Effects of Stress on Animals
Are your animals happy?

Introduction
The discussion of animal handling is becoming more prevalent for many farmers and ranchers in beef, pork, and other agricultural industries. Many different pre-slaughter conditions can alter the meat quality and production of the animals, such as:

- Dark-cutting beef
- Psychological defects in pork
- Lying conditions of dairy cows
- Maternal instincts of cows

Researchers in the cattle industry conduct studies to find ways to reduce the amount of stress on the animals, as well as research to provide ways to increase the quality of meat and production of the animals.

What is dark-cutting beef?
Dark-cutting in beef cattle is a meat condition where the meat is a dark red or black in color, and dry and sticky in texture. Meat quality costs the United States $132 to 170 million annually. Finding effective ways to produce the dark-cutting condition in beef cattle is difficult. Different stressors research to produce dark-cutting in beef are treadmill exercise and restraint and isolation (RIS). Research has found that RIS is the best stressor in finding suitable models in Holstein calves for dark-cutting beef.

The dark-cutting condition in beef is a growing concern for production.
Source: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au

Is your pig stressed?
Decreasing stress in the environment will help the overall production of pigs and increase meat quality. Research shows that a high stress environment prior to slaughter causes the pigs more psychological damage than negative effects on meat quality. Different stressors that contribute to poor pork quality are:

- Long, rough transport
- Short lairage treatment
- Electrical shocking while herding

These stressors combined did not alter meat quality tremendously, but did hinder the psychological well-being of the pigs.

Pigs kept in confined spaces are more likely to have stress related psychological problems.
Source: http://andrewsullivan.theatlantic.com
How does human handling affect maternal instincts of cows?

Research shows that cows handled by humans in earlier stages of life are more likely to be at ease around humans when they have calves than cows that were not exposed to human handling. Cows are still excited and on edge, but are not as violent due to their interactions with humans at early stages of life.

Source: www.animalsaustralia.org

Why is housing important?

Housing for dairy cows is important because cattle movement is essential in the production of the dairy cows. Social interactions between the cows also help with the conditions of the housing. Research shows that the ability and freedom to lie down and rest at ease are important to the welfare of the cows. There are four common lying positions of cattle:

- Flat on the side
- Head back
- Head on the ground
- Head up, the most common position.

How can you help?

Research shows that positive human interaction with animals is the best way to improve production. Human interaction with cattle at earlier stages of life improves the ability to work with the cattle and lowers the instinct to attack. Adequate housing conditions and freedom to move improves the production of cattle and the overall welfare.

References


