



**AgEcon** SEARCH  
RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL & APPLIED ECONOMICS

*The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library*

**This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.**

**Help ensure our sustainability.**

Give to AgEcon Search

AgEcon Search  
<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu>  
[aesearch@umn.edu](mailto:aesearch@umn.edu)

*Papers downloaded from **AgEcon Search** may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.*

# Activism and Trust: Animal Rights vs. Animal Welfare in the Food Supply Chain

**Jon C. Phillips, Adriana Ortega, Marquesa Cook, Marian Concepcion, Tina Kimmons, Kelly Ralph, Joanna Ponce, Hannah Miller, Michelle Lam, and Sarah Baldwin**

Animals such as poultry and cattle have been used for production and human consumption throughout the history of agriculture. This work defines and analyzes the concepts of animal rights and animal welfare. It compares and contrasts the viewpoints of animal rights and animal welfare organizations in an effort to portray a comprehensive perspective of this ethical concept as it relates to agriculture and the supply chain for food. These organizations have had significant impacts by urging governments to implement new regulations and enforce existing regulations for the humane treatment of food animals. In addition, not only does enforcing such regulations provide animals with humane treatment and improved living conditions, but it also helps to produce healthier and safer animal products for human consumption, thus augmenting consumer trust. Granting animals with equivalent rights to those of human beings, however, is still an ongoing debate that animal rights activists eagerly seek to settle in the favor of animals.

Throughout the history of humankind, man has continuously used animals for his survival. After the first agricultural revolution, known as the Neolithic Revolution (estimated to have occurred between 8000 and 5000 B.C.), “humans shifted to dependence on cultivated crops and domesticated animals for their subsistence” (Guisepi 2007). During this transition to sedentary food production, people began to realize that it was more convenient and profitable to keep animals that could be used for consumption nearby. Humans, therefore, began to tame “different animal species in different ways” based on the animals’ “own natures and the ways in which they interacted with humans” (Guisepi 2007), and in certain cases, based on the animals’ ability to work. Many centuries after groups of people around the world settled into agrarian societies, the slow but sure development of new technologies, discoveries, and inventions—such as the first transcontinental railroad—allowed individual farmers to gradually expand, network, and produce agricultural goods more efficiently and successfully. With such developments and the world’s population rapidly increasing, agriculture has become a fast-paced business as nations around the world continuously import and export agricultural goods. With the world’s

population presently being over six billion people (*National Geographic* 1998), there is an ongoing extremely high demand for various agricultural products, making it necessary for farmers in high-producing countries to find innovative methods to achieve mass production. Unfortunately, fast-paced mass production can lead to the neglect of animal rights and animal welfare, which in many cases leads to the severe mistreatment of various farm animal species. Therefore today there are numerous animal rights and animal welfare organizations within the United States and worldwide that work endlessly to ensure the proper care and treatment of food animals. The beliefs of animal rights activists, however, differ slightly from those of animal welfare organizations in that animal rights can be defined as “the rights to humane treatment claimed on behalf of animals, especially the right not to be exploited for human purposes” (*The American Heritage Dictionary* 2005). This definition can be interpreted as the belief of granting animals with freedom and rights equivalent to those of humans, thereby opposing any and all use of animals by human beings. On the other hand, among animal welfare scientists “the most widely accepted definition of animal welfare is that it comprises the state of the animal’s body and mind, and the extent to which its nature . . . is satisfied” (Hewson 2003). In other words, animal welfare organizations believe that animals used for human purposes should be treated in such a way that their natural physical and mental states are not tampered with, thereby

---

Phillips is Associate Professor, Food Marketing and Agribusiness Management, and Director, Center for Food Marketing and Agribusiness Solutions, Cal Poly Pomona University. Ortega, Cook, Concepcion, Kimmons, Ralph, Ponce, Miller, Lam, and Baldwin are students, Cal Poly Pomona University.

protecting them from potential mental stress and physical harm. Some examples of animal welfare organizations within the United States include The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), National Dairy Animal Well-Being, and Animal Welfare Institute (AWI). Examples of animal rights organizations, on the other hand, include People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and the Animal Rights Foundation of Florida (ARFF). The following describes and analyzes the agricultural use of dairy cows, broilers, and egg-laying hens, with a focus on animal rights and animal welfare issues. We also consider a labeling program intended to indicate which food products were produced by operations that provide human conditions to their animals.

### **Chicken Farms**

Every year in the United States over nine billion chickens are raised and slaughtered for their meat and over 285 million hens are raised for egg production (HSUS 2006). Today, chickens are among the most extensively slaughtered animals for the production of food worldwide. According to The Humane Society of the United States there is no federal law that regulates the methods used for slaughtering chickens in the United States because the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) "does not interpret the federal Humane Methods of Slaughter Act as providing protections for birds reared for meat or eggs" (HSUS n.d.). However, there are various animal rights groups in the United States today that work relentlessly to change this. In 2007, for instance, the Animal Rights Foundation of Florida (ARFF), succeeded in obtaining the support of five Florida cities which "passed resolutions condemning the intensive confinement of egg-laying hens in cages" (ARFF 2009). Also, PETA, the largest animal rights organization in the world with over two million members and supporters (PETA n.d.), began a controversial campaign in June 2003 intended to draw attention to chicken farms by comparing chicken farming to the Nazi's extermination of the Jews during World War II. PETA Youth Outreach Coordinator Matt Prescott stated that "The very same mindset that made the Holocaust possible—that we can do anything we want to those we decide are 'different' or 'inferior'—is what allows us to commit atrocities against animals every

single day" (Lynne 2003). With this idea in mind, PETA began campaigning toward shutting down chicken farms. The organization went as far as sending spies posing as workers into such farms. Some of the chicken farms that were infiltrated by PETA even had footage of their practices leaked onto the Internet by PETA activists. The ultimate goal of PETA is to completely stop the use of chickens for food production. For many years this organization has shown that it will do just about anything to stop the slaughter of animals for food.

Unlike animal rights groups, however, animal welfare organizations focus their efforts on maintaining a sense of well-being for animals used in the production of goods. These organizations strongly believe that chickens and hens used for meat and egg production should have enough room to extend their wings and roam about, and that they should be treated and slaughtered humanely. In California (the U.S. state with the highest production of agricultural goods), Proposition 2 was an historic success in the 2008 General Election. This proposition states that egg-laying hens should not be forced to live in stressful environments, such as in filthy, cramped cages, which can cause them severe physical injury (Yes on Prop 2 2008). With the passage of Proposition 2 in California, egg-laying hens will no longer be kept in battery cages and egg producers are required to provide these hens with additional space for roaming and spreading their wings, after a phase-in period. Producers who fail to follow such regulations will be subject to a misdemeanor penalty with a fine of up to \$1,000.00 and/or up to six months in jail (Yes on Prop 2 2008). Without a doubt, animal welfare organizations fought very hard for this proposition to pass, and although they succeeded, they are still relentlessly active in their efforts to improve the living conditions of all farm animals by educating the general public and proposing additional laws that will further prevent animal cruelties. For example, The Humane Society of the United States is "the nation's largest animal protection organization—backed by 10 million Americans," and "has been fighting for the protection of all animals through advocacy, education, and hands-on programs" for more than 50 years (HSUS n.d.).

## Dairy Cows

In regards to cows, animal rights organizations such as PETA strongly believe that cows are social, intelligent creatures that are capable of forming “complex relationships” with each other and “maternal bonds” with their young and should, therefore, not be exploited for their milk or their meat (Go Veg n.d.a). According to GoVeg.com, which is affiliated with PETA, “more than 41 million of these sensitive animals suffer and die for the meat and dairy industries every year” (Go Veg n.d.a). In addition, not only are cows forced by certain farmers within the dairy industry “to produce about 10 times as much milk as they naturally would,” but they are also repeatedly impregnated using artificial insemination “in order to force [them] to continue giving milk” (Go Veg n.d.b). These and other factors cause dairy cows to become physically spent at an exceedingly rapid rate, shortening their natural lifespan from 25 years to only about four or five years of age, which is the age at which dairy cows are typically sent to slaughterhouses to be killed for the production of ground beef (Go Veg, n.d.b). Appalled by these facts, PETA and other animal rights activists are constantly advertising and attempting to educate the general public by presenting this type of information along with their views on the use of animals for food. Furthermore, in an attempt to continuously obtain more supporters, several of these animal rights operations also have programs open for people to join who wish to help stop animal cruelty. However, the debate on whether or not it is morally correct to drink milk or eat meat is an ongoing controversy that animal rights activists are continuously fighting to win.

Animal welfare groups, on the other hand, do not directly oppose the existence of dairy farms, but have made it a top priority to set guidelines for the proper care of dairy cows and for adequate methods of milk production. Quality care for dairy cows is a top priority for animal welfare organizations because of the mass production and consumption of dairy products by Americans nationwide and the potential for widespread disease if proper care is not enforced. Therefore animal welfare organizations have taken the initiative to obtain the support of the United States government in order to help enforce such guidelines. Today, innovative ways to care for dairy cows are constantly being implemented with

the support of ongoing research from animal welfare organizations. According to Stookey (2009),

“Intensive operations are much more likely to call upon experts in the fields of financing, engineering, nutrition, reproduction and herd medicine. All of these experts, directly or indirectly, can make significant contributions towards the improvement of the animal’s welfare.”

For instance, a very important animal welfare group for the protection of dairy cows, National Dairy Animal Well-Being, created an initiative with a set of guidelines for proper dairy cow care, which is now implemented by numerous producers throughout the dairy industry. The work of this organization “has already been endorsed by co-ops representing more than 25,643 farms and 106.5 billion pounds of milk annually. This represents approximately 59 percent of the milk marketed in the United States annually” (National Dairy Animal Well-Being 2009). Like this group, several other animal welfare organizations throughout the United States are also committed to the proper care and treatment of dairy cows.

## Animal Welfare Approved Program

Perhaps one of the most prominent and actively involved animal welfare organizations in agriculture within the United States is Animal Welfare Institute. This organization was specifically “founded in 1951 to reduce the sum total of pain and fear inflicted on animals by humans” (AWI 2009b). Today, one of the main focuses of the organization’s efforts is on the protection of animals used in agriculture. This group is concerned with the needs of farm animals and with all of the factors involved in the production of animal goods, which include breeding, growing, transport, and slaughter. For this reason, the institute launched a program for the protection of food animals called *Animal Welfare Approved*. This is a labeling program “reviewed by veterinarians, farmers and scientific experts in animal behavior” that requires farmers to raise their animals according to stringent animal welfare standards (AWI 2009a). These standards not only strive to protect the welfare of farm animals but also ensure high-quality animal products for consumers across the

nation. Animal products under this label come from animals that “breathe fresh, clean air, instead of fumes from their own waste and grow naturally without pain and deformities caused by unnatural breeding for fast growth” (AWI 2009a). To ensure that these standards are successfully met, the program supports family farms by allowing only this type of farming to earn their seal of quality animal products. The program’s support for family farms is due to its belief that only producers who practice small-scale farming have “a true commitment and connection to their animals,” which is otherwise lost and forgotten in large-scale, intensive farms in which animals come to be regarded simply as production units (AWI 2009a).

## Conclusion

Evidently there are numerous animal rights groups and animal welfare organizations around the world that care deeply about and strongly believe in the humane treatment of farm animals and other species used for human consumption. The main difference between animal rights and animal welfare organizations is that animal rights activists believe in the notion that all animals should possess the same rights as human beings and should not be utilized by humans for any purposes whatsoever, whereas animal welfare groups support the use of certain animal species for the production of food and other purposes while still maintaining the idea that such animals should be respected, cared for, and slaughtered humanely. However, when it comes to the question of whether or not it is morally correct to use animals for food, clothing, and other purposes, it becomes a very controversial subject that can be strongly debated from various points of view. Yet, as depicted by the Animal Welfare Approved Program standards, the practice of animal welfare not only is crucial to an animal’s well-being but it is also an essential part of being able to produce safe animal products for human consumption, by providing farm animals with a clean and healthy environment in which to grow and reproduce. This reduces the amount of stress an animal experiences prior to and during slaughter and aids in the prevention of the onset and spread of animal diseases and parasitic infections due to poor living conditions. Without the intervention of federal and state-mandated food-inspection regulatory agents,

the implementation of federal regulations for the humane slaughter of farm animals under the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act, and the implementation of certain animal welfare policies and regulations enforced by government, the potential for widespread disease arising from contaminated animal products due to poor environmental conditions and improper methods of slaughter would otherwise be highly threatening to the lives and health of animal-product consumers worldwide.

## References

- The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. 2005. Houghton Mifflin Company. <http://www.ask.com/web?q=dictinary%3A+animal+rights&content=ahdict|46778&o=0&l=dir>. Accessed May 18, 2009.
- Animal Rights Foundation of Florida. 2009. “About ARFF: Accomplishments.” <http://www.animalrightsflorida.org/About.html>. Accessed May 23, 2009.
- Animal Welfare Institute. 2009a. “Animal Welfare Approved Program.” <http://www.awionline.org/ht/d/sp/i/11779/pid/11779>. Accessed June 4, 2009.
- Animal Welfare Institute. 2009b. Homepage. <http://www.awionline.org>. Accessed June 4, 2009.
- Go Veg. No date a. “Cows.” People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. [http://www.goveg.com/factoryFarming\\_cows.asp](http://www.goveg.com/factoryFarming_cows.asp). Accessed February 21, 2009.
- Go Veg. No date b. “Cows Used for Their Milk.” People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. [http://www.goveg.com/factoryFarming\\_Cows\\_Dairy.asp](http://www.goveg.com/factoryFarming_Cows_Dairy.asp). Accessed May 23, 2009.
- Guiseppi, R. A., ed. 2007. “Agriculture and the Origins of Civilization: The Neolithic Revolution.” History World International. <http://history-world.org/neolithic.htm>. Accessed May 1, 2009.
- Hewson, C. J. 2003. “What is animal welfare? Common definitions and their practical consequences.” *The Canadian Veterinary Journal* 44(6):496–499. <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=340178>. Accessed May 18, 2009.
- The Humane Society of the United States. No date. “An HSUS Report: The Welfare of Animals in the Egg Industry.” <http://www.hsus.org/web->

- files/PDF/farm/welfare\_egg.pdf. Accessed February 21, 2009.
- Lynne, D. 2003. "PETA likens chickens to Holocaust victims: Animal-rights activists launch campaign against meat eaters." *World Net Daily*. [http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE\\_ID=31211](http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=31211). Accessed February 20, 2009.
- National Dairy Animal Well-Being Initiative. 2009. "Endorsers." <http://www.dairywellbeing.org/endorsers.php>. Accessed May 18, 2009.
- National Geographic*. 1998. "Population and World Development: Population Milestones." <http://www.csupomona.edu/~erc/ag101/populationdevelopment.html>. Accessed February 20, 2009.
- People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. No date. "PETA's Mission Statement." <http://www.peta.org/about/index.asp>. Accessed May 18, 2009.
- Stookey, J. M. 2009. "Is Intensive Dairy Production Compatible With Animal Welfare?" *Advances in Dairy Technology* 6. <http://www.usask.ca/wcvm/herdmed/applied-ethology/articles/dairysem.html>. Accessed February 23, 2009.
- Yes on Prop 2. 2008. "The Facts." [http://www.yesonprop2.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=110&Itemid=107](http://www.yesonprop2.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=110&Itemid=107). Accessed February 20, 2009.