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A Voice for Animals

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Animal Transportation Regulations

As a young woman living in a farming and ranching community who is very active in 4-H, Agriculture plays a major role in my life. I want to begin by introducing my inspiration for choosing the regulation of animal transportation as my platform: Dr. Temple Grandin. She is a Professor of Animal Science at Colorado State College.

Dr. Grandin was diagnosed with Autism at the age of three and a half. Many people did not see the genius side of her as she grew up, but her drive to cultivate ideas for an industry she loved was phenomenal. She received her Ph.D. in Animal Science and continues to make improvements in the agriculture community through her innovation and research.

Dr. Grandin once stated, "I think using animals for food is an ethical thing to do, but we've got to do it right. We've got to give those animals a decent life and we've got to give them a painless death. We owe the animals respect." She was a Pioneer advocating for low-stress handling of livestock who invented the Center Track Restraint System which is now used to handle nearly half of all the cattle in North America. She saw the problems animals faced and used her voice to help these animals. When she first voiced her idea of the Center Track Restraint System it was rejected constantly. After finally being able to prove ranchers wrong she set up her restraint system to demonstrate how it works. They were fed up with the way Grandin wanted them to run the cows through, so they tore it down and rebuilt it there own way. This was

a huge failure and a few cows died until she returned and insisted they did it the right way. The farmers were overly shocked on how well her system worked. This goes to prove a confident voice and persistence will achieve your goals. I, too, believe as Agriculturalists who raise livestock to benefit ourselves and others, we should respect animals used as products and treat them humanely and with dignity. Sadly, 9% - greater than 850 million- animals never even make it to slaughter because they die of stress, induced diseases, or injury during transport.

Moreover, this is a personally important problem I would like to help fix. How can I, like Temple Grandin, make an impact in the agriculture world and change statistics such as these? One thing I would like to change about the agricultural industry is the condition in which most livestock are transported. I constantly see animals being transported and it is always during the drenching, hot days in South Texas. This hurts my heart and just adds another example of why I choose to use my voice to make these animals more comfortable.

Farm animals are transported in masses and deprived of food, water, and bedding for up to a minimum of 28 hours straight. Trucks are so overcrowded that animals are unable to rest and may trample or fight with one another in search of space, causing injury, sickness, and death. These animals are crammed in soaring temperatures while having no room to move around to find a cooler space. Not only are they in confined, hot spaces, but these animals are also at high risk to spreading diseases such as salmonella and E.Coli. These diseases can lead to food poisoning after human consumption of the meat from these transported animals. There is a law in play that is supposed to help with the stress and health of animals being hauled, but most truckers pay no mind to it if they even know what it is. I spoke to cattle haulers who were not even aware of a 28-hour law. This 28 hours law states transporters must stop and let the animals drink, eat

and rest for a minimum of 5 hours. However, it is clearly not always enforced and the penalty for not upholding this law is a minimum of a \$100 fine, with a maximum of \$500. These fines are often not a deterrent for transporters who stand to make a much greater profit upon delivery. This law was passed in 1873, and it is obvious it is not listened to as much as it needs to be. I say this, because decades of years later animals are still constantly dying due to travel hazards.

I believe some initial steps to improve the conditions of animal transport are to hit the purse strings a little harder, step up the monitoring and enforcement and shorten the maximum travel time allowed significantly. Provide quality rest stops near common transport routes that allow animals to be safely unloaded for food, drink, and rest. Even though this will be their last meal their bodies still require it and hunger for it. Devices can be required with transport permits that track routes and generate logs to document animals that have been cared for since pick up. Personnel at strategically placed checkpoints would also verify that animals are being handled in a humane manner. Also using these strategies, transporters can document the loss of any livestock and dispose of them properly instead of having other animals trample them during the rest of the journey. If these factors were more strongly enforced I believe that the deaths of animals would decrease significantly during transportation. I also could see the sales of meat increase which would benefit our markets.

This eagerness of mine comes from reading countless tragic stories of animals dying during travel. A story that sticks with me was when 1,000 breeding dairy cattle were shipped to Russia from Galveston, Texas. A multitude of animals died before arriving and were not accounted for at the final destination. Months later a multitude of carcasses were washed up on the shore of Russia and Sweden. These were the same animals that were not accounted for in

Russia. This is only one small story compared to the thousands of other stories that relate to the same outcome. These awful acts of the transporters put species living in the ocean in danger. They also jeopardized spreading diseases from the cattle to other environments. This is why monitoring and stronger enforcement should be put forth to put a stop to careless acts.

Individuals who have been raised to respect the lives of animals and find pride in contributing quality products to consumers will quickly and wholeheartedly rally for these changes. The difficulty begins with the costs of creating more of these rest areas as well as getting these laws passed and enforced. I want to bring awareness to the staggering costs of wasted product and how it impacts the money market. I must find the financial support to back the heart of the 4H kid, the farmer, the animal lover. Let's treat them with dignity and deliver a healthy, less stressed product to our food markets. Let's eliminate their unethical treatment and the waste of their lives. Being a pioneer does not mean you have to recreate the wheel or even invent a new product. It can be as simple as finding your passion for a needed improvement as I have found in animal transport.

Moreover, I have already started to make a change for these poor animals. I have rallied for these changes by speaking in front of a large audience, covering my points and thoughts written above. Not only have I talked this over, but I have also created a petition on change.org. I have titled this petition, Animal Transportation Regulations. I have been able to receive support from 479 supporters. I have gained these supporters by printing QR codes out, sharing on social media, and advocating when I travel with my 4-H organization. Not only have I been able to use

my voice for animal rights, but I have also been able to educate other individuals on the importance of rightfully caring for animals.

As we look towards the future of Agriculture, women will continue to have a tremendous impact on improvements made and I am looking forward to being a part of that starting with the advocacy of animal needs. As Dr. Temple Grandin would say, “I am different, not less.” I want that to be heard because no one is the same and we are all capable of making an impact on something. My impact as a young woman will be through the doors of agriculture by improving animal transportation.

Works Cited

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