

# Right or wrong, issue over animal rights isn't leaving

**W**HEN they tackled the theme of "The Optimal Beef Cow: Does She Exist?" during the eighth annual Nick Petry Workshop in Denver's National Western Stock Show stadium late last year, one important ingredient was missing.

While the information from the excellent speakers from Colorado, Texas and Nebraska was substantial in creating the efficient cow, the time spent on the value of matching livestock to the environment gave little time to an important market aspect.

Certainly the information reported in *Western Farmer-Stockman* this month (see Pages 19-20), regarding the value of matching cows to grazing land was vital, but what about matching the cow to the animal rights market environment?

Sad but true is the fact that today's consumers are more critical than ever that livestock are treated in a humane manner.

While this subject causes some ranchers to scoff, like other environmental criticism today, it cannot be dismissed.

Considering the press given today about treating livestock well, the idea is one that deserves attention.

Not only is it prudent to make sure those grasses are what the cows want to eat, but also what the consumer thinks when driving by grazing cattle. That can reflect more and more on beef consumption.

Although at this point there hasn't been a notable beef boycott based on animal welfare, let's not think that cannot occur. I, for one, would be highly upset if our beef producers were to suffer such slings and arrows that shoot down sales for this noble industry.

## Picking on Petry

I don't intend to pick on the worthy Nick Petry conference, but simply to use it as an example of all such events I cover that fail to address the mounting animal welfare crowd. The rightists are people with enough time on their hands to make a difference in sales, and they can stampede the masses.

Pointing out this shortfall in beef industry confabs is easy, but coming up with solutions to the problem isn't. That's why the call for some part of these meetings to address how management can be altered to provide producers with good tips about how they might merge ranching and animal welfare.

I am sure there are some ideas out there that are palatable to the industry, but where are the Extension or other science speakers who address this matter?

What troubles me is what I hear a lot from my general public friends who seem to be concerned with animal welfare on the ranch. You've heard it, too, I imagine: "Those poor cows are out in the rain!" or "I passed a truck full of cows going to market and they were packed in like sardines!"

Those comments just could be the

tip of a groundswell from those already active in criticizing how the poultry industry functions, or how that mangy retriever next door is left out in the cold all night.

You know the types.

Don't expect understanding from

these animal-rightists about how the beef industry has functioned historically. That goes little distance with today's shortsighted agricultural challengers.

Instead of ignoring this issue altogether, our industry needs to develop

## Our Say

T.J. BURNHAM  
Editor  
tburnham@  
farmprogress.com



some ideas that can allay charges from the do-good detractors.

They, like the environmentalist and the regulator, must be lived with in the beef market of today. Planning how to do so soon is just another notch in what they like to call "sustainability."

## Precision Ag It's a lot more than steering your tractor



Make sure to put Topcon on your list of top places to visit at World Ag Expo. From planning to harvesting, the entire farming cycle, Topcon offers a complete family of precision ag products to improve the productivity and efficiency of every operation:

- Guidance and Autosteering
- Water Management
- Sprayer and Planter Control
- Planning and Documentation

Topcon's dual-constellation GPS + GLONASS provides 75% more satellite availability than GPS alone. More satellites means higher accuracy and 24/7 operation. Maximum uptime and accuracy in all conditions – dust, fog, up against a treeline, or even at night. Maximize your productivity and save time, fuel and materials.

See Topcon Precision Ag Systems at:

World Ag Expo, Tulare, CA, Feb. 12-14 Big Blue Tent at Ride & Drive 3 and Booth 3726, Pavilion C  
National Farm Machinery Show, Louisville, KY, Feb. 13-16 South Wing A, Booth 118

**TOPCON**  
Precision Agriculture

800.443.4567 www.topconpa.com