



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

Expert Statements on California Slaughterhouse Investigation

The HSUS shared the results of its investigation with a veterinarian and an internationally renowned animal scientist.

Temple Grandin, Ph.D., is among the world's foremost farm animal handling and slaughter experts. A professor of Animal Science at Colorado State University and operator of Grandin Livestock Systems, Grandin has designed animal handling facilities in the United States, Canada, Europe, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand and other countries. She frequently consults with the animal agriculture industry and corporate retailers, including McDonald's, on facility design, animal handling and welfare. Grandin has authored more than 300 articles in both scientific journals and trade periodicals, and serves as a contributing editor to "Meat & Poultry." Her latest book, "Animals in Translation," was a New York Times best-seller.

Grandin provided this statement in reaction to the video footage recorded during this investigation:

I viewed the video dairy beef slaughter house investigation. The abuse of downer dairy cows is ATROCIOUS animal cruelty. Downed cows were dragged with chains and pushed across the concrete floor with naked fork lift forks. The horrendous handling practices violated both USDA regulations for handling non-ambulatory animals and AMI [American Meat Institute] Industry guidelines. This is one of the worst animal abuse videos I have ever viewed. Industry leaders in both the dairy and meat industry need to put a stop to the torture shown on this video. Most slaughter plants handle animals in a decent manner, but the few rotten apples who do not comply with both USDA and industry guidelines should be punished.

Eric Davis, DVM has practiced veterinary medicine for 30 years, including 11 years as a rural large animal practitioner. He has examined and treated dairy cows. His experience performing surgery on large animals required moving paralyzed or severely debilitated large animals (horses and cattle) by a variety of techniques. Dr. Davis is based in California where he directs The HSUS' program to provide veterinary services to underserved populations in the United States and abroad.

Dr. Davis addressed the handling of the animals as depicted in the footage:

The idea of moving an animal that weighs over 1,000 pounds with the tines of a fork lift is completely inhumane. The cows in the video are experiencing pain when their weight is supported by the thin metal blades and when they are dropped to the concrete surface. You cannot depend on keeping a live animal on a fork lift, as the video consistently demonstrates. It is hard enough to keep a non-motile corpse on the tines. Further, there

are no doubt instances where animals are cut or disemboweled by this method. While I have never lifted a live animal with a fork lift (I would never ever consider such a thing), I have had to move dead ones from a stall or a surgery room. In the process the skin can easily be torn if the operator is not careful. While this makes no difference to a dead animal, the implications for a live one are obvious.

Davis notes that there are a number of lawful ways to move recumbent animals that are more humane and efficient for handlers. He suggests the use of tables that can be lifted by hydraulics (like a fork lift), hip supports, and slings.

“Of course, this tragedy starts with the downer cow being dragged onto a truck or trailer at the farm,” Davis said. “It is clear from the symptoms that several of the cows were showing that they had nerve damage that did not occur either on the truck or during unloading. These emaciated animals had, no doubt, been down in the dairy lot previous to transport. The one cow who could only stand on the plantar surface of its hocks and metatarsal bones is an example. The cow that was simply dumped out of the back of the truck, for several feet onto the ground is another example.”

Davis pointed to several other techniques shown in the video, including dumping a cow four (4) feet onto concrete out of a truck, lifting with leg chains, and pushing across concrete with a forklift. “These will absolutely tear skin, bruise muscle, damage nerves, and cause severe pain,” he said. “The techniques to try to make down cows stand, such as repeated ‘hot shot’ application, jabbing the eye with the back of a herding paddle, and running water into the animal’s face, are all brutal methods of trying to force an animal to do what it is physically incapable of doing. The hose in the face is an attempt to make the cow feel like it is drowning. If it will not stand after such treatment, it is clearly incapable of doing so.”

“The techniques exhibited at this facility are completely inhumane and indefensible. These cows should be put out of their misery on the farm or on the truck. The moving techniques demonstrated in this video are only appropriate for dead animals. I cannot see justification to do otherwise.”

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