

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Response to “Healthy Conversation About Meat?”

Temple Grandin, PhD

This letter responds to “Healthy Conversation About Meat?” It criticized my article, “Answers to Patient, Student, and Clinician Questions About How Animals Are Slaughtered and Used for Food.” The main focus of my article is conditions in slaughterhouses. On the cortisol issue, I did not state that the animals were not stressed. I said that animals’ stress levels at slaughter were similar to those during handling on a ranch.

There are 2 basic ethical schools of thought on the use of animals for food. One view is that using animals for food is wrong. The other view is that using animals for food can be done ethically.¹ I have spent a major part of my career improving conditions in slaughterhouses. In the 1970s and throughout the 1990s, conditions in some slaughterhouses were terrible. Today they are not perfect, but they have greatly improved.²

It was beyond the scope of my article to discuss the many problems with concentrated animal feeding operations. There are some serious **animal welfare problems** on some large farms.³ Some of these problems will be more difficult to fix than slaughterhouses’ problems. The 2 species that have the greatest welfare issues with highly restrictive housing are pigs and laying hens. Farms and slaughterhouses that submit to regular inspections by large supermarket and restaurant buyers have better conditions.⁴ The worst places are not inspected by buyers. The letter also contained a reference that supported regenerative grazing for soil health.⁵ I have visited ranches where the land was improved with rotational grazing.⁶ I have also observed land damaged by overgrazing. When rotation is done right, it can be beneficial for the land.

References

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Conflict of Interest Disclosure

Dr Grandin reports doing paid consulting work on animal handling and welfare for major meat companies and restaurants.

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