

IN RESPONSE TO: "SOME QUESTIONS FOR PETA"

On behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), I would like to thank Mr. Nathan Lewin for finally replying to our letter of November 2003—just 13 months after we sent it.

Had he or Mr. Rubashkin replied 12 months ago, AgriProcessors might have spared itself the outrage that has come from the revelation that the production of Aaron's Best and Rubashkin's brands involved truly horrific abuse of animals, including ripping out their tracheas and esophagi while they were still fully conscious and slaughtering them in such a shoddy manner that many stood and attempted to flee, minutes after their throats were cut open.

In the words of Rabbi Barry Schwartz of the Central Conference of American Rabbis' Task Force on Kashrut, "The suffering of these animals during slaughter is sickening. Death is neither quick nor merciful. If this is kosher, then we have a big problem."

It is not surprising that Mr. Lewin had to go back 80 years to unearth a shred of evidence to support his client. AgriProcessors cannot find a single veterinarian or other expert to defend the slaughter practices that we documented.

One hundred percent (literally every single one) of the scientists, animal welfare experts, and veterinarians who have been asked to comment on our investigation have condemned AgriProcessors for its horrific abuse of animals.

Dr. Temple Grandin, consultant to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the American Meat Institute, stated, "I thought it was the most disgusting thing I'd ever seen. I couldn't believe it. I've been in at least 30 other kosher slaughter plants, and I had never ever seen that kind of procedure done before." Dr. Lester Friedlander, a former USDA kosher slaughter inspector wrote, "The footage captured by PETA represents the most egregious violation of the USDA Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (HMSA) I have ever witnessed."

AgriProcessors has also faced sharp criticism from a growing number of Rabbis, including an official condemnation of the plant by the Rabbinic Assembly of the conservative movement, which represents one-third of American Jewry.

The Rabbinic Assembly wrote that "the scenes recorded are not what *shehitah* should be, nor does it correspond to the Jewish way of treating animals. ׀½ When a company purporting to be kosher violates the prohibition against *tza'ar ba'alei hayyim*, causing pain to one of God's living creatures, that company must answer to the Jewish community, and ultimately, to God."

Indeed, our efforts to reform AgriProcessors and encourage the Orthodox Union to implement humane standards have enjoyed broad support from rabbis, Jewish leaders, scientists, and veterinarians, all of whom are shocked by the egregiously cruel treatment of animals that has been standard operating procedure at AgriProcessors for years. The video and additional expert and rabbinic commentary is available on our Web site www.GoVeg.com.

Anyone who reads Mr. Lewin's outline of PETA's seven "demands" from November 2003 will be left wondering why AgriProcessors brought this scandal upon itself by refusing to implement these improvements in the first place.

One does not need to consult the Torah to know that animals should not be struck in the face with electric prods or denied drinking water. By stubbornly refusing to make minimal improvements in its slaughterhouse—such as fixing a broken ramp, keeping animals calm, and engaging in self-audits—AgriProcessors has shown its flagrant disregard for the welfare of the animals who pass through its doors.

Rather than mocking the small changes that PETA has requested, Mr. Lewin might do well to ask AgriProcessors why it has refused to adopt basic guidelines to ensure that animals on its killing floor are given quick, painless, and dignified deaths, as provided for in the Torah.

Regarding Mr. Lewin's other questions:

- PETA has conducted countless widely publicized undercover investigations over the last two decades, including investigations into numerous mainstream factory farms and slaughterhouses.
- We have worked tirelessly to improve the conditions for animals both on the farms where they are raised and in the slaughterhouses where they are killed. Our largest current campaign is against KFC (see KentuckyFriedCruelty.com), whose top two executives are evangelical Christians. We are asking KFC to adopt guidelines to ensure that its chickens are no longer bred and drugged so that they become crippled under their own weight, and to end other abuses.
- PETA has pioneered campaigns across the world to protect the interests of working animals. For instance, we have established a program in India that pays oxen-cart drivers to give their overworked animals much needed rest. And we successfully campaigned in Turkey to pass legislation that requires rest time for working animals.
- For 25 years, we have actively opposed and protested rodeos, hunting, horse racing, and dog racing. We are pleased that Mr. Lewin is also revolted by these so-called sports.

For more information on these and other PETA endeavors, readers can visit www.PETA.org.

Along with PETA, I take much solace in the morality of Torah law, which is second to none where compassion for animals is concerned. PETA has great admiration for Judaism's rich tradition of respect for animals and we hope that—in keeping with Jewish law—AgriProcessors will choose to adopt the recommended humane treatment standards to ensure that animals are no longer abused in the company's slaughterhouse.

As we state explicitly in the opening paragraph of our Web page on this investigation, "Kosher slaughter, done correctly, is kinder and quicker than standard slaughter methods in the United States. But AgriProcessors, the world's largest glatt kosher slaughterhouse, has been ignoring the Jewish commitment to compassion and federal law by mutilating fully conscious animals, shocking them in the face, and slaughtering them in a way that has allowed many to stand and attempt to flee, even minutes after their throats had been slit."

Readers should make up their own minds about whether AgriProcessors' slaughter methods are in accordance with the Jewish precepts prohibiting cruelty to animals: Find out what Mr. Lewin is defending by visiting www.GoVeg.com.

For information on Judaism and vegetarianism, please visit the Web site run by the Jewish Vegetarians of North America, at www.JewishVeg.com.

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