

Fly on the Wall

Alliance releases reports from 2014 animal rights conferences, where speakers highlight ‘successes’ but note infighting among animal rights groups.

The Animal Agriculture Alliance Sept. 2 released a report that chronicles observations from the 33rd annual Animal Rights National Conference presented by the Farm Animal Rights Movement (FARM) and the Humane Society of the United States’ (HSUS) Taking Action for Animals (TAAFA) conference. Collectively, more than 2,500 people — many from foreign countries, including Brazil, Canada, India and Europe — attended the conferences.

“It is so important that we be present at

events like this in order to get a firsthand account of what activist groups are planning and understand the state of the animal rights movement,” said Animal Agriculture Alliance President and CEO Kay Johnson Smith. “If we can glean what demographics the activist groups are targeting, we can more effectively counter their misleading campaigns against animal agriculture.”

Though all of the speakers noted the “great successes” that have been achieved by the movement for animals raised on

farms, in zoos and aquariums, and utilized in medical research, numerous speakers also discussed discrepancies in the movement, noting infighting among group leaders and dissension in the ranks.

Specifically, FARM founder Alex Hershaft noted that People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals’ (PETA) Ingrid Newkirk had not attended the annual animal rights conference in more than 13 years despite repeated invitations for her to speak. Hershaft and other speakers also expressed

frustration in how the movement lacked coordination.

Said Hershaft, "If our opponents knew how little we communicated, they would be amazed."

Besides Hershaft, other notable activist presenters from either or both conferences included Wayne Pacelle (HSUS), Nathan Runkle (Mercy for Animals), Bruce Friedrich (Farm Sanctuary), and Will Potter (Author of *Green is the New Red* and Drone Kickstarter Campaign founder).

The reports, which collectively include summaries from more than 50 conference plenary and breakout sessions, also summarize key quotes from notable speakers and detail upcoming campaigns and efforts.

All groups, including the HSUS, Mercy for Animals and Farm Sanctuary spoke passionately about promoting veganism

using every available channel, using social media to fundraise for the movement, targeting restaurants and retailers with messages about "factory farming" and promoting Meatless Mondays as an incremental tool toward converting consumers to veganism.

"These reports really capture the goals and sentiments held by the leading animal rights organizations," said Johnson Smith. "I hope our members utilize these reports as tools to communicate with stakeholders about the true agenda of the activist organizations and recognize the need to actively engage in conversations along the food chain about agriculture's commitment to animal care."

Both the 2014 Taking Action for Animals Report and the 2014 Animal Rights Conference Report, which compile personal

accounts of speaker presentations and general observations, are available to Alliance members on the Alliance website.

Media wishing to obtain copies of the full reports, or for all other inquiries, please contact Emily Meredith, vice president, communications and membership, at emeredith@animalagalliance.org.



Editor's Note: *The Animal Agriculture Alliance, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, is a broad-based coalition of individual farmers and ranchers, producer organizations, veterinarians, scientists, suppliers, packer-processors, private industry and retailers. The Alliance's mission is to communicate the important role of animal agriculture to our nation's economy, productivity, vitality and security, and that animal well-being is central to producing safe, high-quality, affordable food and other products essential to our daily lives.*