

# For the Record

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Straight talk about antibiotic use in food animal production sponsored by ALPHARMA Inc., Animal Health

## PAY NO MIND TO THAT ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

Literature and folktales throughout history are sprinkled with the character of the Clever Fool, the buffoon who wins at the story's end by masking his deviousness with absurdity. Several observers have recently cautioned the animal agriculture industry against falling for the deceptive antics of our own drama's Clever Fool: today's animal rights activists. On the foolishness side, there's plenty to behold:

- In an **open letter** to an Australian vegan magazine in December 2001, the president of the Virginia-based animal rights group United Poultry Concerns argued not only that the September 11 attack on New York's World Trade Center was comparably less barbaric than the daily slaughter of chickens in the United States, but that the killing of 2,800 people there actually produced a net decrease in pain and suffering, because most were probably meat eaters.
- The president of PETA—People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, or, as one Internet wit has labeled them: Poorly Educated Teen Activists—publicly berated the late terrorist Yasir Arafat in 2003 for sanctioning a Jerusalem massacre—but only because it employed a suicide bomb strapped to a donkey.
- Upon discovering a Wisconsin professor planned to use drugged pigs to study why Tasers were inexplicably killing prisoners in police custody, Patti Gilman, whose brother died under similar circumstances in 2004, pro-

tested by letter to the school. "Shocking more pigs," she argued, "is only going to add their numbers to the Taser-related death statistics."

Yet behind the clown mask, the animal-rights philosophy has gained some progress in swaying public opinion about important matters like how food is produced and how safe it is to eat. And on that front, the animal rights groups have closely aligned themselves with the movement to ban mass preventive antibiotic use in farm animals.

Recent example: Shortly after its parent company, Compass Group Americas, announced it would begin demanding its pork suppliers **end such antibiotic** use, high-end San Francisco caterer Bon Appétit announced it would **begin buying eggs** only from hens that have not been confined in cages. Credited with breaking the furrow for Compass' ultimate antibiotics decision, Bon Appétit may now be playing the same role for wider implementation of animal rights-backed standards of animal "care" within the \$6.7 billion food giant.

Though it might strike the logical among us that someone concerned with animal well-being would want to provide—not withhold—medications, there's good reason they entwine the messages. When representatives for anti-technology, anti-free-market and anti-property-rights groups are able to present themselves to the media as scientific authorities on food-safety issues like antibiotic use, it

permits them to deflect attention from the 5-ton elephant in the room—their mockable underlying animal-rights agenda.

Animal rights organizations have entered the antibiotics debate because they believe a health and food-safety message gains more traction with a public growing weary of often absurd animal-rights positions.

### Also in this issue

- What's the logical connection between opposing farm-animal antibiotics and supporting animal rights?
- A breakdown of the different organizations' stands on animal welfare
- An animal scientist who built his career on studying animal well-being says producers must reclaim the science in this impasse.

### For the record...

When anti-technology, anti-free-market and anti-property-rights groups oppose animal antibiotic use, it's often so they can support an animal-rights message without actually having to own up to it publicly.



# WHY THE CONNECTION? IT WORKS.

Activists who favor a compulsory return to old-fashioned food animal production practices have made antibiotic use their poster child for good reason: It works. Here's why:

## 1. IT CONNECTS UNDERLYING PHILOSOPHIES.

Since its beginnings as a small counterculture movement in mid-1960s California, the “California Cuisine” trend which ultimately energized opposition to antibiotics and intensive animal production was about issues much deeper than food. Its anti-capitalist philosophy survives today in the “sustainable agriculture” movement it begat.

That underlying belief structure of the most vocal opponents of livestock antibiotics intersects with the animal-rights movements at their attack on what they perceive as **global systems of oppression**, whether that system is free-market agriculture that encourages the bigger farms we've witnessed for the last half-century, or whether its individual systems of animal production that confine pigs to concrete floors or cattle to fenced feedlots. In both their history and their language, the activist groups actively lobbying for an elimination of “factory farming” almost always display a broader far-left political sympathy, as well:

- The Union of Concerned Scientists, whose scientifically questionable **2001 report *Hogging It*** has become a touchstone for the anti-antibiotics movement, began when a group of MIT scientists staged a 1969 work stoppage to protest the Vietnam War. Appearing at that originating conference were Eric Mann, leader of the leftist terrorist organization Weather Underground, and student Jonathan Kabat, who told participants: “We want capitalism to come to an end.” Today's UCS supports global-warming initiatives, limits on SUV production, ending missile-

defense research and numerous environmental initiatives.

- The Sierra Club, which **actively opposes** modern livestock production for environmental and animal-welfare reasons, believes “The treatment of farm animals is a marker for the entire industrial system's attitude towards farmers, communities, consumers and the environment. ...a production system that treats animals inhumanely also tends to enslave farmers...,” the group argues.
- The **Global Resource Action Center** for the Environment, another member of the “Keep Antibiotics Working” coalition and highly visible critic of animal production practices, also opposes nuclear power and the use of oil, gas, coal and other conventional energy sources, as well as supporting a long list of United Nations initiatives, ranging from disarmament to reproduction and contraception rights.

The shared nostalgia for pre-modern agriculture that's been embraced by sustainable agriculturist and animal rightist alike—with their equal insistence that those visions be imposed through government subsidy, efficiency-crippling regulation and artificial, even direct and violent, limits on the free choice of the food consumer—has less to do with honest concerns over food safety and the well-being of animals as it does their bitterness at the country's stubborn unwillingness over the last 40 years to accept the need for a command-and-control economy. In the wild success the free-market, industrialized food production system has enjoyed in turning the former luxuries of meat, milk, cheese and eggs into everyday commodities, the anti-farming and animal-rights advocates are joined in seeing only failure—failure to level the traditional economic class distinctions, the lines at bottom of which have now been blurred between the farmer and his animals.

“For certain activists,” notes **British journalist Marek Kohn**, animals have become “the ultimate proletariat.”

**2. IT SELLS WELL.** Much as we both scoff at and avert our eyes in disgust at the antics of PETA—like comparing confined livestock production to WWII concentration camps, or hoping foot and mouth disease reaches American shores—we have to be honest about one thing, **writes veterinarian Terry Whiting**, of Manitoba Agriculture's Office of the Chief Veterinarian: They have developed and refined a model of social-cause advocacy that works for them. Each of PETA's “polished, organized and tenacious” campaigns follows a specific set of steps, according to a study of the group's successes and tactics by the London Internet research and monitoring firm Infonic. Whiting rightly predicts you can expect the future targets in livestock production to be issues that fit most easily within the PETA model. Although he doesn't address animal antibiotics, it's obvious to see why an attack on them fits the model, and why most animal-rights organizations have now adopted the cause.

PETA Messaging Strategy	Why Animal Antibiotics Fit the Model
Objectives must be unambiguous and achievable.	“Alleviate animal suffering” is too ambiguous; “end unnecessary antibiotic” use is more specific and achievable.
Focus on only one small aspect of the overall production system being targeted.	PETA as well as most members of the Keep Antibiotics Working campaign propose limits and even complete bans on confinement livestock production, yet they seldom promote that message beyond their membership. Their focus instead on smaller pieces, like cage space, gestation crates and antibiotic use, allows them to attack the bigger system indirectly.
Convert the central fundamental issue to one that's easy to understand for the target audience.	Underlying philosophical arguments about the rights of animals vs. man are discarded in favor of those like “farmers are making your children's antibiotics ineffective.”
Make it easy for supporters to feel good about the honesty and validity of their opinion.	Playing down the production and health benefits of farm antibiotics, dismissing the additional costs a ban would impose, negating the public health risks of eliminating antibiotic use, accusing pharmaceutical companies of driving small farmers out of business and focusing solely on profits all make it easy to support the mission.
Paint the issue as unnatural, horrendous or brutal, and a result of the basest, most dehumanizing human flaws—greed or lack of caring.	Claiming “unnatural factory farming” couldn't exist without antibiotics, that “animal husbandry” has been replaced with “animal science,” and that producers now run barns full of underpaid, illegal migrant workers from afar support this aspect.

## LEVERAGING THE ISSUE

Formed shortly after Sept. 11, 2001, to take advantage of public panic over anthrax and possible resistance to the antibiotic ciprofloxacin, the “Keep Antibiotics Working Campaign” gathers a baker’s dozen activist organizations around the theme of phasing out the use in healthy animals of any antibiotic that “may become” important to human medicine, restricting all uses of antibiotics “essential” for treating humans, and generating “adequate data” to support those efforts. Most of the member organizations also have some element of animal welfare in their positions, including:

Group	Animal Welfare Position(s)
Center for Science in the Public Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “Expert, independent evaluation” is needed to identify the impact herd/flock-management practices have on animal health and welfare, as they relate to food safety.</li> <li>● Federal research funding should increase on issues including animal crowding and transportation.</li> <li>● Animal welfare factors should be included in global food and products trade standards.</li> </ul>
Environmental Defense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ED publicizes no direct policy on animal welfare.</li> <li>● ED actually opposed PETA in support of lab animal testing on widely used chemicals; however, ED supports the reducing animal testing “to the greatest extent feasible.”</li> </ul>
Food Animal Concerns Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● FACT opposes caging hens, supports free-range poultry only.</li> <li>● Opposes milk-fed veal, supports non-confined only, and urges consumers to avoid veal entirely, so dairy calves will be raised for beef, rather than killed as calves.</li> <li>● Believes pigs should be pasture-raised or raised in deep-bedded housing only.</li> <li>● Supports only pasture-raising of beef and dairy cattle.</li> </ul>
Global Resource Action Center for the Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● GRACE has called for immediately invoking a legal moratorium on building any more feedlots of more than 1,000 head capacity, hog facilities of more than 2,500 head or broiler operations of more than 100,000 birds in a single location.</li> <li>● Urges the use of local zoning and other regulations to eliminate all “factory farming.”</li> </ul>
Humane Society of the United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● HSUS opposes any production system that treats livestock as “...mere commodities rather than social, intelligent creatures who are capable of great suffering.”</li> <li>● HSUS supports federal legislation to eliminate horse meat for human consumption.</li> <li>● HSUS supports the permanent ban on marketing non-ambulatory livestock.</li> <li>● HSUS has sued USDA to include poultry under the federal humane slaughter law and the New Jersey Department of Ag for defining common livestock production as “humane.”</li> </ul>
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● IATP supports publicizing farming practices it considers cruel, incorporating animal welfare requirements into production standards, lobbying for legal mandates on farm animal treatment.</li> <li>● IATP supports the Animal Welfare Institute’s hog production standards banning crates, prods and windowless buildings, and requiring bedding, “varied” diets and housing allowing them to behave “naturally.”</li> </ul>
National Catholic Rural Life Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● NCRLC supports a ban on confinement hog and poultry production.</li> </ul>
Natural Resources Defense Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● NRDC believes “more humane farming systems should be encouraged, including composting and pasture systems.” Its definition of humane appears to include bedded housing.</li> </ul>
Physicians for Social Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● PSR publicizes no direct policy on animal welfare.</li> </ul>
Safe Tables Our Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● STOP believes federal regulations should specifically govern sanitation, ventilation, and crowding of livestock and poultry, although its concern arises predominantly from food-safety concerns.</li> </ul>
Sierra Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Sierra Club believes, “Industrial animal production...represents a systematic violation of nature,” and that modern livestock farming is a “growing menace.”</li> <li>● The Sierra Club directly urges consumers to demand meat, milk and eggs produced without total confinement and without antibiotics or “added hormones.” By implication, it urges food not be produced using “genetic manipulation,” mechanical milkers, multiple daily milkings, slatted floors, caging or induced molting.</li> <li>● Several governing board members have ties to animal-rights organizations.</li> </ul>
Union of Concerned Scientists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● UCS remains one of the leading advocates of “sustainable” livestock production, which advocates elimination of modern practices like total confinement; however, it publicizes no direct policy on animal welfare and does not criticize production from an animal-welfare standpoint.</li> </ul>
Waterkeeper Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Waterkeepers believes “factory farms cause animal suffering,” and that “factory farms cruelly confine animals in restrictive, disease filled conditions, frustrating their natural behaviors.”</li> <li>● Waterkeepers urges consumers not buy “...corporate pork and other factory grown food.”</li> <li>● Waterkeepers maintains an active campaign of lawsuits against farms, EPA and state regulators to shut down legal operations, based on pollution accusations.</li> </ul>

Source: Organization position statements, news releases, correspondence, reports.

### For the record...

Virtually all activist groups opposed to antibiotic use in live-stock also support an animal-rights agenda to some degree.

# TIME TO RECLAIM A RATIONAL APPROACH

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When it comes to finding a uniquely American approach to our current impasse over animal welfare, I believe the U.S. pork industry and its lead organization are making a mistake in taking their cue from applied ethologists who've commandeered the science on the issue. Espousing unwisely biased thinking that arose in England some 40 years ago, those animal behaviorists have concluded that assessing an animal's well-being based on the animal's "feelings" is virtually the sole approach to take. That approach now reigns in the public discourse on this issue.

But we in animal agriculture need a significant paradigm shift as it deals with this critical issue, and the sooner the better. I call it the "Performance Axiom:" Absent an adequate, scientifically informed understanding of a constitutionally fit animal's conscious feelings, the best single set of measurable—hence manageable—indicators of that animal's state of being will be how well it produces and reproduces compared to its predicted potential.

When bodily resources become limited because a pig is in a situation requiring extraordinary adaptation, productive processes will be the first to decrease. We can measure that. Reproductive functions will be next. We can measure that. Maintenance processes, which ensure survival, last. These observed reductions in measurable performance traits are the earliest, most sensitive indicators that a pig's well-being has

been disturbed—much more sensitive than behavioral patterns that may indirectly signify some emotional reaction.

It's only rational to conclude we can't effectively manage something until we can measure it. And yet, the mainstream approach to dealing with an animal's state of being ignores this self-evident fact. As long as we can't yet measure how a pig feels, let alone measure the depth of any such feeling—which everyone agrees we can't do—we can only speculate, surmise, analogize and anthropomorphize. What we cannot do is know, set thresholds, define limits or draw lines. How then is it reasonable to expect producers to manage pigs on that basis? It's this very immeasurability—hence, unmanageability—of animal feelings that frustrates attempts to coerce and regulate animal husbandry practices along that line. It's potentially not even in the best interests of the pig.

We can stipulate that pigs feel discomfort. Of course they do. And we can still support continued research into the important question of pig cognition. But in the meantime, U.S. pork producers must reclaim a major portion of control of their own destiny in this critical matter by reinvigorating their commitment to this more scientifically rational approach. They must get behind the scientific testing that I predict would evolve from greater emphasis on the performance axiom. Then, all stakeholders—producers, protectionists, and scientists—can get on with the matter to the mutual satisfaction of all, and to the benefit of the pigs.

## For the record...

Those of us interested in keeping science in the welfare debate need to shift our thinking. And soon.

## For the Record,

sponsored by a grant from ALPHARMA Inc., Animal Health, is designed to help unite the industry and provide a unified, rational message on behalf of producers whose freedom to use safe, effective, economical production methods is at stake. Working together, we can set the record straight on antibiotics.

Questions or comments? Contact Steve Kopperud at [skopperud@poldir.com](mailto:skopperud@poldir.com). Want to read past issues or link to more information on this issue? Visit us online at [www.alpharma.com/ahd](http://www.alpharma.com/ahd).

# CRUELTY IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

One important distinction missed by many of today's animal-rights advocates, according to Tufts University philosopher **Daniel C. Dennett**, is the difference between pain and suffering. Although almost nobody still subscribes to the old notion that animals don't feel pain, many miss the point that animals can feel pain without feeling suffering. Suffering, as Dennett defines it, is a much deeper self-consciousness that combines simple pain with the distinctly human emotions like sadness, loss, dread, shame and others.

Just because humans can't picture themselves enduring the conditions a pig lives under doesn't inherently make those conditions cruel. For instance:

- Caged chickens. The Humane Society of the United States, a partner in the Keep Antibiotics Working Campaign, **began a campaign** in January to legally end the caging of hens based on its cruelty. Yet Jeff Armstrong, dean of agriculture and natural resources at Michigan State University, pointed out in a recent Wall Street Journal article what's common knowledge to poultry producers: You can expect nearly twice as many chickens to die when they are raised without cages, due to fighting, savaging and disease.
- Crating sows. Despite a successful ballot initiative in

Florida and ongoing campaigns in other states, Australia and Canada to outlaw individual crating of hogs, Manitoba's Terry Whiting echoes the logic of a September policy statement by the American Veterinary Medical Association which refused to actively support such measures: It's entirely possible you could ban crates and actually decrease the overall welfare of sows. The welfare of gestating sows depends on numerous factors beyond housing, and some studies show group-housed females actually fare less well than individually crated ones.

- Free range. The scientific literature on this staple of anti factory-farming is often contradictory. Studies show free-range dairy cattle can have higher disease risks; organic production can actually increase disease pathogen levels in chickens and pigs; and free-range pigs, laying hens and sheep raised outside without dewormers suffer from heavier burdens of parasites. And despite recent PETA attempts to use the avian flu scare to attack confined poultry production, the Netherlands in September began temporarily requiring free-range chicken producers to cover their flocks with nets and shields to protect them from infection by the disease's common carrier—wild birds.