

Executive Summary

Animal activists focused their efforts on ending the slaughter of horses and non-ambulatory livestock and the use of certain confined practices in recent years. They are only beginning to spend similar resources targeting the typical modes of transporting farm animals. However, European activist trends migrate to the United States, and efforts there have included campaigns against long trips by animals. Therefore, this Issue Briefing covers an emerging issue for U.S. livestock producers that is in the activists' sights at this time.

Issue Background

Transportation is the one practice common to all food animal production. Farmers and ranchers transport breeding stock onto the farm, move animals between production stages and deliver their finished product to market or a processor. While few members of the public will ever step inside a modern broiler or hog house or tour a cattle feedyard, thousands of people encounter livestock in transport every day, making it easily the most publicly visible part of livestock production. As such, it behooves producers and processors alike to ensure those brief exposures to the industry are positive.

A key challenge is imparting to the public the dual responsibilities that food animal producers have, not only to feed their fellow man but also to the animals under their care. Transportation is an essential and often overlooked aspect of animal care, comfort and food quality. Taking meaningful steps in this arena verifies that food animal producers are satisfying their responsibilities to man and animal alike.

There are hundreds of thousands of gooseneck and bumper-pull trailers across the country, pulled by many different kinds of vehicles. There is less variation in type among the tens of thousands

of tractor-trailer combinations, but they are driven by thousands of drivers with varying degrees of experience hauling livestock. Regardless of these differences, everyone involved in farm animal production has a vested interest in a safe, reliable, consistent livestock transport system that provides the best possible treatment for the animals.

Transportation is the door that admits the outside world into the heart of farm animal production. Animal rights groups, in particular, have focused on transportation for three reasons: it is highly acces-

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AFBF Policy

AFBF has not taken a policy position directly relating to the treatment of livestock in transit or transportation standards. However, among the provisions in AFBF Policy 104, Animal Care (excerpted):

“We recommend the livestock industry encourage aggressive initiatives within its ranks to communicate the best modern animal husbandry and handling practices, including but not limited to facility designs that promote the safe and appropriate production and movement of livestock.

“We oppose legislation that

would give animal rights organizations the right to establish standards for the raising, marketing, handling, feeding, housing or transportation of livestock, horses, poultry, aquaculture, fur-bearing and canine animals. Standards should be science-based and adopted on a voluntary basis. We oppose any laws that would mandate specific farming practices in livestock production.

“We recommend the livestock industry oppose the shipment of non-ambulatory livestock from the farm to livestock markets or auctions.”

Twenty-Eight Hour Law Summary

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) is one of several activist organizations that worked to expand the federal Twenty-Eight Hour Law that regulates transport of animals by rail to include transport by truck.

Under the Twenty-Eight Hour Law, carriers “may not confine animals in a vehicle or vessel for more than 28 consecutive hours without unloading the animals for feeding, water and rest.” It generally requires at least five hours of rest for every 28 hours of transport.

But “in an animal welfare victory affecting more than 50 million farm animals,” USDA “reversed its longstanding position of excluding farm animals from protection during long-distance truck transport,” the HSUS Web site (www.hsus.org) touts, regarding the September

2006 announcement. “Nearly one year after the HSUS and other animal protection organizations challenged the position, the agency responded, publicly declaring that farm animals transported by truck are protected under the nation’s first federal animal welfare law,” the site continues.

During HSUS’ campaign to expand the Twenty-Eight Hour Law, an official claimed long-distance truck transport had negative implications for food safety.

According to Dr. Michael Greger, “Millions of Americans fall ill and thousands die every year from eating contaminated animal products. Transporting farm animals long distances greatly increases the risk that these animals will harbor life-threatening pathogens.”

Economic Analysis

Live-haul accidents can cost close to \$200,000 in direct losses.

A new tractor and cattle trailer costs more than \$100,000, and the value of a load of fed steers can easily exceed \$50,000. Beyond that is the loss of other vehicles, property damage, injuries to people and the incalculable public relations damage that accompanies a live-haul accident.

Vehicle and cargo insurance rates are influenced by the prevalence of accidents, and widespread adoption of driver training programs would likely reduce this significant operating expense.

Given today’s high fuel prices and costs of operation, any reduction in insurance expense would be welcome news to drivers and fleet operators.

In addition, food animal producers have seen improvements in meat quality in recent years due to the adoption of quality assurance (QA) programs, which deal with all aspects of food animal production, from handling practices to hauling.

Trucker Quality Assurance (TQA) programs, such as those developed by the beef and pork sectors using checkoff dollars, are natural extensions of these successful efforts.

The gains in meat quality from improved transport, on top of reduced economic losses from accidents, add up to significant financial gains to the sector as producers balance their responsibilities to consumers and to the animals under their care.

Public Relations Resources

Talking Points:

- Producers of cattle, hogs and other farm animals want to minimize the amount of time their animals are in transit, and they do all they can to make sure animals aren't traveling any longer than absolutely necessary.
- Livestock producers are serious about getting their animals to another facility safe and sound. They avoid harming or injuring the animals during transport.
- Many livestock producers schedule transportation at night to take advantage of cooler temperatures, especially during the hottest months of the year.
- Organizations representing beef and pork producers have developed standards for transportation. Trucker Quality Assurance (TQA) programs teach drivers and other individuals involved in hauling livestock how to minimize highway accidents and how to help animals when accidents occur. Drivers are also taught the importance of loading the appropriate number of animals to avoid over-crowding.
- TQA programs minimize the potential for accidents and ensure animals receive proper care during transit. At least one pork company determines its drivers' fatigue levels every night and de-briefs its drivers after each accident.
- A pork company in North Carolina has provided funds and training tips to first-responders in the areas where its barns and truck traffic are concentrated so these emergency workers will know how best to help and handle farm animals involved in highway accidents. Training has included the use of "jaws of life" on livestock trucks.
- These programs ensure that attention is being paid to animals' welfare and health. They demonstrate the industry's promise to provide consumers with the highest-quality meat products.

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sible to members of the public, it is absolutely essential to food animal commerce and they sense it is a weak link. Groups such as Farm Sanctuary (www.farmsanctuary.org), Animals' Angels (www.animals-angels.de) and Compassion in World Farming (www.ciwf.org) are especially involved in this issue.

No official information is available today on the occurrence of live-haul accidents in the U.S., but Farm Sanctuary released a publication, "U.S. Highway Accidents Involving Farm Animals," in 2006. That group surveyed

media outlets from 2000 through mid-2006, finding reports of 233 live-haul highway accidents occurring in 44 states. While there are legitimate concerns with their mode of analysis, the take-home message is that animal activist groups are paying close attention to transporting livestock and do not miss a chance to link other production practices with transportation (e.g., the use of cages). Part of food animal producers' responsibility to communicate that they hold animal care of paramount importance is to highlight proactive industry efforts to reduce live-haul accidents.

As other production technologies come under intense scrutiny

from activist groups and the general public, all food animal producers must take steps to guarantee a safe, comfortable trip for their animals every single time. To that end, some industry organizations have developed educational programs and materials. For example, the National Pork Board has created training materials and certification programs to teach drivers how to avoid fatigue and manage their loads. The beef industry has developed a similar program.

Trucker Quality Assurance Programs

The cattle and pork industries have established programs and guides to help truck drivers and other individuals understand the principles of proper handling and transportation of farm animals.

Cattle

Promoting safe and successful handling and transporting of cattle is at the heart of a new user-friendly booklet and DVD created with Beef Checkoff funds. The 45-minute DVD and 16-page booklet are designed to help livestock producers, truck drivers, employees at sale barns and slaughterhouses and other individuals understand cattle behavior and typical responses to human interaction.

Producers, veterinarians, truckers and professors Temple Grandin of Colorado State University and Janice Swanson of Kansas State University are among the individuals who contributed to the “Master Cattle Transporter Guide” materials.

The DVD and booklet use diagrams and pictures to explain how a cow’s vision, flight zone and point of balance all come together to determine whether she

will move forward, backward or stand still during loading and penning.

Knowing what to do with non-ambulatory or potentially sick cattle is also discussed, as is the importance of pre-trip planning and accident and emergency preparedness.

Other information covers the importance of minimizing or rescheduling transport in extreme weather conditions and stresses the need for cleaning livestock trailers or haulers regularly.

To learn more or order copies of the booklet and DVD, which is packaged inside the booklet, visit www.tbqa.org or contact the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association at (303) 694-0305.

Hogs

The Pork Checkoff established the Trucker Quality Assurance Program (TQA) in 2002. This program provides certification to truck drivers who receive training from an instructor.

The National Pork Board Web site (www.pork.org/Producers/TQA/TQA.aspx) provides contact information for certified trainers

throughout the U.S. to make it easier for drivers and other interested individuals to get in touch with trainers in their region or state.

The National Pork Board claims that TQA certification “will identify you to producers and meat packers as a transporter who is conscientious about properly transporting hogs and who understands the value of producing quality pork products.”

In addition, the National Pork Board has created a user-friendly 46-page TQA handbook and 60-minute DVD packed with advice for drivers and handlers. Like the beef materials, these guides are aimed at improving understanding of swine behavior, reducing injuries and accidents, and ensuring the quality and safety of meat. Call 1-800-456-7675 or e-mail porkboard@porkboard.org for more information; the Web site is www.porkboard.org.

For More Information

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Additional Resources

Additional information is posted on Farm Bureau’s intranet site, SILO, at <http://silo.fb.org/issues/livestock>. Among the resources posted on the Livestock Issues Management page on SILO are news clips, links to past Issues Management Briefings about related issues and links to agricultural law programs around the U.S. Links to related conference calls and PowerPoint® slide presentations also are posted on this page.