

**Animal Care
Council Report**

2011 NIAA Annual Conference

Tuesday, April 12, 2011



The Animal Care Council met on Tuesday, April 12, 2011 from 1:30 pm to 5:00 pm during the 2011 NIAA Annual Conference in San Antonio, Texas with more than 44 people present. Dr. Jer Geiger served as Chair, and Dr. Gail Golab, Vice Chair.

The committee session focused on public perceptions of U.S. production practices. The following speakers presented relevant information pertaining to perceptions and responses to U.S. production practices:

Mr. Charlie Arnot, Center for Food Integrity, presented “How American Consumers View American Production Practices.” American producers may not be viewed as farmers. People trust farmers and veterinarians, but the public senses a difference between its impression of farming and modern approaches to food production.

Dr. Peter Groot Koerkamp, Wageningen University, The Netherlands, presented “How European Consumers View American Production Practices.” The public may have standards different from producers by which production practices will be deemed “acceptable.” The end goal for both parties may not be radically different, though the terms and standards may initially appear incompatible.

Dr. Glynn Tonsor, Associate Professor of Agriculture Economics, Kansas State University, presented “The Impact of Welfare Media Coverage on Meat Demand.” Within the limits of his study, animal care media coverage has had little/no impact on the public’s purchases of beef. Poultry products have exhibited a short-term (3 month) negative impact of media coverage. Pork products have exhibited both short-term (3 month) and long-term (6 month) negative impact of media coverage.

Dr. William Gavin, Vice President of Farm Operations, GTC Biotherapeutics, Inc., presented “Transgenic Animal Production: Public perceptions and expectations for animal care and welfare.” The public will be slow to accept consumption of transgenic or cloned products (as therapeutic or food items) even though governmental oversight is rigid. With careful and patient persistence, these products can reach the marketplace. It remains to be seen how well the public will embrace those products.

Old Business: None

New Business: Leadership succession was discussed. Dr. Geiger will step out of his current leadership role in the Animal Care Council to serve NIAA as liaison to AVMA. The committee was invited to make nominations, suggestions, comment regarding a replacement either during the meeting or by email after the meeting. Dr. Cia Johnson expressed interest in taking an active role in the Council during the session.

Consensus Points for NIAA White Paper Development:

1. Those involved in American food and fiber production and delivery in general, and animal agriculture in particular, must do a better job of communicating (**both listening and speaking**/teaching) with the consumer public, using venues and language appropriate to age

and lifestyle of the consumer public. Open, frequent, continuous and bidirectional dialogue, allowing for differences in experiences, values and expectations, must take place in formats and time restrictions conducive to effective delivery of the agricultural message. Messages should be age- and experience- specific and should start no later than 5-6 year old students.

2. Approaches to animal care must be continually evaluated and updated, using science as a basis, but with appropriate consideration paid to ethical and societal values and expectations.
3. Agriculture needs to speak with one voice on issues of import because public perceptions affecting one segment are often easily transferred to another. Fragmentation is not an option.

General Discussion: None

Committee Session adjourned at 5:20 pm.