

## **Farm Animal Council of Saskatchewan Conference: Fence Lines to Corporate Board Rooms**

December 14, 2005 - Saskatoon, SK

Two general theme areas: **1)** On-farm decision making for unfit animals **2)** Strategies for responding to media and animal activists. More conference information is available at [http://www.facs.sk.ca/proactive\\_proceedings.htm#14th](http://www.facs.sk.ca/proactive_proceedings.htm#14th) .

### **On-farm decision making for unfit animals**

**Speaker:** Dr. Terry Whiting, Manitoba Agriculture

- 4 categories of 'unfit' (critical control points where decisions should be made)
    - o To eat
    - o To transport
    - o Unlikely to recover with treatment
    - o Unfit to continue to live
- } lesser conditions that lead to 1 & 2
- Decision making around when to euthanize on-farm not generally done well
  - Need to ID critical control points and criteria around decision to euthanize
  - Technical standards for euthanasia established (the 'how to', info. available)
  - Operational standards needed on-farm; commitment to ensure that no animal suffers needlessly – requires clear message from management, proper equipment and training, empowerment of staff, belief in the necessity & painlessness of euthanasia (moral obligation), ongoing evaluation of critical control points
  - Large operations need a manual with specific directions for required outcomes
  - Make the hard decisions once, write them down and follow through

### **Strategies for responding to media and animal activists**

**Speakers:** John Lewis (FBI), Norm Luba (North American Equine Ranching Information Council), Mary Ellen Walling (BC Salmon Farmers Association), Leslie Ballentine (Ballentine Communications), David Biesenthal (beef producer), Marty Brett (Chicken Farmers of Canada)

- Risk of agricultural terrorism is considered a real threat by the U.S. – radical animal rights and environmental groups included. Developing measures and partnerships to address increasing risk – not going away as an issue. – John Lewis, FBI
- Animal agriculture is subject to intense scrutiny; consumer expectations are growing with increasing concern for animal care and desire for reassurances that industry is doing the right thing
- Key considerations for addressing animal care issues and developing a strategy
  - o Internal review – what can be done better? Listen to critics for any truths
  - o Benchmark – understand what's going on in your industry
  - o Commit to quality – aim high
  - o Messaging/communication – tell your good stories, be transparent, honest
  - o Unified agriculture industry response needed
  - o Use 3<sup>rd</sup> party experts to develop your system properly, then use them as a referral/resource for credible media opinions
  - o Fix what needs fixing, then communicate what you are doing well
- Avoid: ignoring the warning signs, being reactive (have a plan ahead of time), being unprepared for animal care challenges (media training needed)
- Engage legitimate media (establish relationship before an issue arises), avoid situations where you will be set up to fail – focus on moderate majority.