

BC Farm Animal Care Conference

TEMPLE GRANDIN

USE BEHAVIOUR INSTEAD OF FORCE

Story And Photos By Elaine Stovin

Dr. Temple Grandin is a designer of livestock handling facilities and a Professor of Animal Science at Colorado State University. Dr. Grandin was the featured speaker at the BC Farm Animal Care Council conference held in November.



Temple Grandin at the BC Farm Animal Care Conference



China have maintained a ban on imports using ractopamine. Grandin has set a goal to work with the farms and feedlots to reduce the use of beta-antagonists saying, "It makes no sense to me why we cut their testicals off and give them drugs to make them act like bulls."

You've Got to Calm Down and Quit Yellin'

An animal's first experiences with new people, places or equipment must be good. People need to be more observant about an animal's behaviour. "Certain people make cattle crazy. You can only solve half the problems with equipment, the rest is done with people," says Grandin. Human presence and loud yelling are the main causes of stress in livestock. Even well handled animals are cautious of humans, particularly depending upon where the human is in relation to the flight zone. The flight zone is the animal's safety zone and its size varies depending on the animal's degree of wildness or tameness. Cattle that seldom see people have a large

Bring Me Cattle I Can Use.

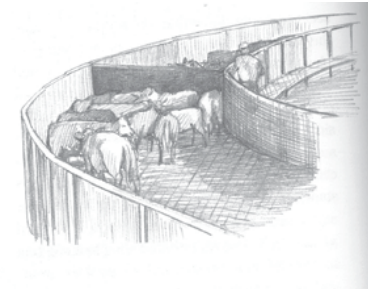
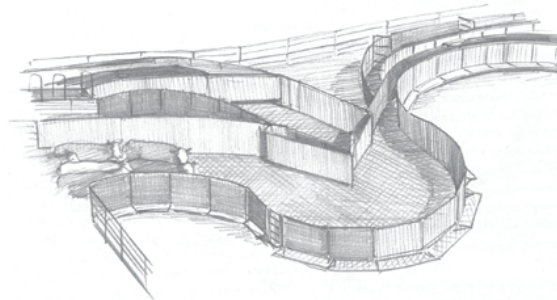
Known for her work with slaughterplants to design handling systems, Grandin is one of the leading animal welfare experts. In her presentation, Grandin states quite emphatically that cattle are getting too wild to handle safely at the slaughterhouses.

"The plants are working great but we need to stop bringing in half dead cattle," says Grandin. "Cattle and pigs come off the truck with their tongues hanging

"Animal groups are showing normal stuff and portraying it as bad. That's wrong!"

out and sore feet, all doped up on beta-antagonists and ractopamine." Grandin claims that these products make cattle wild and unpredictable, which is a safety hazard for people working with livestock. "They don't affect cattle all the same. Out of 100 cattle, 5 will be crazy from it." Ractopamine is a feed additive given to animals to promote muscle growth over fat. Between 65 and 85% of beef production in Canada uses ractopamine based products; also commonly used within the pork industry. The European Union and

Livestock Handling Facility designed by Temple Grandin



flight zone, varying from a few feet to 100 yards or more. The size of the flight zone is determined by genetics, amount of contact with people and the quality of contact with people. Animals with large flight zones may become fearful and agitated when a person deeply penetrates their flight zone, especially when they are in a confined space and unable to move away. Grandin encouraged people to use the animal's behaviour instead of force when working or moving animals.

Good handling takes more walking.

When animals move voluntarily, they are not stressed. Stress is something that can be measured by monitoring heart rate and cortisol levels in an animal. An animal's first experience must be good, so handlers must help acclimate animals to new things. "Animals that get stressed on the farm show the most stress at the slaughterplant." Grandin encouraged people to start walking through the livestock pens. When asked about transport stress by an audience member who used it as an argument to support on-farm slaughter, Grandin discouraged it citing food safety concerns. Instead she encouraged the farmer to practice loading and unloading the livestock in advance of the trip to minimize animal stress during transport.

You can't monitor what you can't measure.

Discussion about Canada's Recommended Codes of Practice and their review drew both scrutiny and advice. Grandin urged the livestock industries to write clear standards into their Code of Practice

and to "ban using the words 'proper, adequate, and sufficient' because they can be interpreted differently." Grandin reminded the audience that measurable does mean that it has to be numeric. When determining bunk space or bedding area she recommended that the guidelines could simply state there will be enough bunk space for all the cattle to eat at the same time or enough bedding area for them to lay down all at the same time.

Auditing must be simple.

In order for the scoring to be reliable, the auditing must be simple. A yes or no answer is needed to minimize interpretation by auditors. Questions should be based on directly observable things. Have a small number of critical control points to measure problems. As a measure of body condition, "Can you see the vertebrae? If yes, fail." To measure lameness ask "Can they keep up with a walking herd?" For hot lesions, "Is it smaller or bigger than a baseball?" Grandin doesn't believe in paper audits. "I've seen too many fake paperwork records." To be credible, Grandin says auditing must be done by video and monitored by outside people.

Stream It Out on the Internet

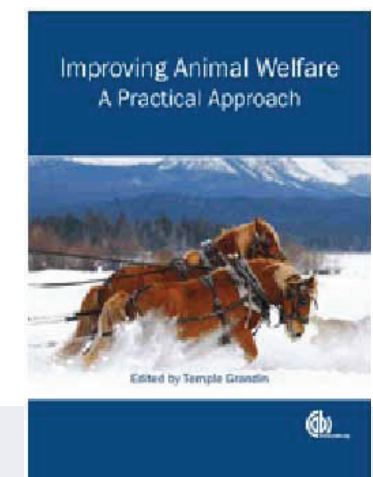
"We need to communicate with the public a whole lot better." Grandin encouraged farmers and ranchers to stop being afraid of showing people what happens on the farm. "Demystify the slaughterhouse and farm." Grandin encouraged farmers and ranchers to start talking to people outside of their normal circles. Grandin believes firmly that animal rights groups are misrepresenting common on-farm

practices and portraying them as bad to the public. Consumers are so far removed from the farm that they are only able to see agriculture through the lens of its critics. In order to help the public see what really happens on our farms, Grandin suggests that, "We need to live stream everything on the internet."

Managing Painful Procedures (Dehorning & Castration)

"Science can tell you that dehorning and castration hurt and pain relief is necessary." Grandin urged that pain relief for these procedures needs to be instantaneous; we don't want to have to sedate cattle. In order to adopt pain management the industry needs an effective tool. "Something that can be administered at the time of the procedure and effective immediately." We do not want to increase the animal's stress by increasing handling time. "We know that handling stress is the most difficult for calves."

Grandin's advice was straight forward and the solutions offered were practical. "I can fix almost any problem with a piece of cardboard, duct tape and a light." Grandin has a new book out called *Improving Animal Welfare: A Practical Approach*. ISBN: 978-1-84593-541-2 \$81.50 (Chapters online)



BC Farm Animal Care Conference

BC Farm Animal Care Conference SPEAKER SUMMARY



“The Value and Merit of Farm Animal Councils”

Susan Church, Former manager of Alberta Farm Animal Care Council

Susan Church spoke about the valuable role that farm animal council’s play. Drawing on her 16 years as manager of the Alberta Farm Animal Care council, Church pointed out the many benefits for producers to be involved in farm animal councils. Sharing information and bridging the knowledge gap is a main one. Equally as important is the strength and solidarity created among farm groups. Providing extension to farmers is a key role of the farm animal council. It helps farmers and ranchers stay up to

date. Animal rights activity is escalating. Activists present examples of mistreatment of farm animals as though they are representative of the whole industry in an effort to raise funds. Explaining why people believe their message, Church explained, “Most agriculture in the Fraser Valley takes place behind closed doors” and consumers do not know much about real agriculture. “Usually there is a nugget of truth in every activist’s message,” explain Church, advising farm groups to “stay in front of the issues” and pool their limited financial resources. Church urged people to take an honest look at critical issues, such as unfit animals, and “fix what needs fixing.” In closing, Susan Church urged farm groups to “be the first to speak out on an issue” or incident. Be the source of good information for consumers.



“Animal Welfare, Public Trust and Professionalism”

Dr. David Fraser, Research Chair in Animal Welfare, University of BC.

Dr. Fraser outlined the difference in public perceptions about animal care and welfare. “At the farm level,

animal welfare means good husbandry, good nutrition and disease prevention.” However, many others are concerned about basic animal health plus emotional well being and natural living conditions. Fraser cautions that these two views do not have to be in conflict. Fraser walked the audience through the intensification of agriculture. “In emerging nations, like Asia and Africa, intensification is pursued to solve food production needs and establish an economy with goods to sell. In Canada, it is seen as bad and factory farming.” Fraser links this reaction to concerns about the loss of agrarian life and a move to corporate ownership which erodes public trust. Fraser advised that consumers are seeing agriculture through the lens of its critics. He encouraged farmers and ranchers to “talk to and assure people that what we are doing is in the best interests of the animal.”



“Farm Councils Add Credibility”

Bonnie Windsor, Assistant Plant Manager, Johnston’s Meats

“Gone are the days of consumers’ main concern being about quality and price,” states Bonnie Windsor, BC Association of Abattoirs director. “Animal rights groups have done a good job of raising suspicion. Windsor comments that “Women are more concerned about animal welfare and they make the majority of food purchasing decisions.” Windsor encouraged producers to tell their good story rather than hide saying, “It is far better to be proactive. BC Farm Animal Care Council has added credibility to agriculture industries.”



“Codes of Practice”

Jackie Wepruk, Manager National Farm Animal Care Council

The National Farm Animal Care council has been focused on working with stakeholders to revise and update their Recommended Codes of Practice. Codes serve as an education tool and set industry guidelines for standard practices. “In the absence of a Code, what are the acceptable standards? Who designs them? Animal rights groups?” The crowd bristles at that thought. The update on the beef code is expected to be completed in March 2013. The Canadian Cattlemen’s Association is representing the interests of cattle producers at the table.

“Consumers and Animal Welfare”

Ken Clark, Manager Fresh Dept, Overwaita Food Group

Clark explained that consumers are keen to purchase food that matches their personal ethics but often do not wish to pay extra for these attributes. Consumers want choice but with the economy he is seeing a renewed focus on price and value. In response to consumer interest in animal care, Overwaita food group has worked with the Humane Society to produce in-store education information about egg production. Clark also proudly shared Overwaita’s vision for sustainable seafood and their new landbased fish farm called Sweetspring Salmon. Overwaita’s consumer education program about egg production raised concern and drew criticism from the crowd. One organic egg farmer in the crowd encouraged Clark to work with farm groups, not the humane society, when developing consumer education materials. Clark ended his presentation by saying Overwaita strives to offer choices to meet customer needs.



“The New Dairy Code”

Ron Maynard, Dairy Farmers of Canada

The Dairy Code revision is the now complete and is “based on science and practicality,” says Maynard. Dairy farmers strived to ensure that farmers themselves could conduct assessments and make improvements based on the Code. “On my own farm, we trained one specific person” to handle animal care issues like dehorning and worked with a veterinarian to develop a way to dehorn that was best for the animal. Maynard was supportive of the flexibility provided by their Code saying “(it) tells you the outcome, not how to do it.” The Dairy Code outlines the regulatory items, “things you must do” as well as industry standards and best management practices. Dairy Farmers of Canada volunteered to be the first farm group to pilot the new Code. “Public pressure is why we volunteered,” explains Maynard. Other livestock groups can learn from the Dairy Farmers experience and build even better tools into our Codes.

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Is the “Right To Farm Act” Strong Enough to PROTECT YOU FROM ACTIVISTS?

John van Dongen, MLA Abbotsford South

Farmers and ranchers have been working with farm animals for hundreds of years, and in our own minds we know how to take care of farm animals. We respect our animals, they are our livelihood, and our animals' health is closely linked into the productivity and economic success of our farms.



We might even think that BC is too small a market to be targeted by the animal rightists. And we actually feel pretty good because we have changed our practices since our grandfathers' and our fathers' times. Cage densities have been reduced for layers. Housing practices have changed for dairy cattle. And many agriculture colleges across America now conduct extensive research into improving the lives of farm animals on the farm, during transportation, and during slaughter.

speaking from experience with the aquaculture file as an example. They humanize animals and equate farm animals to companion animals and pets, and their messages detail the daily horrors facing farm animals. Their messages often contain skewed, misrepresentative details, and paint a false picture of animal agriculture.

Activists do ride the wave of some powerful movements in society. For example we have a very pet-centric society. Many of our consumers are generations removed from farming. They equate farm animals to their own pets, and want to see them treated accordingly. Activists are also entering the field of religion, if you can believe it, and some places of worship are catering to animal lovers. Animal advocacy groups have taken notice, and are ramping up their efforts to cater to people of faith.

Compassion in World Farming released a video to coincide with World Egg Day asking people to put themselves in the place of caged creatures. The video shows people crammed into cages in a huge warehouse, and contrasts their panic and pain with a happy free-range hen. It ends with a simple message, “Put yourself in their position.”

Now stop and think for a minute about the current state of the BC forest industry and the aquaculture sector. At one time both of these sectors were thriving economic engines with rapid growth, a lot of technical innovations, and were recognized as world leaders.

With aquaculture, a focused campaign carried out by a relatively small number of individuals, and organizations such as the Pew Foundation in the US, resulted in a moratorium on further expansion and a sector that has to fight daily to be allowed to continue to farm and operate, and produce what is, in fact, BC's largest seafood and agriculture export product.

Aquaculture has struggled to maintain any level of support from the public, and in essence has struggled to maintain any minimal social license. I spent a fair bit of time with the aquaculture file personally over a 10-year period, from when I was first elected, culminating in four years as the Minister responsible in British Columbia. If you saw some of the tactics that were used by activist opponents, it would blow your mind.

Common misconceptions by farmers is that we are protected by the Right to Farm Act, which in actual fact is one of the more misunderstood pieces of legislation. Another one is, we produce food, and everyone has to eat, so who would want to shut down agriculture? These are in many ways good reasons based on farmers' own sincere beliefs, as well as science-based research and practice. However, there is a whole other side to this story in this day and age of media, social media, and many more direct communication vehicles.

The issue with farm animal care is that the opposition is not dealing with science. They are very often not dealing with facts. They are generally dealing with emotion, appealing to people's emotion. The general public is constantly bombarded with emotionally charged “facts” to draw attention to the plight of farm animals, and animal activists use shock tactics to generate outrage to gain support for their causes.

I can assure you these people don't play fair, and I am

The general public is constantly bombarded with emotionally charged “facts” to draw attention to the plight of farm animals, and animal activists use shock tactics to generate outrage to gain support for their causes.

Facts didn't matter. David Suzuki has said things about the aquaculture industry that are patently untrue.

Consider the Whistler sled-dog situation. Think of the public outcry, shock and anger. It's hard to find an issue, a public policy issue that would motivate people like that one did. We can't generate that kind of sudden outcry in almost any other manner. Over \$250,000 was spent on an inquiry. There was an instant public reaction leading to a very quick political decision. And folks, when the decision was made, the dogs were dead; but the decision was made anyway and the BC SPCA conducted the inquiry.

Now tell me if you still think that a Right to Farm Act will protect the industry against that kind of emotional public outcry. The activist messages may be dressed up as improving the life of animals on our farms and ranches, but their ultimate goal is to stop meat production of any kind and in any manner. And I'll just cite a few of the examples. I think a lot of you in the industry would know some of these better than I:

- In the European Union, battery cages will be banned as of January 1, 2012. That's less than 2 months away, and it's a change that many producers are not ready for. Also in the EU, sow stalls will be banned in 2013.
- Seven American states including Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Maine, Michigan and Oregon, are phasing out or have banned sow stalls.
- California proposition 2, that comes into effect January 1, 2015, prohibits

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The reality is that when hard scientific research goes up against emotional “facts”, science will always be the loser. That’s why I encourage the industry - I encourage farmers and ranchers to support the Farm Animal Care Council in British Columbia. Don’t lose an agency like that, that helps bring you together and deal with these kinds of issues.

the confinement of certain farm animals in a way that does not allow them to turn around freely, lie down, stand up, and fully extend their limbs.

- The New Zealand government banned sow stalls as of 2015.
- Australian pork producers have voluntarily committed to phase out sow stalls as of 2017.
- And similarly in Manitoba, the MB Egg Producers have announced a new policy effective 2018. When its producers are building new or renovating the hen housing, the housing systems must be enriched cages or an alternative system to provide the Five Freedoms.

We recognize that agriculture is constantly subject to increased production costs and demands by society that adds further costs. Food safety, traceability, environmental concerns - is animal care another additional cost? And we understand the frustration, because as I said, I come from the industry.

As a farmer or rancher you know that animal care is not a fad. You have always cared for your farm animals. The issue is that consumers don’t always know that you are doing that. Farmers and ranchers need to work together cooperatively in a coordinated manner in order to take a stance to protect agriculture and maintain the social license to raise livestock and protect your enterprise and your way of life.

The reality is that when hard scientific research goes up against emotional “facts”, science will always be the loser. That’s why I encourage the industry - I encourage farmers and ranchers to support the Farm Animal Care Council in British Columbia. Don’t lose an agency like that, that helps bring you together and deal with these kinds of issues.

The aquaculture file was a great learning experience for me, and it taught me that governments are not equipped to defend an industry like yours or aquaculture. We are not equipped because of the political realities of defending against unfair advocacy and political activity. Governments do not know the industry like you do, and governments do not know the specifics of the animal husbandry practices that you practice to treat your animals well.

I became absolutely convinced that the aquaculture industry were and are their own best advocates, and they are doing many

things now such as regular tours of fish farms to educate the public about what they are doing and why. So I encourage you to work together to make the Farm Animal Care Council a success.

A council that is the unified voice for BC farmers and ranchers. A council that brings together what we know is a very diverse industry, and facilitates collaboration amongst diverse agricultural groups. A council that works with farmers and ranchers to address animal care concerns before they become bigger issues. A council that is proactive to address potential issues by offering training and education to farmers and ranches. And a council that acknowledges agricultural practices to the general public, but also tells the general public how agriculture is working to ensure progressive practices on farms and ranches across BC.

The Investment Agriculture Foundation is funding the first five years of the council, and I commend them for making that progressive decision. Now it’s time for all of the industry to think about how they can move that initiative forward, beyond the first five years. A council that is funded by farmers. A council that is working with farmers and that speaks for animal agriculture as a whole.

In closing, this is a serious issue that needs to be embraced by the agricultural industry. I am absolutely convinced that governments not only are not equipped to do it, they are not able to do it and it’s not an appropriate role for government. I became absolutely convinced of that. That even if we could do it, it is not an appropriate role for government because it puts us in a position with the general public where we become the advocates for the industry, and we have many other roles. We have a role as a regulator, mainly as a regulator. We have some industry development role, but we cannot mix the two.

So I really encourage the industry to take the issue in hand, work together and be proactive because it will, it can affect you as it did the aquaculture industry. You actually never know when an issue is going to take off, and when it does you have to be ready.

Best regards,
John

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