

Cattle Welfare Symposium May 19-21

Temple Grandin says animal welfare audit systems should be simple, objective.

by **Mary Lou Peter**, *K-State Research and Extension*

When it comes to auditing animal welfare, Temple Grandin says any system designed to get the job done has to be simple and measurable. The livestock behavior specialist is known internationally for her work in developing animal handling systems and audit guidelines for meat packing plants, transport companies and other livestock-related enterprises.

Grandin, a professor of animal science at Colorado State University, says, "If it's not simple, you can't do it," adding that it is important to have objective, measurable actions in an animal welfare audit plan. She likens such plans to traffic laws. "The police aren't going to pull you over because they just feel like pulling you over. They'll stop you because they measured your speed and determined it to be faster than the law allows."

Grandin will speak on the topic: "How to Set Up and Implement

an Auditing System" at Kansas State University's (K-State's) Beef Cattle Welfare Symposium scheduled for May 19-21.

Prior to the development of animal handling guidelines in the 1990s, she says, livestock handlers were told in sometimes vague terms what not to do. But current guidelines are based on straightforward scoring systems. For example, in a large beef plant where multiple vehicles are unloading cattle at the same time, unloading is continuously observed until 100 cattle from three different vehicles are scored. A plant can earn a score of "Excellent" all the way to "Serious Problem" in this category, depending on how many, if any, animals slip or fall down.

Another featured speaker at the symposium, Mike Siemens, Cargill Animal Proteins leader for animal welfare and husbandry, will present "Animal Welfare at the Beef Packing Level."

"Obviously, it's the right thing to do," says Siemens of Cargill's efforts

at handling animals in a humane manner. “Humane animal handling is more efficient and productive. It’s safer for the animals. It’s safer for the employees and contractors who interact with the livestock.”

Siemens says that every Cargill employee who works with livestock receives 82 hours of animal welfare training each year and that as of summer 2009, 20 Cargill employees had been trained and certified by the Professional Animal Auditor Certification Organization.

“Cargill has a responsibility to both the animals in its care and the customers who rely on them. We have to be responsive to educating our customers. We have to make sure they understand the facts and make sure those facts are presented accurately,” he says. “We need to be sensitive to animal well-being — for the animals and for the people who truly care about animals.”

Other symposium presentation topics include:

- ▶ Adoption of industry guidelines and creating the animal welfare culture in your operation;
- ▶ How industries can communicate to government concerns;
- ▶ Compromised cattle program — the elimination of compromised cattle transport;
- ▶ Heat stress in feedlots;

- ▶ A tool for managing mud in feedlot pens;
- ▶ Answering public questions about beef production;
- ▶ How the beef industry can better communicate to governmental entities;
- ▶ Teaching beef cattle welfare in the field;
- ▶ Analgesic pharmacology and management of pain associated with dehorning, castration and lameness;
- ▶ How to benchmark animal welfare progress in our industries;
- ▶ The economics associated with welfare; and more.

The conference will be preceded by a half-day session on emergency preparedness beginning at 1 p.m., May 19, in Weber Arena. The session will cover such topics as handling loose cattle after an accident; moving downed animals, humane safety and handling fractious animals; humane euthanasia techniques and emergency response techniques for wounded cattle.

For those who are unable to attend the symposium in person, a live webcast option is available.

More information, including online registration and associated fees, is available on the web at www.isbcw.beefcattleinstitute.org/. 