

For immediate release:

Snapshots of global progress

Livestock transport is a growing focus of animal care initiatives around the world.

Calgary, AB, Feb. 17, 2009: Canada is helping to lead the charge in progress with livestock transport. But what are other countries doing?

Comments from additional presentations at the Livestock Transport Conference helped to flesh out a global perspective of how industry and its partners are supporting advancements toward a new generation of safe, humane and effective livestock transport.

Their experiences and points of view show a common vision for collaborative, industry-driven progress, and a commitment to ongoing livestock care innovation, in many countries around the world.

Building a model for cross-border teamwork

“There are so many benefits to working together,” says Joey Astling, a USDA field coordinator, who discussed how U.S. and Canada have collaborated on horse transport in recent years.

In 2002, an agreement was signed by USDA and CFIA. The countries agreed to work together to ensure U.S. origin horses traveled out of the U.S. according to USDA regulations. “Horses cross borders, so should regulations,” says Astling. “The more we can coordinate and streamline what we do, the better.”

The recent successes with horse transport showcase the opportunity for the USDA and CFIA to work together for greater North American collaboration for all livestock species, he says. “CFIA has done a great job of catching U.S. violators at the border and returning them back to us for prosecution. We want to continue to do everything we can to strengthen our relationships and get more of that type of benefit.”

Taking charge Down Under

Australia is also making strong advancements in strengthening its livestock transport approaches, says Cameron Hall, CEO of the Australian Livestock Export Corporation, known as “LiveCorp.”

“We want to be a respected world leader in sustainable livestock exports, and a major part of that is ensuring livestock are well taken care of,” says Hall, who addressed the conference via video. “Livecorp is committed to ensuring that all participants in the livestock export trade adhere to recognized best practice and to encourage a culture of continuous industry growth, innovation and improvement.”

Australia exports live sheep, cattle and goats to many overseas markets, and has strongly integrated livestock care best practices into all its activities, including all aspects of transport. LiveCorp has gone so far as to place employees in the countries it exports to for the purpose of assisting in ensuring humane animal handling after the livestock have been exported. In Malaysia, for example, LiveCorp has made a major commitment to training local stockmen in the latest techniques for good livestock handling.

“There is a very strong link between good animal welfare and good business outcomes,” says Hall. “And we recognize the expectation of the global community that all animals are well treated. This approach helps us to meet that expectation as part of good business and good stewardship.”

Britain boosts focus on guidelines

The UK is another corner of the world where everyone from farmers to transporters are placing greater focus on standardized approaches to livestock transport.

“Our message to you in North America is we are here to work with you and to help,” says Phil Malone of the Britain-based company “Animal-i.” The company has developed an information and interactive training program on the safe handling and transport of livestock in the UK, working with industry and other stakeholders at multiple levels.

In the UK context, a key force toward updated livestock transport guides was European Union legislation, explains Malone. Quality assurance schemes driven by the major supermarket and restaurant chains also played a role.

“What will drive change with you in North America?” he asks. “Will it be the industry wanting to show best practice, will it be your big supermarkets – the Wal-Marts and the Loblaws demanding standards? Could it be that NAFTA shows leadership so that your cross-border issues melt away? Or will there be busy legislation from state to state and province to province, giving everyone big headaches?”

The preferable option is for industry to show leadership and set the tone, he suggests.

“We can’t afford to sit back and relax. If we want to control our own destiny, we’re always going to have to be one step ahead of the other drivers.”

Keeping one step ahead

That proactive approach has largely been the case in North America, noted these and other Livestock Transport Conference speakers.

The conference included presentations on several of the key North American initiatives, including Canada’s Certified Livestock Transporter (CLT) program, the U.S.-based Transport Quality Assurance (TQA) program, and the recently developed American Meat Institute’s Animal Welfare Audit for Transportation.

In particular, several of the invited speakers from the U.S. noted they were encouraged by the industry progress and leadership they have seen coming from north of the border.

“Several of us from the States have mentioned how impressive it is what you all have accomplished here in Canada and what the group here represents today,” says Dr. Nick Berry of Cargill, who resides in Coralville, Iowa, and was one of more than a dozen speakers at the conference.

“Everyone here should be commended for getting together and being committed to collaborate and work together and share ideas at a meeting like this,” he says.

Seeking out new opportunities

Themed “*Are we there yet?*” the conference brought together over 120 people including transporters, livestock producers, researchers and other industry leaders from across North America.

“We all need to lean on industry peers who we trust and respect,” Berry observed, capturing the feeling of many in the room. “We all need to talk to one another and hunt and seek out what is working well and what we can improve. That’s what we need to do to be leaders in this industry and leaders in caring for our livestock.”

The Livestock Transport Conference was hosted by Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC) and the National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC). It was sponsored by National Cattle Feeders’ Association, Animal Transportation Association, Alberta Livestock Industry Development Fund and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food Program. More information on the conference including additional articles on several of the speaker presentations, is available on the CLT Web site at www.livestocktransport.ca and through the AFAC Web site at www.afac.ab.ca.

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