



Farmers & Ranchers Care for their Animals

SALT LAKE CITY – Misinformation and distortions by animal activists and anti-meat radicals seems to be shaping debate in Utah on animal cruelty and how society views our animal agriculture industry. It has been disappointing to see the lack of balance by some in the media when reporting the Legislature’s recent debate on Utah’s animal cruelty laws.

Utah’s farmers and ranchers agree society should protect domestic pets and that the Legislature should establish appropriate guidelines. But at the same time, we need to preserve sound, science-based animal husbandry practices. Livestock and poultry organizations have already adopted codes of conduct out of common sense concern for animal well-being.

Many of us are proud of our agricultural roots, either growing up on a farm or visiting Grandpa’s farm on a regular basis. And most Utah residents have an appreciation for rural values and understand the concern that farmers and ranchers have for their animals.

Farmers and ranchers recognize their moral obligation to provide for the well-being of the animals in their care. These agricultural professionals guarantee the health and well-being of their animals in a humane, compassionate and socially responsible manner.

As farmers and ranchers tend livestock, poultry and fish, the animals in their care provide them an important economic return. They are also the source of the high-quality, affordable and abundant food we enjoy. The productivity of American agriculture means that less than 2 percent of our population is needed to feed and clothe our nation and a growing portion of the world. Well-cared for, healthy livestock, poultry and fish are the key to this efficiency.

It is disheartening to realize that there are those among us who portray animal agriculture as ruthless and barbaric. As our society has become more urban, contact with animals – especially farm animals – has become limited. As a result, society’s understanding of the needs and roles of domesticated livestock is lessened. While man and animal depend on each other, our fast-paced lifestyle has provided for a widening gap of understanding.

For most consumers today, animal agriculture is seen only in the abundance we enjoy at the grocery store, where shelves are stocked with a wide variety of meats, dairy products and eggs. The bucolic Norman Rockwell image of the family farm with its red barn,

chickens in the yard, pigs in the mud and cows grazing in a nearby pasture simply isn't accurate. Today, American animal agriculture is dynamic and specialized – the envy of the world.

Animal agriculture is an important part of our lives. Animal agriculture is the foundation of Utah's agriculture industry making up nearly 80 percent of our farm gate sales. More than one billion dollars in sales is turned into more than \$3 billion of economic activity, providing jobs for nearly 100,000 of our friends and neighbors. In short, animal agriculture - livestock, poultry and fish – is the economic engine for many of our rural communities, generating tax revenue and providing jobs.

Modern animal agriculture is not an accident. Improved housing, updated handling practices, health products and nutritious feeds are the result of billions of dollars of private and public investment and research into raising high quality animals. As the landscape of American agriculture has changed over time, rest assured that farmers and ranchers are concerned for the welfare of their animals just as they are dedicated to providing the highest quality, safest and most affordable food in the world.

Signed,

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