

Saturday, June 8 Breakout I.2
What Does Science Say About Animal Housing?

Synopsis

State statutes regarding animal care standards for housing have evolved by steps. The first phase of statutes applied to housing for sows, calves and hens at the state regulatory level. The second phase requires that animal products brought in from other states meet the receiving state's animal care standards.

Research on the results of new animal care housing practices is not sufficient to prove that it results in improved well-being. Housing should be considered in context with other animal care practices that interact with each other. A holistic approach to animal care would address the dual realities of quality of life and the attributes that will achieve it.

Animal welfare is a combination of animal genetics, animal behavior and human workers. Animal care practices include environment, worker safety and food affordability. There is a conflict between end user values and farmer practices. The ultimate measure should be the quality and quantity of the **product**.

Session Summary

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Rumley

We are still using common law practices to address the issue of animal housing. Even the definition of "livestock" differs within a particular state's statutes (New Hampshire, for example, has three).

Florida passed the first early response confinement law in 2002 by ballot initiative. It applied to sows. Arizona passed the next one and added calves. California's Proposition 2 ballot initiative resulted in the first statute to cover sows, calves and hens, followed by laws in Arizona, California, Florida, Maine, Michigan and Oregon that covered all three. "First form" statutes in Oklahoma and Georgia limited regulations for animal care to state governments.

California's "second form" statute resulted from a second ballot initiative proposition. It was an agriculture response statute that stipulated that eggs brought in from other states must meet California animal care standards for hens. Similar standards were proposed in both the House and Senate versions of the federal farm bill. However, Iowa Representative Steve King was able to attach an amendment to the House bill that bars states from imposing their own animal welfare standards on eggs, meat and other agricultural products brought in from other states.

Salek-Johnson

There are some common public misconceptions about animal housing that need to be corrected regarding the feeding of hormones and antibiotics to livestock. The truth is that hormones are NOT fed to pigs and antibiotics are NOT fed to chickens.

Six percent of sows are housed in group pens. But there is no verification process to determine whether this has improved their well-being. Housing sows in cages large enough for them to turn around does not necessarily improve well-being. Regulatory animal care standards can interact with each other. For example, increased floor space allowance and a higher fiber diet increases aggressive behavior in sows.

Swanson

A holistic approach to animal care is needed that addresses the dual realities of quality of life and the attributes that will achieve it. A so-called "natural environment" has a way of disposing of livestock that are not able to make it. There is a conflict between end user values and farmer practices.

Space was the major animal housing focus, initially in biomedical facilities and zoos. It was then applied to sows, calves and hens. Hens naturally group in small bunches (flocks) where there is plenty of cover. Studies have shown that putting hens in cage-free settings increases mortality rates. For turn-around size sow pens, 93 square inches meets the California Proposition 2 language. Yet Michigan is proposing a standard that requires 102-144 square inches. Changing housing conditions can also increase particulate and ammonia emissions.

UC-Davis and Michigan State are conducting holistic studies with private funding that include animal welfare, environment, worker safety and food affordability.

Discussion

Public requests for transparency are asking for farm locations. Public knowledge doesn't necessarily follow from FOIA. Raw data can be manipulated by the general public. It should not be traceable to a particular farm. Producers are becoming wary of on-farm audits for research purposes. HSUS will use published data and misconstrue it.

Q&A

Is it possible to quantify animal "happiness"?

Animal welfare is a combination of animal genetics, animal behavior and human workers. The ultimate measure should be the quality and quantity of the **product**.

What is the status of the California Proposition 2 requiring out-of-state eggs to meet in-state animal care standards?

There are some constitutional challenges to it in the works. There is a "dormant commerce" clause in the interstate commerce law that makes exceptions for interstate trade that violates public health and safety.