



PEW COMMISSION ON
INDUSTRIAL FARM
ANIMAL PRODUCTION

Frequently Asked Questions about the Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production

What is the Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production?

The Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production is an independent Commission funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts through a grant to the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

The purpose of the Commission is to recommend solutions to the public health, environment, animal welfare, and rural community problems caused by intensive confinement systems.

Who are the members of the Commission?

The Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production is comprised of a diverse group of individuals with expertise in public health, animal health, rural sociology, production agriculture, nutrition, ethics, and state and federal policy.

Commission members include; John Carlin, a former dairyman, the 10th Archivist of the United States, a former Governor of Kansas and currently on the public policy faculty of Kansas State University; Dr. Michael Blackwell, former Dean of the Veterinary School of Medicine of the University of Tennessee/Knoxville, a former practicing veterinarian, and former assistant Surgeon General of the United States; Fedele Bauccio, chairman and CEO of BAMCO; Bill Niman, founder of Niman Ranches, Inc.; former Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman; former National Catholic Rural Life Executive Director Brother David Andrews; Dr. Mary Wilson, Associate Professor at the Harvard School of Public Health and Associate Clinical Professor of Medicine at the Harvard Medical School; Dr. James Merchant, Dean of the University of Iowa School of Public Health; Montana rancher Dan Jackson; South Dakota state senator Thomas Dempster; Dr. Marion Nestle, Paulette Goddard Professor, Department of Nutrition, Food Studies, and Public Health at New York University; Dr. Bernie Rollin, Colorado State University; Dr. Alan Goldberg, Professor of Toxicology, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health; Fred Kirschenmann, North Dakota rancher and Distinguished Fellow at the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University; and Dr. John Hatch.

Are there any Commissioners involved in the animal agriculture industry?

Bill Niman is the founder of Niman Ranches, Fred Kirschenmann is a North Dakota rancher, and Dan Jackson is a Montana cattle rancher. The chairman of the Commission, John Carlin, owned and operated a family dairy farm prior to getting into politics and public policy. In addition, former Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman is knowledgeable on animal agriculture issues.

The study by PCIFAP concerns the public health, environmental, rural community and animal welfare problems caused by intensive confinement systems, necessitating a diverse group of experts; still a third of our panel has direct experience in the agriculture industry.

How expansive was the Commission's inquiry?

The Commission conducted 11 meetings over the span of two years, including meetings in every region of the United States. It solicited input from stakeholders and all interested parties, accepting thousands of pages of information for review. Two public hearings were held where more than 175 people spoke directly to the members of the Commission. The Commission visited a swine operation in North Carolina, chicken operation in Arkansas, a dairy in northern California, and a cattle feedlot and egg operation in Colorado. In addition, Commission visited the swine teaching facility at Iowa State University to learn more about swine production.

Eight technical reports were requested from leading academics. Production of the reports followed a peer review process based on that used by the National Academy of Science. Report contributing authors and peer reviewers were solicited from industry recommendations, other stakeholder recommendations and from the Commissioners, as well. The reports will be released on the Commission's website as the peer review process is completed for each one. (all will be posted by August 1, 2008)

In addition, following through on the Commission's goal of transparency, all presentations in electronic form presented to the Commission by interested parties during the study are available on the Commission's website, www.pcifap.org

How did the Commission form its recommendations?

The recommendations by the Commission were developed through a consensus process. Commissioners relied on information from stakeholders, including industrial agriculture, Commission staff reports, news reports, academic studies from the United States, Canada, and

Europe, the technical reports requested by the Commission, and the individual expertise of the Commissioners themselves.

Members deliberated for more than 250 hours, including more than 50 hours with industry representatives, to formulate its recommendations. PCIFAP staff members held weekly conference calls with representatives of the Animal Agriculture Alliance over an 18 month period. Those calls, totaling literally hundreds of hours, were part of the Commission's effort to be transparent in its operations and to seek as broad a range of information as possible.

In addition, the Commission held five public briefings on Capitol Hill to offer information to Hill staff, advocacy organizations, industry and the general public on the key issues examined by the panel. Commissioners in attendance took questions from the audience and have been available for comment throughout that process.

What are the characteristics of an industrial farm animal production operation?

The food animal production model that is commonly known as the industrial, or concentrated model, is characterized by extremely large numbers of the same specie of animal being raised in closed barns utilizing automated feeding and watering systems with the animals' movement restricted.

It is not uncommon for 25,000 swine, or more, to be raised in one industrial operation, 10,000 dairy cows, and 100,000 broiler chickens or laying hens. In the case of swine production and dairy production, the industrial model generally uses a liquid flushing system to remove the animal feces and urine from the troughs under the animals to an open cesspool holding pond. Giving low doses of antibiotics to promote growth and to minimize the threat of a rapidly spreading bacterial problem due to the close proximity of the animals to each other is also a characteristic.

Will the recommendations by the Commission increase the price of food?

One of the characteristics of industrial animal agriculture is its ability to externalize costs, that is, not to be responsible for bearing the true cost of producing the meat product so the total cost of meat is not reflected in the price paid by consumers at the grocery store. But consumers and taxpayers are paying for those costs of production in other ways.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimate that antibiotic resistance costs taxpayers approximately \$5 billion annually. A recent study released by the Union of Concerned Scientists outlines that industrial farm animal production facilities cost U.S. taxpayers over \$38 billion in externalized costs, which is approximately \$159 for every man, woman, and child in the United States.

The Commission's economic analysis of swine production showed that in comparing a current industrial production model using gestation crates and a liquid waste handling system to a hoop barn system, the hoop barn system would add only 26 cents per hundred weight for the hog. If the current industrial model would be required to pay for the costs that are currently externalized, it would increase the cost of pork in that system by \$12.16 per hundred weight.

The Commission's recommends the changes it proposes be phased over a 10 year period, minimizing the cost increases. In addition, the Commission recommends that a combination of accelerate capital depreciation, tax credits, and direct subsidies be extended to medium and family sized family farmers to reduce the financial impact on those farmers.

Did the Commission ignore industry information and information from academics favorable to the animal agriculture industry?

No, the Commission considered a wide range of information, including information from the animal agriculture industry, academics, medical professionals, animal health experts, lay people, and agriculture producers not using the industrial model of production. Commissioners carefully weighed all information it received to achieve the consensus recommendations.

Commissioners were concerned about the widespread instances of intimidation used by the industry with academics at leading land grant colleges. In addition, industry representatives contacted technical report authors in an inappropriate manner mounting to a breach of the contract and confidentiality agreements signed between the authors and the Commission.