

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 25, 1999

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AMERICAN PUBLIC STRONGLY SUPPORTS FARMERS AND RANCHERS
FEELINGS NOT THE SAME FOR ANIMAL RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

If you're looking for people in whom the general public has deep trust and confidence, look to American farmers and ranchers. If you're looking for a group for whom the public has a general skepticism and distrust, then it's animal rightists, especially those attacking animal agriculture. So says a national consumer opinion survey sponsored by the Animal Industry Foundation (AIF) and released today.

"The results of the survey don't surprise anyone who appreciates the contribution to our quality of life made by animal agriculture," said Steve Kopperud, AIF president. "Our polls show consistently over the years that the public trusts and values American farmers and ranchers and the important job they do so well. At the same time, animal rightists repeatedly prove them-selves to be out of touch with the public at large on just about every level."

Eighty-eight percent of the American public thinks American farmers and ranchers "do a good job of producing healthy food at reasonable prices," according to the AIF poll conducted in late 1998 and released this summer. The poll is the fourth conducted by the education foundation to track public attitudes about American farmers and ranchers, as well as trends in philosophies, issues and buying habits.

Tracking those whom the public trusts when it comes to messages about farm animal wellbeing revealed farm veterinarians to be the highest ranked at 94%, with ranchers and university professors also highly ranked at 84% and 83%, respectively. On the flip side among the lowest ranked for credibility on farm animal treatment at only 35% were "well-known actors" – very often the key messengers for animal rights groups.

Nearly 90% of the public agreed with the following statement: "While it is important to be concerned about how farm animals are treated, there is nothing wrong with humans raising animals solely for food purposes." The public also felt strongly (94% agreement) that "consumers should have the right to choose what they eat and not be dictated to by a small minority of activists."

The survey poll asked respondents if they would be willing to pay more – and how much more -- of their take-home dollars for meat and poultry products labeled “humanely raised” – whatever the term might mean. If the cost were 5% more, 44% said they would try the “humanely raised” product. A 10% price increase cuts the number of willing buyers to 20%, and with a supermarket price increase of 20%, the number willing to spend more plummets to 6%.

This public opinion telephone survey was conducted by Provo, UT-based Western Wats Center Market Research—the second largest independent data collection and processing firm in the U.S. The 1,000 survey respondents included 485 males and 515 females. All were heads of households and were randomly selected.

AIF is a 501(c)(3) non-profit education foundation dedicated to educating the public about modern livestock and poultry production and to producing and disseminating factual information about U.S. animal agriculture’s contribution to consumers’ quality of life.