



Banff Pork Seminar  
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## ***News Feature***

### **Minimizing challenges caused by animal rights groups**

At one time the chance of farmers engaging with activists was relatively remote. That's not the case today. Media and social media show constant interaction with activists in a way that has potential to threaten the individual and their industry.

Geraldine Auston of the Ag and Food Exchange gave pork industry players attending the 2017 Banff Pork Seminar some solid background in the difference between animal welfare and animal rights. And she had some tips on how to manage on-farm or during transport and when dealing with activists.

### **Do the right thing, always**

A lot has been learned on how producers and transporters can manage their affairs to be better prepared for questions about their operation. Here are some specifics about good management techniques and transparency.

- **Have a code of conduct.** Outline your farm's or company's expectations for animal welfare. Every person in contact with livestock should sign off on this document.
- **Hire the right people, for the right reasons.** Skills and strength are important in certain jobs, but go beyond that. Consider a person's temperament, and do not allow individuals with challenges such as anger management issues to work in close contact with animals.
- **Train and retrain.** Ensure every person understands the law, regulations, code of practice and expected procedures and policies. If an individual has trouble initiating a task such as euthanasia, retrain that individual or reassign him or her.
- **Establish a reporting system.** Within your business establish how employees can raise animal welfare concerns. Ensure all concerns raised receive appropriate recognition and follow-through.
- **Document problems.** When something goes wrong, document it. Outline what happened, and what you will commit to doing to ensure it does not happen again.

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## **Focus on transport**

Over the past few years, animal rights activists have been holding protests outside of processing facilities. Most activists attending these events are committed to quietly observing trucks entering slaughter facilities.

Recently, a growing number of activists, particularly in Ontario, have attempted to block trucks, or attempt to feed and water animals, climb onto trailers to take images or make contact with livestock and sometimes argue with transport drivers.

## **What you can do**

Here's what Auston recommends.

1. Establish communication and expectations with the plant.
2. Assume you are being filmed, and act accordingly. Activists frequently post videos of their encounters to social media pages.
3. If activists are blocking your truck, or if they are too close to safely move forward, stay inside your truck and contact plant security or police for assistance.
4. Do not engage in conversation beyond asking activists to move out of the way.
5. Avoid using truck horns. It causes distress for the animals and inhibits your ability to communicate with plant security and police.
6. Once protestors move away, verify it is safe to proceed and move the truck ahead.
7. If protestors approach the truck again, stop the truck, warn them again, and call police.
8. Do not engage in physical or intimidating contact with any protestor.
9. If you feel you or your property are threatened, contact police.

## **Social media**

Farmers and transporters active on social media should not engage in arguments with animal rights activists. End online conversation with individuals who antagonize. Block them if you need to. Ensure your security settings such as photos, physical location and personal information are not available to public view.