely,

*Amanda Sollman*

Amanda Sollman
REFERENCES


