

Cattle Business in Mississippi – April 2016
“Beef Production Strategies” article
Power of Education

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I don't know how your 2016 is going, but mine is flying by! I cannot believe that April is already here! During last couple of weeks of March, the Animal and Dairy Science Extension team traveled across the state teaching the law enforcement community about Farm Animal Welfare. The trainings, sponsored by the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation, were supported by several of Mississippi's livestock commodity organizations, including the Mississippi Cattlemen's Association. These trainings taught our law enforcement the basics of farm animal welfare, how to safely handle livestock, and provided them with contacts for consultation.

I will never forget a phone call I once received from a concerned citizen while working in a previous job. This lady was really upset because she had driven by a farm close to town where the cows were covered in mud and they were so crowded they were “jumping on one another”. According to the lady, she *knew* this farmer was abusing his cattle. She provided an address a county agent looked into it. Come to find out the farmer had synchronized estrus in his heifers and was getting ready to time AI them! Unfortunately, a heavy rain made his pen a tick muddy and well –we all know heifers. When I returned the lady's call, I explained to her what happened and told her how this farmer is really taking care of this heifers and how he is breeding them to the best bulls in the country so she can enjoy a consistently delicious beef product.

As an industry, we must realize the fact that the average American is three generations removed from the family farm. Things we perceive as normal, sometimes cause confusion and disconnection with consumers. Radical Animal Rights groups such as PETA and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) have undermined the values of the American family farmer and have painted a negative picture of our industry. They have persuaded the American public that they are animal experts, because they “care”. In reality what they care about is abolishing animal agriculture and plant-based diets. HSUS CEO Wayne Pacelle was quoted in *Animal People News*, May 1993 issue - “We have no problems with the extinction of domestic animals. They are creations of human selective breeding.” We cannot afford these self-proclaimed experts to influence policy and disregarding our values as farmers and ranchers. We hope that these training programs will re-establish who the real experts are and insure the first entity a sheriff's department would reach out to, in an instant of a perceived animal welfare case, is their local county Extension office.

At each training location, the law enforcement had an opportunity to interact with livestock. This was certainly a win-win as several cops had never been that close to a live animal. The handling demonstration provided attendees with some first-hand examples on how to handle livestock that weren't where they were supposed to be! Case in point, a calf is out on the interstate, the last thing that needs to happen is cars arriving with sirens blasting and the blue lights flashing.

In closing, I would like to thank you all for an outstanding first year in Mississippi! You all have welcomed this Alabama man onto your farms, into your homes, and as a member of YOUR association! The relationship between the Mississippi Cattlemen's Association and the Mississippi State Animal and Dairy Sciences Department strengthens our state's beef industry! I look forward to what the next 12 months bring and becoming more involved with MCA and the Mississippi Beef Council!

If you would like to contact me, my email address is cobie.rutherford@msstate.edu and phone is [662-325-4344](tel:662-325-4344).

For more information about beef cattle production, contact an office of the Mississippi State University Extension Service.