

**Animal Care
Committee Report**

2010 NIAA Annual Meeting

Tuesday, March 16, 2010



The Animal Care Committee met on Tuesday, March 16, 2010 from 1:00 pm to 4:50 pm during the NIAA 2010 Annual Meeting in Kansas City, Missouri with 45 people present. Animal Care Committee Member Jim Fraley served as Chair as Dr. Jer Geiger, Chair and Dr. Gail Golab, Vice Chairperson, were unable to attend.

The committee session focused on various animal welfare-related issues impacting each species. The following speakers presented relevant information pertaining to their respective areas of expertise:

Mike Bumgarner, Ohio Farm Bureau Federation, presented “Ballot Initiatives: The Ohio Experience”. Their issue was a proactive one, driven by industry. HSUS contacted the OFBF leadership in February 2009 to discuss an animal care initiative. OFBF sought a pro-active approach and was able to place an initiative on the ballot that would establish a 13-member animal care standards board. \$4.5 million was spent on this effort, and the grassroots really became involved. The message that worked the best was to keep Ohioans in charge. The imitative passed 64% to 36%. HSUS is now collecting signatures for a countermeasure ballot initiative. 400,000 signatures will have to be obtained.

Dr. Jim McKean, Iowa State University, presented “Welfare: the Husbandry-Health Link – A Swine Perspective”. The Five Freedoms come from the Brambell Report issued in 1965. They are freedom from: hunger and thirst; discomfort; pain, injury, and disease; the ability to express normal behavior; from fear and distress. These are the standard basis for evaluating a housing system, for example. He believes larger sow groups will work best (70 or so), with individualized feeding systems. In the 1970’s we had 500 cases of trichinosis annually. Today, we still have a few, and all are from wildlife infections: bear, cougar, wild boar, etc. The larger operations have fewer cases of toxoplasmosis. This is due to better biosecurity and fewer cats.

Dr. Robin Anderson, USDA-ARS, presented “Welfare: the Husbandry-Health Link -- A Microbiologist’s Perspective”. Animals are born in with a sterile gastrointestinal tract. The tract is considered “outside” the animal - the hole in the donut, if you will. Lactic acid and *Streptococci* are the first to be established. Neonates receive flora from the environment and their mother. Most flora in the gut are the same in all species. In some cases, eggs for example, there is no maternal contact. An inoculum does a very good job at jump starting the colonization process. Transportation, weaning, molting are all stressors that may impact the flora in the gut. Now the layer industry uses a low-energy substrate (usually ground alfalfa) to feed to the chickens to induce molting. Animals grazing actually produce more methane.

Dr. Patricia Wakenell, Purdue, presented “Welfare: the Husbandry-Health Link -- A Poultry Perspective”. The poultry industry has several main areas of focus when it comes to animal welfare-related issues: molting, beak-trimming, caging, flock termination, and fighting cocks. Cock fighting is illegal in all states, but is allowed on Native American reservations. It also is not illegal to own a fighting cock. Beak trimming is used because chickens are natural peckers, and will peck on things that are “new” in the environment, and establish a clear pecking order. “If you’re a chicken, and someone is bleeding, that’s the highlight of your day!” In a cage-free environment, chickens will only use a small part of the building. You will see increases in broken legs and wings, increase in disease and mortality, and vices like egg-eating.

Dr. Ann Wilkinson, Pfizer Animal Health, presented Welfare: the Husbandry-Health Link -- A Cattle Perspective. Good husbandry is "normal." However, we can't claim 100% compliance. Current voluntary producer welfare programs help educate producers, and assure customers. There are three systems to conduct a Scientific Assessment of Animal Welfare: animal-based, resource-based, and management-based. "It's easier to prevent disease than it is to treat a sick animal."

Old Business:

The current mission statement of the committee was reviewed. There were no changes. The current resolutions pertaining to this committee were reviewed.

New Business:

It was moved, seconded, and carried to reaffirm all existing resolutions to the Animal Care Committee. The committee did note one grammatical change, and suggested that this correction be included in the report.

Committee Session adjourned at 4:50 pm.