

# ANIMAL VOCALIZATIONS

*It is fascinating to hear from Evelyn Rapanos about Dr. Weary's animal vocalization studies at U.B.C. as described by Nicholas Read in the Vancouver Sun: -*

**Moo, Oink, Grunt:** - U.B.C. professor of animal welfare studies, among other subjects, "animal vocalizations", in other words the sounds that animals make and the meaning of those sounds. His work, (no! He is not a Dr. Dolittle!), is to improve the lives of hundreds of millions of cows, pigs and other farm animals across the country.

Quantifying animal behavior is by nature a difficult thing to do, says Dr. Weary. How aggressive is an animal? How fearful? How amorous?

But vocalizations are different in that they can be measured and analyzed. "We can tape record them and do a computer analysis of them".

Thus he and other scientists can study the features of animal sounds and the meanings they may impart. Research of this kind can lead to real advances in animal welfare.

For example: - Forced separation of cows and calves a few days old is routine in the dairy industry as it



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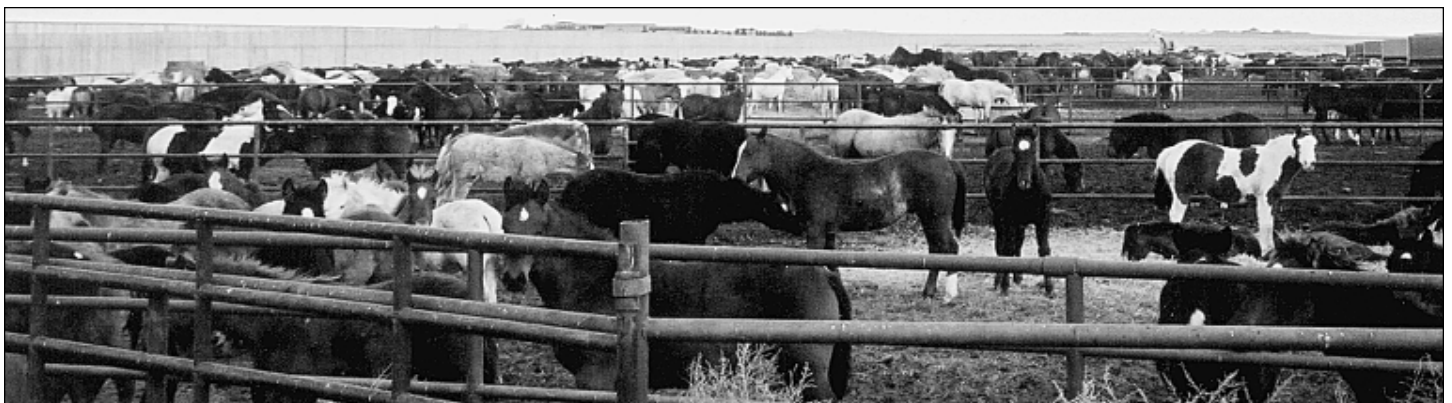
*UBC's animal welfare professor Dan Weary records and analyses the meaning of sounds made by farm animals*

ensures a commercial supply of milk for the farmer. The belief has been that the sooner the calves are separated from their mothers, the less distressed both animals will be. Dr. Weary says that vocalization studies confirm that beef cows separated from their young after six months will vocalize for days to the point of hoarseness.

Research has shown that if calves are separated when they are hours old and are fed through artificial teats attached to a continuous milk reservoir - like their mother's - instead of from a bucket three times a day, as is common practice, their separation anxiety is minimized and their growth does not suffer.

## THE SAD PLIGHT OF HORSES AWAITING SLAUGHTER IN FEEDLOTS

*A very concerned Canadian writes of a first hand experience visiting feed lots . . . see story on page 2.*



*A vast number of horses awaiting slaughter at the Fort MacLeod feedlot.*

# THE SAD PLIGHT OF HORSES AWAITING SLAUGHTER IN FEEDLOTS

Our trip to Alberta was quite an eye opener! Our first stop was a Rescue Centre. There we helped feed and water all the animals. There were horses of every breed, size and description, from foals to young horses and some mares with babies. All of these would have been in feedlots awaiting slaughter if it weren't for the man who runs the centre. This is a full-time job for a physically fit person, let alone a man fighting a disability. But he carries on without a lot of support, I might add.

After speaking with him about the situation, we headed out on our own investigation. We were on our way to see what a feedlot was like for ourselves.

On our way to Fort MacLeod we saw what we figured was a feedlot, so we drove in. At the entrance were two dead cows, one totally emaciated and one that looked like it had just died. As we drove around we saw all the cattle in not the best of conditions. It was extremely muddy. We soon realised that we were being followed. We stopped and the owner asked what we were doing, so we explained to him that we thought there might be some horses that we might be able to purchase. He said that no, there weren't any horses. He explained that the conditions that the cattle were being kept in were unusually bad this year due to the extreme weather they had been experiencing. Meanwhile we could see some of the men trying to

help a baby calf so we decided that what he said was probably true and they just didn't want people to see the animals in these conditions.

So we left there and headed toward the infamous Fort MacLeod. What we saw there we will never forget. Our first impression as we drove in was of the enormity of the feedlot. There were pens as far as we could see, up one side and down the other. There were beautiful draft horses in one pen, another was just horses of every description. Another held mares with their foals. The pens at the end held horses with all manner of skin diseases. The pen that bothered me the most was the one with the foundered horse with the crooked legs, and the horse with hooves that turned up like skis at the end, and the horse that looked like it had colic as it kept lying down and then getting up.

There were beautiful horses there



*Horse in feedlot showing terrible neglect of hooves*



*One of many draft horses awaiting slaughter*

as well, not the kind you would expect to see awaiting slaughter. These horses will forever be etched in my memory.

As we were watching the horses, a transport truck drove in with a load of horses. We then watched in horror as two men, one on the top of the truck and one on the side, prodded the frightened horses hitting them again and again to get them out of the truck. It was all we could do not to scream at them, but we were not sure what they might do to us!! On our way out we talked to one of the workers (covered in blood) and we asked him if the job ever bothered him. He said that he was in charge of hides and that no, it was no big deal.

We left that hell on earth and couldn't speak the rest of the way home. I know that this is only one of many feedlots all over the country and I pray that what we saw there is not happening in all of them. If it is then we as Canadians should not rest until something is done to alleviate such suffering.

Does the plight of our food animals, including our horses, mean so little that we can just turn a blind eye to the atrocities that are so much a part of their lives? Should we not take time to care? Should we not strive to give them a life free from hunger, thirst and pain and then at least when the end must come, grant them a humane death?



*Sick horse, possibly with colic, awaiting slaughter in feedlot*

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*Our thanks to Amanda Zimmerman who has written the following most informative article on the quality of drinking water available to cattle. As a student in the U.B.C. Animal Welfare Program, Amanda's research not only points out how the quality of*

*water available to cattle affects their welfare, but it brings out facts, of which a great many of us are completely unaware, with regard to the poor quality of water frequently offered to cattle and the need for this problem to be addressed.*

# Drinking Water and Cattle Welfare

*By Amanda Zimmerman*

Did you know that water quality has a major effect on the welfare of cattle? As a student in the U.B.C. Animal Welfare Program, I have conducted research that looks at how water quality affects the welfare, water intake and drinking behaviour of beef cattle on summer range.

During the summer, the majority of British Columbia's beef cattle graze on rangeland, much of it in arid regions of the province. Rangeland water sources such as ponds and "dugouts" commonly contain sulphate, a naturally-occurring mineral compound. Cattle find sulphate distasteful and my research has shown that once sulphate in water reaches a concentration of approximately 3000 parts per million (ppm), the animals will decrease their water intake, sometimes to the point of becoming sick and dehydrated. I have also identified that the different minerals in water that form sulphate compounds, such as sodium and magnesium, play a role in the acceptability of water for drinking by cattle.

These findings have important implications for beef production because many of the water sources that cattle drink from on rangeland have sulphate concentrations above 3000 ppm.

Cattle producers can undertake several solutions to solve the problem of poor water quality. Now that the level of sulphate that affects cattle is known, water samples from ponds and dugouts can be chemically tested to determine whether they contain sulphate concentrations above that

level. I have also observed that cattle change how they drink when given water that they find distasteful – for example, cattle tend to take repeated small sips of distasteful water as opposed to the long draughts taken with clean water. Cattle producers, just by watching how their animals drink, can make decisions about whether the water is suitable. If the water is unsuitable, the producer can then provide alternative drinking water.

This research benefits both cattle and cattle producers. The cattle, of course, benefit from improved access to clean, acceptable drinking water. Cattle producers see healthier animals with improved growth,

because cattle drinking poor quality water eat and grow less than those with clean water. This provides an economic incentive for adopting the findings of this research, giving it the potential to improve the welfare of thousands of cattle.

Given that water quality is both a welfare and production issue, this project has received funding by the Beef Cattle Industry Development Fund, the British Columbia Cattlemen's Association, and the Animal Welfare Fund of the Vancouver Foundation.

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## Dr. David Fraser Receives Animal Welfare Award

We congratulate Dr. David Fraser, Head of the Animal Welfare Program within the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences at U.B.C. who was recently presented the 15th annual Animal Welfare Award of the Society of Animal Science and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals for his "outstanding contribution to the science, philosophy and practice of animal welfare".

As our readers may remember, Dr. Fraser invited members of CETFA's board to visit the U.B.C. dairy barn at Agassiz where, among other things, Dr. Fraser was developing a method of allowing young calves, who had been taken early from their mothers, to nurse on teats whenever they wanted. The teats are attached to the wall of the pen and provide a milk supply whenever it is required. This is described by Dr. Dan Weary, U.B.C. Animal Welfare Professor, in his study of "animal vocalizations" of which we hear from Evelyn Rapanos, on the front page of this issue.

In just five years the Program has attracted some 50 graduate students from around the world. We thank Dr. Fraser for his focus on food animal welfare.

# Bill C 10 B

It is distressing to us all to know that, at time of printing, this bill for which we had all worked so hard has not yet been passed by the Senate. Instead it is delayed there, with drastic changes under discussion that would take away the bill's "teeth". One proposal being considered by the Senate justice committee

would provide conditional exemptions for aboriginals, hunters, fishermen, scientists and those engaged in "generally accepted practices of animal management, husbandry or slaughter.

The Vancouver Sun did not print CETFA's letter to the Editor which was as follows: -

April 12th. 2003

Dear Editor,

*It is disturbing to read that the Senate is further delaying the passage of Bill C 10 B. This is not the time to consider amendments which would weaken legislation against animal cruelty that has already been passed by the House of Commons.*

*We read that the Senate is considering a proposal to exempt all individuals in animal use agencies.*

*Why should any segment of society be exempt from the enforcement of our laws? Cruelty is cruelty. Effective penalties should be imposed on those who inflict it on helpless, sentient creatures.*

*Bill C 10 B should not be amended. It should be made law now, without any further delay.*

*Canadians for Ethical Treatment of Food Animals*

## Canadian Coalition for Farm Animals

We hear from the Vancouver Humane Society that the Canadian Coalition for Farm Animals is now seeking representation on two national committees - The Expert Committee on Farm Animal Welfare and Behaviour and the Farm Animal Welfare Steering Committee. These committees are made up from government, food industry and animal welfare groups seeking a collective approach to farm animal welfare issues.

## Philip Lymbery Coming to Toronto

Philip Lymbery, who is such an energetic force in farm animal welfare, is coming over from England to be in Toronto in July.

The purpose of his visit is to discuss food animal welfare strategy with our Canadian Coalition for Farm Animals, of which C.E.T.F.A. is a supporter. Philip is now working with the World Society for the Protection of Animals.



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a pain and stress free life and a humane death.***

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