

FARM ANIMAL WELFARE COALITION

Washington, DC

May 26, 2008

Mr. John Ernst
Sales Operations Director
Newsweek Magazine
251 W. 57th Street, 12th Floor
New York, New York 10019-1802

Dear Mr. Ernst:

You've got to hand it to the Humane Farm Association (HFA). Its advertisement – which your magazine accepted and ran April 14 – continues to beat the very old and tired drum of animal cruelty and neglect among veal farmers that it's been thumping for over 20 years with little success. But this time HFA got some national exposure for its attack on farmers and ranchers, and all it had to do was write your magazine a check for advertising space.

I represent the Farm Animal Welfare Coalition (FAWC), an ad hoc group of the nation's largest farm and ranch organizations and the industries which serve them. FAWC brings logic and science-based fact to the policy debates which swirl around livestock and poultry production in the U.S. These farmer-based organizations, listed below, have done battle with the distortions and outright lies spread by the animal rights movement about how animals are raised for food in this country for nearly three decades, and your apparent breach of your own advertising contract conditions continues to frustrate the very folks trying to keep this country – and a good chunk of the world – fed.

FAWC is aware the American Veal Assn., the National Cattlemen's Beef Assn., the American Meat Institute and The Center for Consumer Freedom have individually written to you to correct the intentional HFA misrepresentations of veal husbandry. I won't belabor those facts, but I am concerned that you, your advertising staff, indeed your editorial staff, and certainly your readers are unaware of the goals of the animal rights movement and the consequences to the average U.S. consumer if the animal rights movement prevails in its assault on U.S. animal agriculture.

The ultimate goal of the animal rights movement has little to do with better care and treatment of farm animals and everything to do with elimination of animal-based food production. In the mantra of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), "Animals are not ours to eat, wear, experiment upon, use in mindless entertainment or exploit in any way." It is clearly an "our-way-or-the-highway" political bloc.

To achieve this goal, the animal rights movement follows a "step-wise" strategy, i.e. a little change here, a little change there, and eventually, without opposition, animal husbandry practices are changed so dramatically that many farmers and ranchers can no longer afford to stay on farm. This follows the animal rights movement's more obvious strategy: "If you can't legislate them out of business or regulate them out of business, then cost them out of business." HFA advertising, such as that run in Newsweek April 14, is clearly designed to erode veal sales with an obvious economic impact on veal farmers, the dairy industry and consumers.

Farming and ranching in the 21st century is unfamiliar to most consumers. However, it must be understood that science- and farmer/rancher experience-based husbandry practices are universal in two goals: First, to raise the healthiest, highest quality animals possible, and second, to avoid any practice that compromises the wellbeing of the animal.

Achieving the first goal ensures independent farmers and ranchers thrive by providing the safe, abundant quality food at affordable prices demanded by the public. Even the most cynical observer of farming and ranching can figure out that to abuse or neglect an animal leads to lower quality food products, less return on investment, and the inescapable negative impact on the farmer, rancher, his or her family, their community, and ultimately, the consumer.

The equally important goal of animal wellbeing underpins the first goal, but also goes to the subjective reasons certain folks become farmers and ranchers, namely, they want to work with animals. No one works a 14-hour day, seven days a week to breed, feed, house, milk, pasture, provide veterinary care and market livestock and poultry because it's a fast road to wealth. Farming and ranching is one of the last "lifestyle" professions in our society, one which is firmly based on respect for the animal that provides the farm family its livelihood.

No farmer or rancher knowingly employs a housing or husbandry practice that compromises an animal's health and wellbeing. Evidence of this is the array of "zero tolerance" policies on neglect, mishandling and abuse adopted by this country's farm and ranch organizations as part of their long-standing formal science-based animal wellbeing programs.

The unfortunate fact of life is that many of the demands made by animal rights groups like HFA and the Humane Society of the U.S. (HSUS) – political organizations with no true understanding of farm animal husbandry – have "unintended consequences," not only compromising animal wellbeing by exposing animals to disease, the elements, predation and human mischief – they threaten the availability, affordability and quality of foods for this country's individual and family consumers.

U.S. animal agriculture is not a perfect endeavor, but it's dynamic and admittedly the most advanced system on the planet. Its success is predicated upon professional animal husbandry, science-based production systems, including housing, diet and veterinary care, and a priority on animal wellbeing for both ethical and economic reasons.

It's our request that in the future, when political advertising, such as the HFA ad, is brought to you, you'll look to your own contract conditions and ensure there's nothing "false, deceptive, misleading, fraudulent, libelous (or) defamatory..." in the proposed ad. And if you have even a scintilla of doubt about the messages contained in the ad, that you'll contact one of the organizations in animal agriculture now known to you to get the straight story.

Thank you for consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

Steve Kopperud
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Farm Animal Welfare Coalition Membership:

The American Farm Bureau Federation
The American Feed Industry Association
The American Veal Association
The Biotechnology Industry Organization
The National Pork Producers Council
The United Egg Producers