



# Setting the PACE

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

## Crazy? Like a fox

*When People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and other extremist animal rights groups emerged in the 1980s, most of us saw them as bands of idiots directed by eccentric cult leaders cutting a path of destruction to promote their cause. And even though all of that might have been true, what we didn't see was the impact they might have on our livelihood 20 years later.*

### Over time

Sure, we knew they were dangerous. We watched them set fire to research labs; turn animals loose at zoos, shelters and even livestock shows; and do whatever else was necessary to garner media attention. Well, things have changed since those days, but that doesn't mean they are any less dangerous.

Today's breed of animal rights activist isn't quite so cowardly. The groups we labeled as just crazy have turned out to be crazy like a fox. Today's animal rights groups are focusing an increasing amount of their resources and energies not on protests and violent actions, but on tools of policy development, litigation, legislation and education to bring about public acceptance of the animal rights philosophy and agenda.

What's more, today's animal rights movement is multifaceted, and its leaders are pros at manipulating political, legal and financial environments to reach their goals.

Who is their target? You and everyone who makes a living in animal agriculture.

### A meeting of the minds

A couple of months ago these groups met in their own forum, the Animal Rights 2002 National Convention. The mere fact that these groups are meeting in

their own self-proclaimed convention, and have been for years, should warrant attention from all of us. And while this event is nothing new for these groups, the agendas are. Groups that were once pitted against each other in dispute about trivial differences in methods or beliefs have now joined forces to work as one.

Reports from that convention indicated that the common focus of the panels and workshops was on developing new coalitions and alliances, manipulating the political and legal systems to achieve activist objectives, and framing the campaign for animal rights within a broader social justice movement.

Convention speakers cited the five stages a

## PETA puts full-court press on NCAA

Many of you might have heard that the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) announced it would no longer use leather basketballs in championship series, beginning in 2003.

This decision came after years of effort by the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) to change the policy of the NCAA and discontinue the use of leather, one of the beef industry's most valuable byproducts.

The NCAA claims that the use of a basketball made of synthetic materials was already underway when they received PETA's request, and that many different viewpoints and factual data were considered before the decision was made.

Regardless of whether PETA was responsible for the NCAA decision, they were part of the campaign, and they're taking most of the credit. The use of beef byproducts, such as leather, is important to the beef industry's economy. As a beef producer, your voice should be heard on this issue.

Association members are encouraged to contact the athletics and agriculture departments of their local land-grant university to voice their concerns about this NCAA decision. The more pressure that you, the taxpayer, apply on the state level, the more likely those institutions are to pass that pressure on to the NCAA.

You should also voice your opinions directly to the NCAA by contacting:

Melissa Caito  
National Collegiate Athletic Association  
700 W. Washington St., P.O. Box 6222  
Indianapolis, IN 46206-6222  
Phone: (317) 917-6222  
Fax: (317) 917-6888  
mcaito@ncaa.org.

social movement must go through to reach acceptance:

- public education;
- policy development;
- legislation;
- litigation; and
- public acceptance.

You can guarantee that PETA and other animal rights groups are preparing their troops for battle in all of these areas. Sooner or later we'll feel the effects on the farm.

Even though PETA may have found more meaning for their mission and smarter, more effective ways to accomplish it, there's no question that flashy, celebrity-driven public relations campaigns, publicity stunts and even violence will come into play. These activities put PETA in the news years ago and will continue to keep them there in the future. However, these baited media hooks will be backed up by serious messages and tactical educational and political strategies that dig deeper into the beliefs of our society than ever before.

### What can you do?

The only way to be prepared for what PETA dishes up next is to learn everything you can about this group and its goals. As I browsed through the Web sites listed below, I was appalled by what I found. The dissemination of false information about animal agriculture on these sites is rampant, and there's not a thing we can do to stop it.

But what we can do is start spreading the truth about the humane practices of production agriculture and the important role our industry plays in feeding the world.

From school children to politicians, they're now our targets, too.

Take a few minutes to browse these PETA Web sites next time you're online.

[www.peta-online.org](http://www.peta-online.org)  
[www.GoVeg.com](http://www.GoVeg.com)  
[www.HelpingAnimals.com](http://www.HelpingAnimals.com)  
[www.PETA2.com](http://www.PETA2.com)  
[www.AskCarla.com](http://www.AskCarla.com)  
[www.PETATV.com](http://www.PETATV.com)  
[www.Circuses.com](http://www.Circuses.com)  
[www.StopAnimalTests.com](http://www.StopAnimalTests.com)  
[www.CowsAreCool.com](http://www.CowsAreCool.com)

E-MAIL: [srhode@angus.org](mailto:srhode@angus.org)

### The Last WORD...

Nothing is more important than how our movement is portrayed in the media. And nothing is more important than our movement.

— Bruce Friedrich, PETA