

Tuesday, February 23, 2010

## **Humane Management of Livestock**

We are designing a sheep handling facility to make it easier to vaccinate, trim, sort and body condition check the sheep. If you are planning a facility, your best bet is to look at the research and recommendations of Dr. Temple Grandin. Dr. Grandin is a very much respected authority on the humane handling of livestock. We just picked up her book on humane management of livestock and what an amazing reference. She has such good insight on animal behaviour and how it can be used to move and handle livestock in a stress free manner.

And why is this important? Primarily is the moral consideration. Just because an animal is being raised for meat production doesn't mean that it should be handled any less humanely than an animal that is not raised for meat. Be it our horses, who now are mainly pets, or our sheep or cattle, they all get the same level of care and compassion. Another reason is explained by Dr. Grandin. Meat from animals that are stressed is prone to be dark and not last as long in storage. I also believe that it has a significant impact on tenderness and flavor.

Dr. Grandin also discusses the current approach to breeding livestock. Too often breeders focus on one trait to the exclusion of all others be it rate of gain, production, performance, colour etc. This often has an unexpected and unintentional adverse impact on other traits such as temperament, longevity, fertility. Like with our horses, our breeding program is looking at a balance of numerous traits.

Along that line, I also am surprised that flavor so seldom figures into a breeder's production goals. I suppose it is because flavor is individual and is so difficult to test. I would love to see more taste tests used as part of breeding success. Ultimately the customer is the judge and if it doesn't taste good they judge with their wallet. Flavor is always going to be front and center with our goals.

Check out Dr. Grandin's website. It is very good reading.

TTFN  
Laurie