

Animal rights

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since rail carriers could sign waivers.

In 1959, the federal government passed the Humane Slaughter Act and in 1966 the Laboratory and Animal Welfare Act was adopted. The veterinarian pointed out the 1970s saw the "evolution of how society feels about animals." The Horse Protection Act was passed in 1970 and the Animal Welfare Act was amended. Legislation to protect wild horses and burros was created, too. Then in 1976, both the Horse Protection and Animal Welfare Acts were once again amended.

Schwindaman noted the animal welfare groups are concerned about the rights of animals, a movement that began in Europe. "We must try to understand their concerns," he advised. "They are reasonable people for the most part. We must be careful not to become polarized."

Penn State's Kenneth Goodwin, head of the Poultry Science Department, voiced his opinion that farmers are under a mandate to produce livestock as efficiently as possible, while keeping the welfare of those animals in mind.

Over the years, farmers have seen a transition in animal husbandry that moved livestock and poultry from a range situation to confinement in order to control predators and execute proper management.

Calling on his experiences in the poultry field, Goodwin noted "birds in cages today produce as well as, if not better than, floor-raised bird. He stressed the caged birds' "livability" was better than range or floor birds.

With improved health and feeding management, Goodwin stated poultry producers have been able to surpass goals in feed conversion in the broiler business. Instead of producing a 4-pound bird with 12 pounds of feed in 12 weeks, producers now can produce a 4-pound bird with 8 pounds of feed in 7 weeks.

"There has been no time in the history of the world when people have been able to eat as cheaply or as safely as today," Goodwin exclaimed. "And farmers are being criticized for doing this."

Goodwin conceded there are some management practices that might need changing, however, and suggested that discussions on animal welfare be kept open — basing these debates on things that can be measured, such as fertility, productivity, and abuse.

The poultry scientist defined animal rights as 'antropomorphism' — assigning human feelings and thoughts to animals. "When I'm asked how I'd like to be kept in a cage, I respond that I wouldn't. But, neither would I like to eat my own feces like rabbits do, or eat regurgitated seafood like seagulls do, or

hibernate all winter like bears.

Robert Johnson of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals told the group his agency's task was to "prevent cruelty to animals."

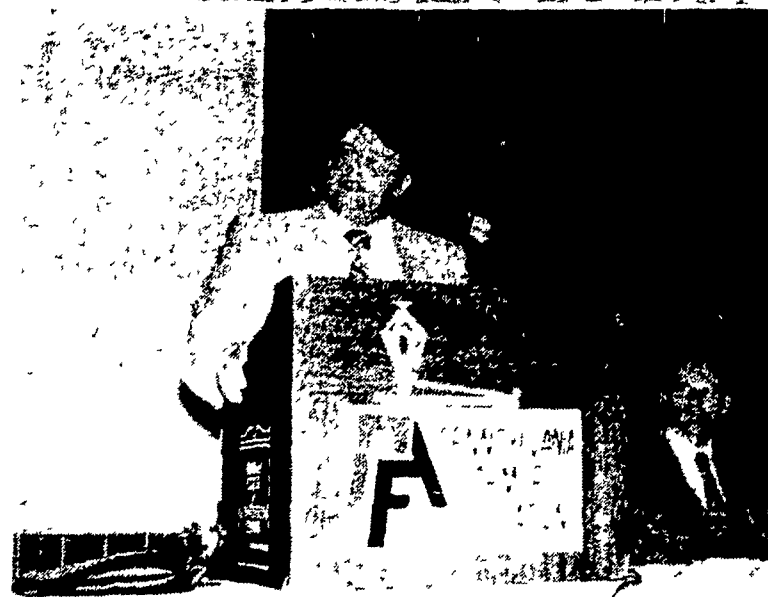
"There is a growing concern and awareness among nonfarm, nonlivestock people about animals used to produce food," he explained. "People over the years have made an intentional blank in their minds between the animals and the end product. Now they're asking 'Does the end justify the means? Are bargain prices worth the way animals are raised?'"

Johnson noted that original animal welfare concerns centered around horses — overworking and overdriving. But now they concern all management systems — overcrowding, deprivation of feed and water, absence of social behavior.

"Neither the livestock industry or the humane groups could condone flagrant cruelty," Johnson stated. "The issues need to be defined and measured."

University of Maryland's Thomas Hartsock, associate professor of animal science, commented that farming and nutrition cannot be separated. He said farmers have been asked by consumers to take a closer look at how and why they're doing things. However, he asked, "Are farmers obligated to keep their animals better than Mother Nature would?"

Farm Bureau's Bruce Hawley brought the group up-to-date on federal legislation concerning animal rights. House Joint



PFA President Keith Ecker delivered his luncheon speech to the conference participants on Tuesday, voicing his concerns for the family farm and its public image as well as the future for farming and PFA.

Resolution 305 which would create a study group to look at the economic, scientific, ethical, and environmental aspects of animal husbandry has been sent to the

Agricultural Committee. "This legislation won't see the light of day in this administration," he predicted.



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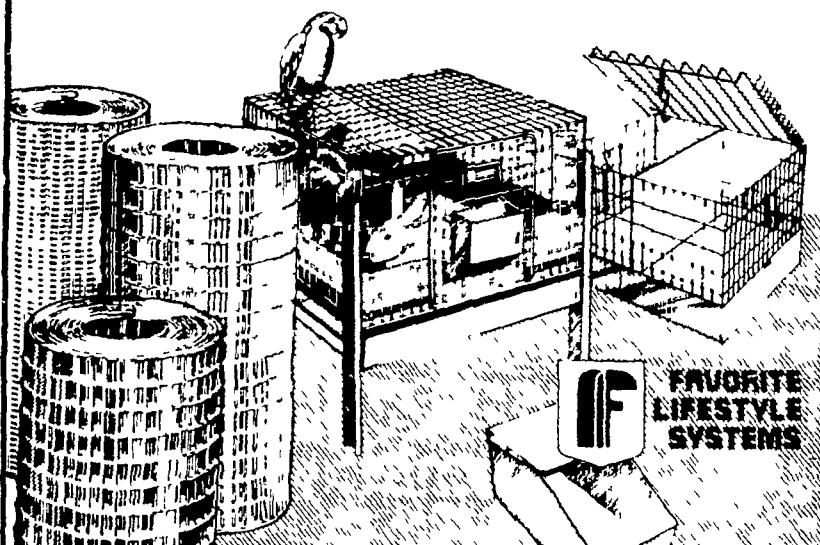
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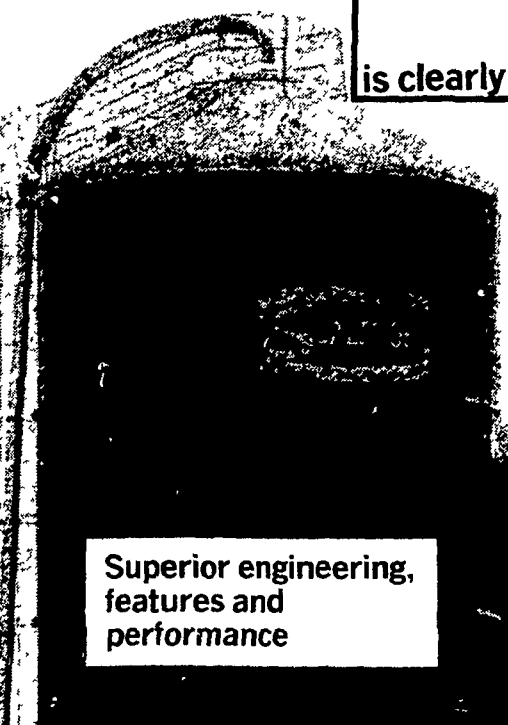
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