



Setting the PACE

► by **Susan Rhode**, director of communications and public relations

Who's the real turkey?

A few days before Thanksgiving I was listening to a morning radio show out of Kansas City, Mo., on my way to the office. I'm as bad about hitting the scan button on my car radio as my husband is with the remote control at home. However, what I heard that morning quickly made me pull my finger off the button.

Equality

"How can we kill millions of turkeys every year at Thanksgiving when their only crime is being delicious?" a guest shrieked at the disc jockey and the caller who was standing by. "They have as much right to live a long and peaceful life on this earth as we do, and those of us involved with Farm Sanctuary are doing what we can to make that dream come true."

What?

Proclaiming humans and turkeys equals is, in my opinion, absurd. And as for eating them, I had a college professor who once told me never to eat anything narrower between the eyes than I was. I've lived close to that rule ever since, but not because I'm taking mercy on them. I simply prefer to eat things that taste good to me.

I continued to listen as the Farm Sanctuary spokesman offered his testimony about the inhumane treatment of domestic farm animals and how awful the general public was for killing and eating these innocent birds. What really amazed me were the people who called in to agree with his views.

Further research

When I arrived at the office I couldn't resist visiting the Farm Sanctuary Web site to learn more about this group of turkey lovers. I found that it is a U.S.-based organization that "operates farm animal sanctuaries and wages campaigns to stop the

exploitation of animals raised for food." On their home page you can adopt a turkey, saving it from your neighbor's dinner table, or learn about Hilda's story, the tale of a sheep who was saved from a pile of carcasses just in the nick of time by do-gooding Farm Sanctuary activists.

Historically, Farm Sanctuary hasn't been as public with their opposition to animal agriculture as other groups have. When we think of animal rights activists, we more than likely think of PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals).

It also had seemed that the trend of supporting these animal rights groups had lost some of its luster, too. That wasn't the case that morning in Kansas City. Callers shared their views on how turkeys, pigs, squirrels, hamsters and people had equal rights to freely roam this earth.

The bottom line is that these groups influence people every day. And they're not just in the more populated areas of the East and West coasts. If they can raise a stir in a cow town like Kansas City, they can find an audience anywhere. They're using whatever means they can to reach people wherever they can, and it's working.

A voice was heard

I want to say thanks to the gentleman who stepped up to the microphone at the



American Angus Association Annual Meeting in Louisville, Ky., and spoke about cattlemen's critical role in working against animal rights groups, especially PETA. He talked about PETA's change in strategy from picketing on a street corner to working in less visible, but likely more effective, environments — elementary classrooms.

Even though we hear less and less in the mainstream media about animal rights groups and their activities, they haven't closed shop. Instead, they've started using a little more strategy to spread their message.

Sir, your point was heard, at least it was by me. The work of animal activist groups is happening around us every day. You'll find it on your radio, in your local newspaper, on the Internet and maybe even in your child's classroom. Producers of all types and sizes and in all parts of the country need to take part in our work against animal rights groups and their threat to your livelihood.

As a beef producer it's your job to keep your ears and eyes open for messages that discredit the work of the original animal rights advocates — farmers and ranchers. Let's all make a commitment to spreading the good word about the humane practice of beef cattle production and how beef is a vital part of a healthy diet. Together we can make a difference and start setting the PACE!

Susan Rhode

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The Last WORD ...

The most important single influence in the life of a person is another person ... who is worthy of emulation.

— **Paul D. Shafer**