

**Some thoughts about cattle restraint**

Sir, I was pleased to see so much attention given in the first two issues of *Animal Welfare* to the subject of head-restraint for stunning cattle who have been condemned to slaughter. Concern about individuals who are to be stunned and killed for food must be given serious attention, not only by those who do the stunning and killing either directly or indirectly at the places where this activity is carried out, but also by those who use the killed cattle but who do not work at slaughterhouses and by those who are interested in non-human animal (hereafter animal) welfare.

Of course, one could easily argue that anyone who uses the animals who are stunned and slaughtered contributes directly to their death, but this will not be pursued here. Professor Grandin's conclusion (*Animal Welfare* 1992, 1: 85-90) that 'The modified ASPCA pen' that she described in her paper 'was seemingly humane (my emphasis) when operated by people concerned about animal welfare' (p 85) intrigued me. I found myself asking just what does 'seemingly humane' mean? Professor Grandin also notes that 'the described modified pen is relatively (my emphasis) humane when it is operated and supervised by people who are concerned about animal welfare' (p 85). I find myself at a loss to assess precisely Professor Grandin's claims. All I know is that the method that she describes seems to be humane and may be more humane than other methods. It would be nice to know if the method really was humane and perhaps more humane than other methods that are still used. Perhaps measures similar to those suggested by Ewbank, Parker and Mason (*Animal Welfare* 1992, 1: 55-63) could be used in some sort of comparative study. Among the major problems here, of course, is how could any such study be done in a humane way? I would like to know more

but I am at a loss as to how to go about humanely assessing the relative humaneness of methods used to kill cattle (or any other animal), not that I advocate this practice in the first place. This is not a trivial matter and the Catch-22 that it presents needs to be considered seriously.

With respect to the many problems involved in assessing stunning and slaughtering practices, I note that neither article considers an obvious alternative to the supposed necessity of stunning cattle, that is, calling for a restraint on meat eating altogether. In a journal concerned with animal welfare, this possibility could have been mentioned without trespassing into areas that fall outside of the territory that encompasses possible topics appropriate for inclusion in the publication. Perhaps Jeremy Rifkin's book *Beyond Beef: The Rise and Fall of the Cattle Culture* (1992, New York: Dutton) should be called to the attention of those who are not aware of its existence. My prediction is that most who read this book, including those who are only slightly ambivalent about eating meat, will assess and change their eating patterns to the favour of the cattle. Total abstinence may not always immediately follow, but moderation in consuming cattle who have been stunned and slaughtered using techniques that may cause physical pain and suffering, including mental anguish, should be forthcoming.

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**Author's response**

Sir, Professor Bekoff has concerns about the relative humaneness of the modified ASPCA pen and other restraint methods for kosher slaughter. In the USA, Israel, South Africa and other countries outside the European Community very cruel restraint methods are used. Fully conscious cattle are hung upside

down by a chain wrapped around one back leg or they have their legs clamped in a vice like device. In Europe cattle are restrained in a Weinberg casting pen which inverts them onto their backs. The Weinberg pen is more stressful than the ASPCA pen (Dunn 1990 *Veterinary Record* 126: 522-525). The Facomia Company in France has developed an improved casting pen. I have observed it, and it is a big improvement compared to the Weinberg pen. It is likely that the Facomia pen is more stressful than a modified ASPCA pen. There is a need for more detailed research to determine the stressfulness of inverted restraint. All ASPCA pens should have both pressure and speed limiting devices which do not require operator judgement. Vertical travel of the belly lift should be restricted to 28 in (71 cm) to prevent excessive pressure from being applied to the animal's thoracic area. Existing pens can be easily modified.

When I operated the modified ASPCA pen I was able to restrain cattle very gently. Most animals stood quietly when I slowly eased them into position. An abusive operator can cause suffering in well designed equipment. It is the responsibility of the abattoir manager to control employee behaviour. A manager who is concerned about animal welfare will instantly sack employees who abuse animals.

I disagree with Professor Bekoff on the use of animals for food. The relationship between people and domestic animals should be symbiotic. We owe them decent living conditions and a kind death. Death in nature is usually very harsh and cruel. Nature is not kind. I will define the term 'relatively humane and seemingly humane' from my article as follows: If I visualize myself as an animal I would willingly walk into the modified ASPCA pens.

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#### *Editorial comment*

We hope, in due course to be able to review Rifkin's book *Beyond Beef: The Rise and Fall of the Cattle Culture*, as suggested by Professor Bekoff.

For the record, readers should be aware of the current law in the UK regarding religious slaughter. *The Slaughter of Animals (Humane Conditions) Regulation 1990* which required head-restraint for cattle being stunned by captive bolt also made new provisions for slaughter by the Jewish or by the Mohammedan methods. From 5 July 1992 cattle may be slaughtered in a slaughterhouse by a religious method only in an upright position in a restraining pen. In the Regulations a *restraining pen means a pen or compartment which is -*

- a. *suitable for restraining cattle in an upright position while they are being slaughtered by the religious method;*
- b. *constructed so as to permit one animal at a time to be confined in it without discomfort and so as to prevent any substantial movement of the animal forwards, backwards or sideways once it has been placed in position for slaughter, and*
- c. *approved by the appropriate Minister.*

The 1990 Regulations include a number of other requirements regarding the design and use of restraining pens. It should be noted that casting pens of the Weinburg, Dyne or North British Rotary type are no longer to be used.

The present position in the European Community is that the regulation of religious slaughter will remain a matter for national authorities.

*Roger Ewbank*