

Ethics in the Show Ring: Making the Responsible Choice

“Cheating, abuse rear their heads at livestock fairs.” *USA Today* (Sept. 1, 1995)

“A blue ribbon year for cheating: Fraud and felonies replace showmanship and hard work at Ohio’s livestock shows.” *Columbus Dispatch*, four-part series (Oct. 3 to Nov. 4, 1999)

Headlines chronicling cases of animal abuse or unethical behavior at livestock shows have made front page news in publications throughout the United States. With the passing of every show season such incidents cause animal agriculture to resonate more negatively in the eyes of the public.

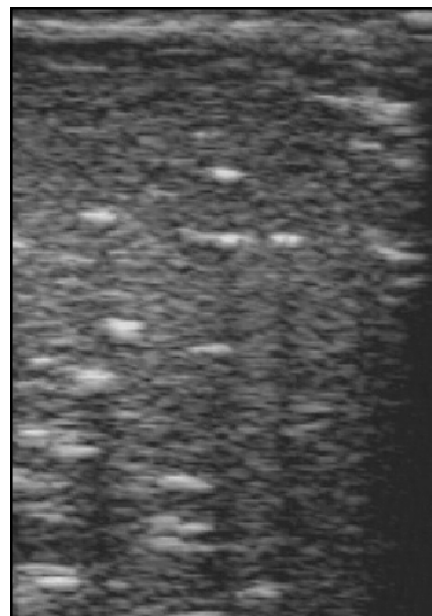
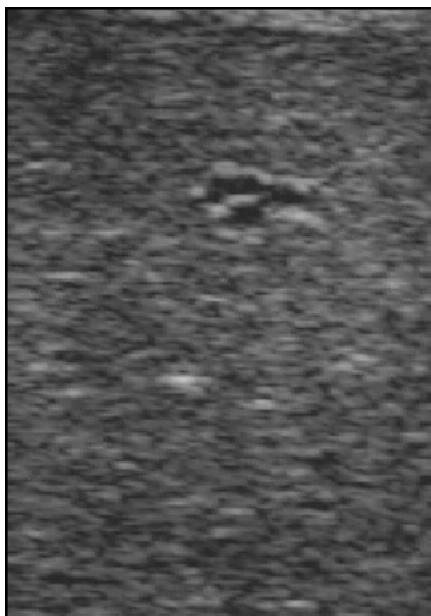
Perhaps the most serious consequence in the public arena has been decreased consumer confidence in the safety of dairy beef and milk. Udder tampering and illegal drug use have seriously detracted from the show ring’s traditional image as a place where producers are rewarded for their efforts to breed a high-quality animal, representative of its breed as well as a safe, wholesome source of food.

As most producers will agree, these goals remain the intent of the majority of Americans, youth and adult, who exhibit dairy cattle and livestock. For the millions of youth involved in organizations such as 4-H and FFA, the show ring is a forum for the months of careful preparation which they have invested in their project animals. By raising and showing dairy or livestock, youth learn important handling and management skills as well as the importance of being a responsible caretaker.

To help young producers make the right decision in the show ring, the Cooperative Extension Service has initiated quality assurance training programs which address animal care and food safety. Ohio is one such state which has taken an aggressive stand by requiring completion of at least one training session by any Ohio junior who plans to exhibit a dairy or livestock animal. According to State 4-H Animal Science Extension Associate Jodi Black, 30,000 to 40,000 Ohio youth are expected to complete Ohio’s training program this year.

Testing At National Shows

For dairy cattle, exhibition codes have been in place for many years and include



This figure illustrates the ability of ultrasound to determine if an udder has been altered by infusing a foreign substance. The picture on the left is an ultrasound of a normal mammary gland in a dairy cow. At right is the same udder after it was infused with isobutane gas, a substance that has been used to make udders appear larger and fuller. Reprinted with permission of the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, Vol. 215, No. 3, p. 367.

statements from the Purebred Dairy Cattle Association and, more recently, the American Jersey Cattle Association (see page 36).

The emphasis on ethics and quality assurance training follows on the heels of increased testing for and discovery of illegal substances at dairy and livestock public exhibitions.

No substance other than milk should be present in the udder at any time. Using an ultrasound machine, veterinarians can check for the presence of prohibited substances by monitoring the density of the udder and portraying that image on a screen.

In cases of tampering, Liquamast Aerosol is one of the commonly observed substances. Also known as a “foamy,” Liquamast Aerosol is a tetracycline antibiotic which is infused into the quarter with a CO₂ cartridge. This drug is illegal for sale or use in the United States.

In order to discourage cheating by exhibitors, shows such as the World Dairy Expo, Madison, Wis., the Ohio State Fair and the Spring Dairy Expo, both in Columbus, Ohio, require exhibitors of the champion and high placing animals to comply with mandatory ultrasound and

milk testing.

The World Dairy Expo, which hosts the Central National Jersey Show, has monitored the Grand Champion and Reserve Grand Champion as well as other animals which place high since 1998.

This past March, the Spring Dairy Expo followed suit, requiring ultrasounds and milk samples from the top five animals in each breed. Dr. R. David Glauer, State Veterinarian of Ohio, says, “People were very cooperative and supportive of the program.”

Ohio Takes Action Against Livestock Tampering

Cheating in the show ring discredits the owner’s integrity but also has more tangible consequences such as prison time and hefty fines. Such a scenario is best illustrated by the illegal activity which took place in 1994 at the Ohio State Fair. Multiple cases of animal tampering were exposed when meat inspectors detected the steroid compound clenbuterol and/or vegetable oil in the grand champion market lamb and seven of the top 10 steers.

The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) launched an 18-month investigation to expose the scandal and eventually called upon the Food and Drug Adminis-

tration for assistance. In the end, the case resulted in 16 felony and two misdemeanor convictions. Sentences varied from serving prison terms to submitting ads in national agricultural magazines indicating the individual's participation in unethical and illegal activities.

The following year, the governor of Ohio signed into law the Ohio Livestock Show Reform Act, receiving unanimous approval from the Ohio Senate and House of Representatives. The law made livestock tampering in Ohio a specific fourth degree felony and sabotage a third degree felony. It also empowered ODA to set statewide regulations regarding tampering and food safety rules, giving departmental staff greater authority when investigating and testing livestock. The law has also closed legal loopholes in the enforcement of illegal or extra-label drug use.

Endorsed by the National Council of State Governments, the Ohio Livestock Show Reform Act sets aside a total of \$200,000 to ODA for testing purposes. Since its approval, ODA has not found substantial evidence of clenbuterol use or oil in any of its testing.

Revisions have also been made to the Ohio Exhibition Livestock Tampering Rules which mandate the completion of a drug use notification form (DUNF) for all junior market livestock and lactating dairy goats and cows.

Proper Use of Livestock Drugs

According to the Ohio Exhibition Livestock Tampering Rules, the use of any drug which conceals, transforms, or enhances an animal's appearance is considered illegal.

Although illegal drugs such as clenbuterol or Liquamast Aerosol are most often cited in cases of unethical treatment at dairy and livestock exhibitions, extra-label use of FDA-approved treatments has also escalated.

Such activity is confirmed by regulatory testing in Ohio. "We're seeing an increase in the misuse of legal drugs," reports Dr. Glauer.

This includes using drugs such as Banamine and corticosteroids to hide physical characteristics such as lameness. Banamine, in fact, is intended for use in non-lactating animals and has a four-day meat withholding period.

In order to legally administer drugs to an animal, you must establish a valid Veterinarian-Client-Patient-Relationship (VCPR). To comply with the law the vet-

Smuggling Clenbuterol Equals Prison Time for Oklahoma Vet

On December 16, 1998, veterinarian Jerry M. Bonham, Cordell, Okla., pled guilty to attempting to purchase over \$64,000 worth of illegal animal drugs smuggled into the U.S. from Canada. The U.S. District Court, Oklahoma City, sentenced Bonham to eight months in a Federal Prison and ordered him to pay a \$15,000 fine. After completing the prison sentence, he will be placed on two years supervised release.

The sentencing came after six winning animals at the 1994 Tulsa State Fair tested positive for Clenbuterol, launching a joint investigation by the FDA's Office of Criminal Investigations and the U.S. Customs Service.

Between 1988 and 1994, Bonham illegally purchased over 1,000 bottles of clenbuterol from a veterinarian in Canada. He then resold the drug to his veterinary clients at Bonham Cattle Company and the Cordell Animal Hospital. Although it is illegal to use clenbuterol in any food animal, Bonham's clients used the drug to enhance the musculature of their show lambs and cattle.

Besides constituting a breach of law and ethics, the use of clenbuterol in food animals poses serious health risks for humans. People who eat clenbuterol-contaminated meat may experience increased heart rate, headache, muscle tremors, dizziness, nausea, fever, and chills.

Bonham's veterinary license was later revoked in January of 1999.

In handing down her sentence, Judge Cauthron said, "I cannot forget what you have done to children, or young people who are out there legitimately trying to learn how to do things and how to do them right, and they have been taught a very wrong thing by your activities in this case."

Source: National Livestock Ethics Council News, Winter 1999, p. 3.

erianian must observe the individual in the herd or look at other animals in the same herd. Secondly, the veterinarian must follow-up on the animal's condition. To complete the VCPR, the owner must agree to follow the veterinarian's instructions for treatment and proper drug use.

A valid VCPR is also needed in order to legally use any drug for extra-label purposes. Extra-label use of drugs (ELUD) is defined as the use of a drug in a manner other than that stated on the manufacturer's label.

Strict guidelines define the proper use of extra-label drugs. If a drug is to be used in an extra-label manner, there must be no other approved animal drug available and the drug must be used for a therapeutic purpose. Certain drugs are not approved for ELUD, including chloramphenicol, clenbuterol, diethylstilbestrol, and fluoroquinolones such as Baytril.

Those drugs approved for ELUD may not be used if they pose a risk to human health or leave drug residues in the treated animal's carcass. Extra-label drugs may not be compounded or mixed with other medications.

In order to legally administer drugs, other than those available over the counter, in an extra-label manner, you must follow the manufacturer's specifications regarding species treated, class of animal treated, dose, route and duration of treatment, and

withdrawal times for meat and milk. Any violation of these stipulations constitutes a breach of law.

When drugs are used extra-label, the container must also be labeled with the veterinarian's name, the name of the drug, the identification of the treated animal, duration and frequency of treatment, and withdrawal or discard times for meat, milk, or eggs.

Food Safety and Cull Cows

Drug residues, whether the drug is used legally or illegally, is a critical food safety concern. According to the Center for Dairy Beef Quality Assurance, nearly half of the beef obtained from cull dairy cows in the U.S. is processed and sold as whole muscle cuts. The meat is often used in deli or fast food beef, fajitas, and economy steaks.

Dr. Glauer, Ohio's State Veterinarian, is assured that with the DUNF at Ohio shows and mandatory quality assurance training, "We're (ODA) at a better standpoint than ever to ensure food safety with regards to exhibition animals.

"The overall rule has allowed people to treat their animals," says Glauer, "but all pieces of the regulatory standpoint are there to keep treated animals from entering the food chain."

A Level Playing Field

Ethics in the show ring is a matter of integrity, respecting the animals that are

Exhibition Code of the American Jersey Cattle Association

Adopted June 26, 1997 by the American Jersey Cattle Association Board of Directors

The showing of Registered Jersey cattle is an important part of the promotion, merchandising and breeding program of some breeders. Additionally, it is an important part of the program of the American Jersey Cattle Association to stimulate and sustain interest in breeding Registered Jersey cattle. This relates to both spectators and exhibitors.

In this connection, the Board of Directors of the American Jersey Cattle Association believes that it is in the best interest of the breeders of Registered Jersey cattle to maintain a reputation of integrity and to present a wholesome and progressive image of Jersey cattle in the show ring. It recognizes that there are certain practices in the proper care and management of dairy cattle which are necessary in the course of moving dairy cattle to and between shows that are advisable to keep them in a sound, healthy condition so that they might be presented in the show ring in a natural, normal appearance and condition. Conversely, it recognizes certain practices in the cataloging, handling and presentation of cattle in the show ring which are unacceptable.

A. The following practices or procedures are considered unacceptable and defined as being fraudulent and/or unethical in the showing of Registered Jersey cattle:

1. Misrepresenting the age and/or milking status of the animal for the class in which it is shown.
2. Treating the animal, particularly the udder, internally or externally, with an irritant or counter-irritant, or other substance to artificially improve the conformation.
3. Surgery or insertion of foreign matter under the skin, performed to change the natural contour or appearance of the animal's body, though not to preclude practices required or involved in normal management.
4. Criticizing or interfering with the judge, show management or other exhibitors while in the show ring, or other conduct detrimental to the breed or the show.
5. Challenging, threatening, or interfering with an ethics committee appointed by show management to monitor the animals on exhibit at the show grounds.

If the Judge finds a violation of the above, they are strongly encouraged to utilize this in the placing of the class and alert show management for possible additional action.

B. The following practices and procedures are considered to detract from the image of the show ring when carried to excess and are considered to be minor violations. The degree of discrimination is up to the discretion of the judge

who is encouraged to utilize this in their placing of animals in question.

1. Setting teats or manipulating a teat to alter its normal position such as to unnaturally hold it plumb or to alter its length shall be given slight to serious discrimination by the judge. By serious discrimination, the judge is encouraged to utilize this in the placing of the class.
2. Excessive manipulation of topline hair. Excessive shall be defined as any manipulation or hair that in the judge's determination is not needed to enhance the natural characteristic of the animal.
3. Use of artificial hair except for false switches.
4. Unsportsmanlike conduct on the part of the exhibitor.

While all animals may be subject to examination, the judge and show management are encouraged to closely examine the top five animals in each class for any violations of this code. To assist in this regard, the judge is reminded of the authority to order a milkout of any class where a major violation may have occurred. Upon milkout, the judge can then alter the placings accordingly. Any major violations uncovered during or after the milkout will be subject to the review. Exhibitors are reminded that the make-up ring is monitored and unethical practices are prohibited. Suspected violations should be reported immediately.

C. Practices which should be encouraged to enhance the image of the show.

1. Establish uniform dress code for exhibitors in the show ring.
2. Recognize good herdsmanship and exhibits in the barn.
3. Selection of professional and capable judges who support and encourage ethical practices in the show ring.

Persons who participate in shows recognized by the American Jersey Cattle Association as either regional or national shows agree to abide by the American Jersey Cattle Association Exhibition Code.

Those who violate this code shall be deemed to have breached a duty owing to the Association and may be censured, suspended, or expelled from membership in the Association, and denied privileges of the Association including, without limitation, the privilege of registering and recording change in ownership of Jersey cattle on the records of the Association.

exhibited, good sportsmanship, and basic common sense. By tampering with udders or administering illegal drugs, exhibitors tarnish their own reputation as well as that of the entire dairy industry. Unethical behavior and the reams of publicity that can come with it alienate other producers as well as the general public which consumes dairy milk and beef.

As illustrated by the 1994 Ohio State Fair, it pays to make the right decision when it comes to ethics in the show ring.

The wrong decision can place an exhibitor at risk of prison sentences, steep fines, or prohibition from future dairy shows.

As Dr. R. David Glauer concludes, "By following acceptable agricultural practices, we can present good, sound show animals that still portray genetic merit, and maintain a level playing field."

For More Information

Training materials designed to teach youth about show ring ethics, quality assurance, and proper animal care are avail-

able from the Ohio State Cooperative Extension Service. The program, "Caring For Animals" includes a 12-minute videotape and an informative discussion guide.

To purchase these training materials, contact the Curriculum Materials Service, 254 Agricultural Administration Building, The Ohio State University, 2120 Fyffe Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210-1067.

You may inquire about the program at 614/292-4848 or by fax at 800/292-4919.