Interacting with Law Enforcement Audiences in Livestock Management

Stephen Boyles
Ohio State University Extension, boyles.4@osu.edu

Kimberly Cole
Ohio State University Extension, cole.436@osu.edu

Leah Dorman
Ohio Farm Bureau Federation, ldorman@ofbf.org

Interacting with Law Enforcement Audiences in Livestock Management

Abstract

An Ohio voter initiative was passed to create the Ohio Livestock Care Standards Board. The board established livestock animal care regulations. Eight workshops were held for humane officers and others who deal with livestock animal care complaints. A total of 127 participants were trained on beef, dairy, swine, sheep/goat, equine and poultry husbandry; body condition scoring; farm animal behavior and handling; and biosecurity. The OPOTA has authority over training the County Humane Agents. OPOTA put together a team, including instructors from Animal Agriculture 101, to edit this section of their training on how to determine animal abuse related to livestock.

Stephen Boyles
Beef Specialist
Ohio State University
Extension
Columbus, Ohio
boyles.4@osu.edu

Kimberly Cole
Equine Specialist
Ohio State University
Extension
Columbus, Ohio
cole.436@osu.edu

Leah Dorman
Veterinarian
Ohio Farm Bureau
Federation
Columbus, Ohio
ldorman@ofbf.org

Introduction

The Ohio Livestock Care Standards Board (OHLCSB, 2010) was created to establish livestock animal care regulations. The issue has increased anxieties over whether local humane officers would know how to identify abuse in a livestock operation. Many of the people responsible for investigating cruelty complaints about farm animals have little to no training in livestock. For example, those enforcing animal cruelty laws need to understand that just because a dairy cow is typically thinner than a beef cow that it is not necessarily an indication of abuse or that feather loss on hens could be the normal process of molting.

Background

There has been a proliferation of animal protection initiatives. The animal protection movement began to adopt a new tactic, the citizen-initiative process (Boyles & Hill, 2008). Organizations have identified what they think are winnable issues in demographically favorable states. Such initiatives related to livestock have occurred in Florida, Arizona, and California. Ohio was a proposed state for legislation, but an alternative initiative was passed to create the OHLCSB. Instead of voter-directed legislation, the OHLCSB was mandated to create livestock standards and timelines for implementation of regulations. Extension personnel served on all the subcommittees when creating the livestock standards.

Methods

Ohio State University Extension <http://extension.osu.edu/> and Ohio Farm Bureau <http://ofbf.org/> Federation joined efforts to help humane officers across the state learn how to distinguish normal livestock care from animal abuse. A series of eights workshops called Animal Agriculture 101: Basics of Farm Animal Care and Management were held over a 2-year period to help humane officers and others who deal with animal care complaints to have more knowledge of farm animal care and production practices. The eight workshops were in eight different locations throughout the state.

The course was suitable for: humane officers/agents; dog wardens; animal control officers; local animal shelters/humane societies; sheriff deputies; and prosecuting attorneys and county commissioners. Visit <http://ofbf.org/media-and-publications/watch/1/596/> to see an example video announcement for the course.

A total of 127 participants were trained in beef, dairy, swine, sheep/goat, equine, and poultry husbandry; body condition scoring (Imler, Carr, Hersom, Johnson, & Thrift, 2012); farm animal behavior and handling; and biosecurity.

The Ohio State University Extension and Ohio Farm Bureau provided speakers and expertise for the 6-hour course. The cost of $15 included lunch, a resource binder, and compact disc (CD). The purpose of the class was to not only provide information about basic farm animal care and husbandry, but to help build relationships between agricultural-based entities and county humane and law enforcement officers that have not previously had a great deal of interaction. One point that each animal specialist emphasized was, "Talk to the owner and ask questions before reaching any conclusions. It could be the easiest or most difficult task, but talking to farmers can fill in the gaps and help you to understand what is going on at the livestock facility."

Table 1.

Agenda

Morning Session	Body Condition, feeding and shelter: Beef, dairy, equine, swine, sheep, goats, and poultry
Lunch	Instructors sit among humane officers to interact and expand relationships
Afternoon Session	Animal Behavior and handling How to talk to the media Biosecurity, legal obligations and search warrants

Results

In three situations it was not a 1-day event. Participants were invited to visit a local farm operation so they could see the animals in a typical farm setting and hear first-hand from farmers and local agriculture leaders. It was difficult for uniform attendance due to job obligations and travel budgets

of various organizations represented by class participants. Various state organizations and universities have requested the resource materials. The CD has been sent when requested. Various radio and press organizations provided stories on the program.

A questionnaire was passed out at the end of the session, and all participants were given 20 minutes to fill it out. A total of 104 questionnaires were returned with at least one comment. Some common questionnaire responses were a desire to have more time on each of the topics. There were requests to expand the classes of livestock covered to include animals such as bison, rabbits, and other small animals raised for fur and meat. The challenge to meet all the suggestions would be what to exclude for a 1-day classroom program. The participant evaluations from Animal Agriculture 101 indicated a need for more training in the area of farm animal handling, especially during emergencies.

Table 2.

Questionnaire

What did you find most useful about the training you received today?
What did you find least useful about the training you received today?
How could the training have been improved?
What comments do you have for today's speakers?
From today's training, what do you plan to implement in your area of responsibility?
Of the topics covered today, where do you feel you need additional training?
What additional topics would be valuable training in the future?
Overall comments for today's training

The Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy (OPOTA, 2013) has authority over training the County Humane Agents. In Ohio, Humane Agents are required to have a minimum of 20 hours of basic training, which includes 5 hours of training on animal husbandry. OPOTA put together a small team, including selected instructors from Animal Agriculture 101, to edit this section of the training. The new format includes practical information about the care and feeding of farm animals derived from Animal Agriculture 101. This is also an important opportunity as it will set the stage for what the humane agent considers normal while investigating animal cruelty complaints. Relationships have been developed between animal science educators and law enforcement personnel.

Future educational programs for law enforcement audiences will be on the legal issues of investigating potential cases of animal abuse. Example topics will be when a search is warranted, showing probable cause, and liability for officers. There will also be emphasis on providing a basic understanding of farm animal behavior and handling in order to be better prepared to respond in the face of an incident involving livestock.

References

Boyles, S., & A. Hill (2008). Selected discussion of legislation and initiatives. In: *Contemporary issues in the use of animals by humans* (pp. 226-236). Dubuque: Great River Technologies.

Imler, A. M., Carr, C.C ., Hersom, M. J., Johnson, D. D., & Thrift, T. A. (2012). Impact of a dairy beef quality assurance extension program on producer cull cow management practices and meat quality knowledge. *Journal of Extension* [On-line]. 50(6) Article 6RIB10. Available at: http://www.joe.org/joe/2012december/rb10.php

Ohio Livestock Care and Standards Board. (2010). Ohio Department of Agriculture. Retrieved from: http://www.agri.ohio.gov/LivestockCareStandards/

Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy. (2013). Ohio Attorney General. Retrieved from: https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Law-Enforcement/Ohio-Peace-Officer-Training-Academy