ANIMAL WELFARE
Livestock Producers Support Responsible Use of Antibiotics

BACKGROUND
Animal welfare has garnered a great deal of attention from consumers, as evidenced in media and social media. Yet perhaps no one is more passionate about the issue than livestock producers themselves — the people who care for those very animals day in and day out.

The truth is, livestock producers have a vested interest in the health and well-being of their herds and flocks. Not only are these animals their livelihood, they are also the heart and soul of their operation. For producers, the health and safety of the animal comes first. Always.

Producers’ commitment to caring for their animals includes providing a comfortable environment, nutritious feed, preventive health care and more to keep their livestock healthy and comfortable.

TOP ISSUES
• Producers Do Not Support Animal Abuse: Like consumers, livestock producers are quick to condemn any type of animal abuse and work hard to provide top-notch animal care. Understanding and caring for their animals is what they do. Those who do not are not a fair representation of the agricultural industry. The majority of producers treat their animals with care, respect and dignity.

• Knowledge Gap from Farm to Fork Contributes to Misperceptions: Most consumers are so far removed from the farm that they have limited exposure to on-farm principles and animal care needs, which can lead to misunderstanding and mistrust. For example, consumers may assume all animals want to be free range, however, housing options often exist to protect animals from diseases, inclement weather and predators. So there is a reason behind the type of care or environment provided.

• Producer Codes Center on Providing Superior Animal Care: Virtually every livestock species has its own set of guidelines including tips and training geared toward helping producers provide the best care possible. These include the Beef Quality Assurance Program, the National Dairy FARM Program, the National Chicken Council Animal Welfare Guidelines and more.
Science, Research Exist Behind the Care: The animal welfare guidelines, standards and audits used by livestock producers have been developed by animal scientists, veterinarians and other livestock experts. These help ensure producers are using best practices to achieve optimum health and welfare of the animals.

KEY MESSAGES

• Livestock producers consider animal welfare a top priority and are committed to providing top-notch care to their animals. This includes providing adequate food/water, living conditions and health care.

• Livestock producers care about providing high standards of animal welfare and preventing animal abuse, just like consumers.

• Many livestock producers complete animal welfare programs that provide them with the education, tools and support needed to ensure proper animal care. They are committed to improving production practices throughout the industry.

• Because food animals are their livelihood, livestock producers have a vested interest in providing high level care to their animals. For producers, a well-cared for animal is a more profitable one.

• For many producers, raising livestock and giving them quality care is part of their family legacy. It goes without saying that you take care of your animals’ needs before your own.

“We put a tremendous amount of awareness and training around our production well-being policies, and the accountabilities we have to our animals. We talk a lot about what great care means to us. It’s about taking the extra time go back through the barn to check the feeders one last time, walking the pens again and making sure if there are pigs that are sick they are getting immediate treatment so they recover. It’s also about helping our teams understand they can personally make a difference in the health and productivity of the animals they care for and ultimately contribute to overall herd health.”

- Cassandra Jass, DVM and Director of Production Well-Being, Iowa Select Farms, Iowa Falls, Iowa

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