



# Animal Welfare APPROVED

newsletter

SUMMER 2013 • Volume 6 • Issue 2



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## Dear Friends,



If ever there was a time for AWA farmers to call on their political representatives to reform our broken farming system—and to show them there really is another way—it is now.

Thanks to the steadfast dedication of principled politicians like Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (see page 5), and the work of groups like AWA and Food & Water Watch,

the public and media interest is at an all-time high concerning the links between the routine use of subtherapeutic antibiotics in industrial farming and the rise of life-threatening antibiotic-resistant bacteria. But we must use this opportunity to achieve real changes, not just more quick fixes.

Unfortunately, the growth of positive-sounding food claims like “antibiotic-free” is distracting many well-meaning consumers from making positive food choices—and risks undermining the gathering momentum for real change. You don’t need me to tell you that a lone “antibiotic-free” label means very little when it comes to real animal welfare or environmental protection. Systems which simply prohibit antibiotics will almost certainly still involve intensive confinement, mutilations such as beak trimming or tail docking, and the same old environmental pollution associated with intensive farming. What we need is wholesale change.

Andrew Gunther  
Program Director



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# Unauthorized GM Wheat Threatens U.S. Export Market

News that an unlicensed genetically modified (GM) wheat has been found growing in a field in Oregon—more than 10 years after the last approved field trials were conducted in the state—has sent shockwaves across the U.S. wheat industry.

BY PETER MUNDY, WRITER/EDITOR

The USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has launched a formal investigation after tests on plant samples from an unnamed farm in Oregon revealed the presence of unapproved genetically modified (GM) glyphosate-resistant wheat plants.

In a statement released on May 29, APHIS confirmed the rogue GM plants were the same RoundUp Ready GM wheat variety Monsanto was authorized to use in over 100 field test in 16 states from 1998 to 2005. The statement also revealed that the last approved field trials of glyphosate-resistant GM wheat were conducted in Oregon in 2001. No GM wheat varieties are approved for sale or in commercial production in the U.S.—or any other nation.

Monsanto and USDA officials quickly sought to reassure trading partners that there were no food safety concerns related to this unapproved GM wheat, highlighting the fact that the FDA had declared it "safe" in 2004. But Japan immediately suspended imports of certain U.S. white wheat and feed wheat. South Korean millers also suspended imports of U.S. feed wheat,

while Europe said it would introduce new tests for unauthorized GM wheat contamination. In early June, a wheat farmer launched a federal civil lawsuit, claiming Monsanto's gross negligence had driven down wheat prices and affected international trade. In 2011, Bayer CropScience paid \$750 million to settle a similar claim after GM rice not intended for human consumption polluted U.S. rice crops.

"We are now witnessing a true 'escape-from-the-laboratory' incident," says Andrew Gunther, AWA's Program Director. "With \$8.1 billion in American wheat exported in 2012, the news that our wheat supplies might be

contaminated with an unauthorized GM wheat is of grave concern.

"The discovery blows a hole the size of Oregon in the U.S. regulatory regime—a regime that's supposed to protect us from just this type of event. It also makes a complete mockery of Monsanto's past assurances about the rigorous control measures it puts in place to minimize risks to the environment during such field trials.

"The big question is whether this find is just the tip of the iceberg. The government should set up an independent task force to examine every GM trial site—both past and present—to test for rogue GM crops." 🐘



Tom Erickson

Wheat fields in Oregon. Monsanto claims the "process for closing out the Roundup Ready wheat program was rigorous, well-documented and audited."

## Discounts for High Welfare Poultry Slaughter Tools



Poultry farmers in the AWA program can benefit from discounted prices when purchasing new tools for higher-welfare on-farm slaughter and euthanasia.

Bock Industries is offering AWA poultry farmers a discount on the list price for their new TED and Zephyr-E captive bolt dispatch tools. Both devices are light-weight, highly portable, and highly efficient, resulting in immediate insensibility and rapid death for all poultry species.

"We believe the TED and Zephyr-E are ideal tools at an attractive price for today's small to medium poultry producers," says

Tim Holmes, AWA's Lead Auditor. "Our goal is to ensure that on-farm slaughter and euthanasia are conducted with an absolute minimum of animal distress. We believe these tools, when applied correctly, can help farmers reliably and consistently achieve this while streamlining their operation."

The Bock Industries TED and Zephyr-E are available to AWA farmers for \$950 (saving \$71) and \$675 (saving \$53), respectively. Prices include shipping.

For more information, contact Bock Industries at (814) 342-4385 or visit [www.tedstunner.com](http://www.tedstunner.com).

## FARM ANTIBIOTIC USE LINKED TO MRSA

European scientists have used gene sequencing to establish the animal-to-human transmission of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), an antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

"Our findings demonstrate that the MRSA strains we studied are capable of transmission between animals and humans, which highlights the role of livestock as a potential reservoir of antibiotic-resistant bacteria," says Ewan Harrison, an author of the study.

"This research confirms beyond doubt that the misuse of antibiotics in industrial farming presents a clear threat to human health," said Anna Bassett, AWA's Lead Technical Advisor. "We urge readers to support passage of the federal Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act, which would restrict farm antibiotic use to the treatment of sick or injured animals, and phase out use of subtherapeutic antibiotics to promote growth and prevent diseases that build and spread in large part because of the conditions found within industrial farming systems."

## SNAP ELIGIBILITY EXPANDED

The USDA has loosened the eligibility requirements for grants to improve public access to fresh produce and healthy foods by Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients. The changes mean that direct marketing farmers can now apply for grants to purchase or lease the necessary equipment to accept Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards, thus expanding their customer base. For more information, visit [www.fns.usda.gov/snap/ebt/fm.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/ebt/fm.htm).

## EU BANS NEONIC INSECTICIDES

The European Union has voted to ban neonicotinoid pesticides. The action follows a report by the European Food Safety Agency in January, which highlighted the significant risks to bees.

Neonicotinoids have been blamed for the recent dramatic decline in global bee populations, known as colony collapse disorder (CCD). The two-year restriction on the use of imidacloprid and clothianidin (Bayer)

and thiamethoxam (Syngenta) on flowering crops in Europe comes into force in December, and will remain in place unless compelling new scientific evidence becomes available to justify lifting the restriction. Although a recent USDA report on national honey bee health acknowledges that CCD is a very serious problem, the USDA maintains that there is insufficient data to support similar action in the U.S., and instead calls for further research.

"Despite the precautionary action being taken in other countries, the USDA's response is limited to the production of an action plan that will outline its major priorities for CCD for the next 5–10 years," says Andrew Gunther, AWA's Program Director. "Just like the link between intensive farming and the rise of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, how much more evidence does the USDA need before it will act?"

## AWA DAIRY FARMS ARE CREAM OF THE CROP IN CA

AWA-approved Barinaga Ranch Farmstead and Toluma Farms & Tomales Farmstead Creamery, both of Marin County, CA, were promoted in a recent feature in the *Marin Independent Journal* about northern California's top dairy farmers and cheesemakers.

## BEST BEEF IN GEORGIA FINALIST RELIES ON AWA

The Rookery in downtown Macon, GA, is one of four locations in the running for the "best beef in Georgia" competition—and the restaurant makes a point of sourcing its beef from AWA-certified Rocking Chair Ranch, Forsyth. The winning beef will be announced in the *Georgia Cattleman* magazine.

## CURED MEAT COMPETITION

AWA farmers who process their own meats are encouraged to enter this year's national American Cured Meat Championships. The competition, which takes place at the American Association of Meat Processors (AAMP) convention on July 18–20 in North Charleston, SC, is open to AAMP processor members. Classes include hams, bacon, jerky, and sausages. Representatives from AWA are also attending the event—why



Researchers suggest that honey bees are responsible for pollinating around one-third of the world's crop production.

not come and stop by our table? For more information, visit [aamp.com/event-calendar/aamp-convention/](http://aamp.com/event-calendar/aamp-convention/).

## AWA WEBSITE REVAMP

The AWA website is being updated to make it easier to navigate. "We want to improve the overall user experience," says Julie Suarez, AWA's Program Coordinator. "But one of our key goals was to make it easier for people to find their way around and to make it more interactive. While it's still very much a work in progress, we hope that it's already easier for visitors to find the information they need." If you have any feedback or suggested improvements, please email [info@AnimalWelfareApproved.org](mailto:info@AnimalWelfareApproved.org).

## OUR NEWEST TEAM MEMBER

Congratulations to Lead Farmer and Market Outreach Coordinator, Emily Lancaster, and her husband, Farrell, on the birth of their daughter, Helen Ida, in late April.

## CORRECTION

In the last issue (page 3), we implied there was no charge for the new Certified Wildlife Friendly™ and Predator Friendly® certification programs. There is, in fact, an application fee of \$100. We apologize for the error and any confusion caused.

For more local, regional and national news coverage of AWA farmers and ranchers, visit [AnimalWelfareApproved.org](http://AnimalWelfareApproved.org).

## A Champion for Antibiotics Reform

**Congresswoman Louise Slaughter, the only microbiologist in Congress, has long campaigned to end the misuse of antibiotics in industrial farming—a practice that is accelerating the growth of antibiotic-resistant diseases.**

I've always had a great respect for America's independent family farmers. As a child growing up in Kentucky, I was surrounded by hardworking people who raised animals in humane, sustainable ways to provide healthy, nutritious meals for their families and the surrounding community. I know I don't need to tell AWA farmers, but many of the techniques they use to keep their animals healthy are as relevant today as they were back then.

After the discovery of penicillin and other antibiotics, many farmers rapidly adopted their use and industrialized their farms in order to raise animals as quickly and cheaply as possible, at the expense of humane practices and public health. Yet some farmers have resisted these extreme industrial trends, preferring instead to raise their animals with human health, animal welfare, and the environment in mind, and by utilizing modern advances such as antibiotics appropriately and judiciously.

I know that choosing to do things the right way can impact farmers' bottom lines. Our current federal farming policies favor corporate agriculture over America's independent family farmers and incentivize unsustainable farming practices. I believe that we must provide greater support to farmers who practice truly sustainable farming methods, rather than to farms that engage in practices that pose unacceptable risks to human health and the environment.

Protecting independent farms is also a win-win for consumers: We get high quality, better tasting meat when animals are treated humanely. At the same time, we also protect public health because animals are not raised with the antibiotics we so desperately need to safeguard for medical treatment.

The extreme overuse of antibiotics in farming—80 percent of antibiotics sold in the United States are used in farm animal production—has led to an explosion of antibiotic-resistant bacteria and infections. More people now die from MRSA each year than die of HIV/AIDS, and these infections are getting more common and harder to treat. Decades of research have shown that daily dosing of antibiotics to healthy livestock is largely to blame for the rise in antibiotic-resistant bacteria. These bacteria are found on most meat

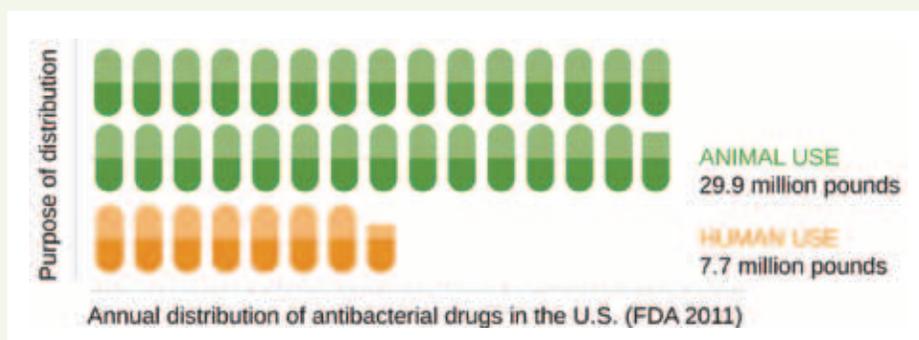


*"Every day that the government stands idly by, we move closer to the nightmare scenario where routine infections can no longer be cured with antibiotic treatment."*  
—Rep. Slaughter

available in our grocery stores, according to recent FDA data. We know that farm animals carry these bacteria, like MRSA, and can transfer infections to the people who raise them. It's imperative that we act now to preserve our antibiotic supply. We are foolishly throwing away one of the greatest medical achievements in human history by wasting antibiotics on industrial farms.

This spring, I reintroduced a bill known as the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act (PAMTA). PAMTA would ban the use of eight major classes of antibiotics on healthy livestock, while allowing exceptions to treat sick animals. This bill is a modest, reasonable alternative to the extreme overuse of antibiotics by corporate agriculture. I know that AWA farmers will stand with me and support PAMTA. This commonsense legislation would not only help to level the playing field for independent farmers who currently practice agriculture the right way, but also protect the health of all Americans. 🐄

To support Rep. Slaughter's efforts to reintroduce PAMTA, visit [louise.house.gov](http://louise.house.gov).



According to the latest FDA data, 80 percent (29.9 million pounds) of all antibiotics sold in the U.S. each year are used on food animals—mainly for growth promotion and to prevent disease.

# A Helping Hand

BY EMILY LANCASTER,  
LEAD FARMER AND MARKET  
OUTREACH COORDINATOR

***AWA's Good Husbandry Grants program was set up with one goal in mind: to support individual projects on the ground that will have a clear and positive impact on animal welfare.***

Since its introduction in 2008, the AWA Good Husbandry Grants initiative has helped to fund almost 200 projects to improve animal welfare on farms and in slaughter plant facilities across the U.S. and Canada.

The initiative is open to AWA farmers, applicants to the AWA program, and slaughter plant facilities that are working with AWA farms. Last year alone, 42 grants of up to \$5,000 were awarded to farms and slaughter plants to support a range of interesting projects, including financing the introduction of mobile housing facilities, mobile shading, and other infrastructure; updating slaughter equipment and facilities; and implementing breeding programs to improve genetics or facilitate pasture-based management. The number of applications coming forward—and the sheer diversity of the projects involved—is increasing year-by-year and is a testament to how farmers are pioneering a transition from industrialized to pasture-based systems, as well as to the resourcefulness and ingenuity of the AWA community.

## **WHAT FUNDING AREAS DO THE GRANTS COVER?**

The ultimate aim of AWA's Good Husbandry Grants is to support realistic projects that will not only result in better compliance with AWA's standards and ongoing improvements for farm animal welfare, but which should also support the ongoing viability of the farm. The grants can be especially useful to farmers who are seeking a low-risk way to take advantage of existing and develop new, sustainable, outdoor methods of livestock production, as well as slaughter plants that are looking to improve or update their facilities and services in a manner that improves animal welfare.

The funding priorities include genetic improvement for pasture-based systems, outdoor access and mobile housing, welfare improvements in the slaughter process, non-lethal predator control, and other innovative projects that improve the welfare of animals. Examples of individual farm projects over the years have included plans to convert existing livestock buildings to increase comfort and better accommodate natural behaviors in the animals, build mobile housing for pigs or poultry so as to increase access to range and forage, build or improve fencing to exclude predators, divide paddocks for better management, and improve handling facilities across the farm. To give readers a better idea of the kind of projects that are being supported through the Good Husbandry Grants, here are profiles of just a handful of last year's successful applicants:



### Mobile Housing for Parasite Reduction CONSIDER BARDWELL FARM, VT

Angela Miller and the other farmers at Consider Bardwell Farm in West Pawlet, VT, raise Oberhaslis dairy goats, using the milk to make a range of award-winning goat cheeses. Consider Bardwell's doelings have always been housed in a barn with free access to a large barnyard. However, regular use of this area can lead to a greater risk of internal parasites, which can rapidly multiply in regularly used pasture and result in ill health and low weight gain. Severe parasite exposure at a young age can also effect long-term milk production and life expectancy.

After receiving a Good Husbandry Grant, Consider Bardwell Farm was able to introduce mobile housing for the young does, allowing the farmers to easily move the doelings to fresh pasture every two days and minimizing the build-up of parasites. The housing also provides the young animals with shade and shelter, as well as access to higher-quality forage. The farmers are already seeing improvements: "By being able to rotate the doelings on pasture we have been able to reduce our reliance on chemical wormers," says Angela. "In addition, we have observed better weight gains and overall health in our doelings than in previous years."

### Mobile Shelter for Welfare and Grazing Management CLOVER CREEK FARM, TN

Chris and Ray Wilson raise sheep and pastured laying hens at Clover Creek Farm, near Jonesborough, TN. Rotational grazing is an important part of the farm's animal husbandry practices: It not only helps to maintain the health of their animals, but also the quality of grazing available. Until recently, however, several of the fields at the farm lacked sufficient natural shade or shelter for the sheep. As a result, they tended to graze in the early morning and late afternoon when the temperatures were cooler, and rested in the same area of the fields—leading to uneven grass growth and a greater risk of potential health problems.

The Wilsons applied for a Good Husbandry Grant to help construct several moveable shade structures for their sheep. Since introducing the moveable shades to the fields, Chris has already noticed positive changes in terms of the animals' welfare and grazing management: "The sheep graze more in the summer because they can return to nearby shade as they feel it necessary," Chris explains. "By moving the shelters we can ensure the sheep always have a clean place to rest, too. We would not have been able to provide shade for our sheep in three fields without help from AWA."

### Mobile Fencing for Parasite Reduction CT BIOLOGICAL WEED AND BRUSH CONTROL, ID

Tim and Lynda Linquist and their sons, Cody and Ty, raise 300 Boer cross Spanish goats on their farm near Wilder, ID. They transport the goats to different locations to provide weed and brush control which would otherwise be managed using chemical herbicides and equipment. The Linquists are proud that their goats meet AWA's standards and live



One of the new mobile doeling houses at Consider Bardwell Farm, VT, built with funding from an AWA Good Husbandry Grant.

outdoors on pasture all year long. But until recently, their goats were brought into a small pasture to feed on hay during the winter, limiting the amount of fresh grass and forage the animals were able to graze and browse, impacting the pasture's health and quality, and increasing the risk of parasite problems within the herd.

In order to improve his goats' health and welfare, Tim applied for an AWA Good Husbandry Grant to buy electric netting so that he can manage access to pasture and move the goats regularly to new grazing. "The moveable netting means our goats are never held in one area for more than a couple of days, leading to a very low parasite challenge all year," Tim explains. Combined with the introduction of a new winter rotational system, the Linquists have decreased their need to worm the goats to just one treatment last year. "The grant has definitely helped improve welfare on our operation," says Tim. "The goats are much calmer and more content, exhibiting their natural behaviors of grazing and browsing."

### Mobile Shelter for Welfare and Grazing Management INDIAN CREEK ANGUS, GA

Dennis Barron and Carol Corbin, along with Dennis's son, Denny, raise AWA Black Angus cattle at Indian Creek Angus,



Indian Creek Angus, GA

*The new shade shed at Indian Creek Angus, GA, provides ample shade for the cattle herd—and encourages better pasture utilization.*

near Carnesville, GA. Until recently, two of the farm's main pastures had insufficient shade in the summer for their cattle. To stay out of the sun, the cattle would gather under the few trees at the perimeter of these pastures, affecting their comfort and ability to stay cool in the hottest parts of the day—and leading to uneven grazing.

Dennis applied for a grant to build a large shade shed, accessible from both pastures, with plenty of space for his cattle to spread out and stay cool. Dennis observed an immediate improvement in the animals' welfare when the shed was built: "It was quite a sight to see the cattle head straight into it on the first day we opened the pasture to them," says Dennis. "The calves played around the dirt pile nearby and the mothers fanned themselves in the shade. Sometimes it is hard to get them to leave it!"

The shed will not only serve as a useful management tool, enabling the farmers to easily handle and sort the cattle at key times, but it will also help to market the farm's products. As the shed can be seen from the I-85, which runs by the farm, Dennis says they plan to paint "Grassfed Beef" and include the farm's website on the structure to increase the farm's visibility. Dennis is delighted with the results from the new shade shed and would encourage others to explore similar options on their farms to improve welfare and management.

### *Improvements in Breeding Stock* **DECK FAMILY FARM, OR**

In 2007, Christine and John Deck introduced black, tan, and brown Galloway cattle to their farm, which is situated near Junction City, OR. The Galloway breed is well-adapted to the range of weather experienced in the state, while their smaller birth weight leads to fewer problems at calving. However, Christine and John encountered a serious issue in their Galloway breeding program when they found that the majority of the Galloway cattle available in the western

U.S. were genetically related. In order to safeguard the future health and vitality of their herd, the Decks applied for a grant to expand their search to the eastern U.S. to obtain genetically distinct bulls.

With the support of an AWA Good Husbandry Grant, the Decks have been able to buy breeding stock to diversify and improve the genetics of their Galloway herd. "Having happier, more comfortable animals translates to better weight gains, which in turn has a positive impact on the farm's cash flow," says John.

### *On-Farm Incubating/Hatching* **MILLSAP FARM, ID**

Debbie and Mark Millsap manage Boer goats and a flock of laying hens on Millsap Farm, near Middleton, ID. Raised on pasture, the chicken breeds include Brahma, Americana, Welsummer, Naked Neck, Black Cuckoo Maran, Barred Plymouth Rock, and Delaware. Although the hens can roam free, peck and scratch for grubs and seeds, and dust bathe on the pasture, Debbie was not satisfied with the farm's reliance on commercial hatcheries to replenish the flock.

In order to improve the welfare of her laying hens, and to raise chickens that are best-adapted to the conditions on Millsap Farm, Debbie applied to the AWA Good Husbandry Grant program to buy an incubator so the farm can hatch their own chicks, and to help build additional mobile housing and fencing to provide better pasture access for their expanding flock. Hatching birds on-farm eliminates the need to order young chicks from hatcheries, which are often transported long distances to farms. In addition, hatching their own breeding stock will allow Debbie and Mark to breed chicks using only the healthiest, most productive adult birds, ensuring future hens will thrive in the specific conditions on their farm. The Millsaps are already pleased with the results of their on-farm incubating and hatching operation



Deck Family Farm, OR

*One of the first calves born at Deck Family Farm, OR, with Galloway genetics.*



and are looking forward to not only meeting their own need for chicks, but supplying chicks to other local family farms. Debbie also believes that their on-farm hatching operation will lead to increased loyalty from their customers who “demand high-welfare, truly range-free chickens.”

### *Mobile Housing for Pasture and Herd Management* **THIS LIL' PIGGY FARM, FL**

Located near Weirsdale, FL, This Lil' Piggy Farm is owned and operated by Rhonda Williams. Rhonda breeds and raises traditional Yorkshire, Duroc, Spots and cross-bred pigs. Although she believes deeply in the benefit of pasture-raising her hogs, Rhonda sometimes found it challenging to see to it that her pregnant sows, postpartum sows, and new piglets had access to the highest-quality pastures while remaining safe and stress-free when they had to mix with boars and un-bred sows. Sows can be particularly protective of their piglets after giving birth, which can sometimes lead to fighting with other pigs.

Rhonda applied to AWA's Good Husbandry Grant program to enable her to build additional mobile housing and fencing so that she can partition sows and piglets for optimal safety and comfort. By separating pregnant and post-partum sows, Rhonda can ensure they remain safe and happy without the risk of aggressive contact with other pigs. The new fencing and mobile housing also offers the sows an easier transition back into the breeding herd after they have given birth and helps them get back to a healthy weight. Rhonda explains that being able to keep her newly weaned piglets and young pigs separate has allowed them to perform their natural behaviors without competition from larger pigs. “The changes have allowed the piglets to do what pigs do best!” she says: “Lots of rooting, playing, and exploring in a safe, large pasture.” In addition to the direct benefits for animal welfare and easier management, Rhonda says that the grant has resulted in greater recognition from the local community: “It's been a positive advertisement, not only for our farm, but also for the AWA program,” she says. “It's awesome to see the interest we get from other small farms when they find out our farm and our husbandry techniques have been recognized by AWA.” 🐷

### **AWA GOOD HUSBANDRY GRANT APPLICATION GUIDELINES**

The fundamental purpose of the AWA Good Husbandry Grants is to fund or partially fund projects which result in improvements in the welfare of farm animals and the sustainability of the businesses concerned.

Last year, applicants were able to submit a proposal for one project, requesting a maximum grant of \$5,000—although it was also possible for individual farmers and slaughter plants to apply for partial funding toward larger projects costing more than \$5,000.

While the application process is not complicated—and we encourage everyone to apply—the total amount of funding available each year is limited. As the number of applications is increasing every year, it is important for applicants to fully understand the eligibility requirements (which are outlined on the Good Husbandry Grants application form) and that the project clearly meets the overall purpose of the grants program.

Every application is evaluated impartially and anonymously by an experienced grant review panel. Priority is given to proposals with the greatest potential impact for improving the welfare of farm animals with respect to the amount requested, as well as those projects which develop innovative practices that can ultimately be applied to other operations. It is important to note that the grants are not intended to subsidize current operations, but rather to support new changes that will bring about real benefits for animal welfare.

Eligible costs include design fees, skilled contractor costs, materials, slaughter and other special equipment, and mobile housing. The grants may not be used for costs such as time/labor conducted by the applicant, general farm expenses and materials, or maintenance costs. As part of the application form, every applicant must include a clear budget of how they intend to spend the grant funding. Proposals which offer limited benefit may be rejected. The grant review panel's decisions are final and not open to appeal.

*For additional information about the Animal Welfare Approved Good Husbandry Grants, including more profiles of past grants, visit **AnimalWelfareApproved.org/farmers/grants-for-farmers**.*

*To stay informed about future grant opportunities, make sure you sign up to AWA's electronic mailing list at **AnimalWelfareApproved.org**.*

## WORKING WITH WILDLIFE

The new Certified Wildlife Friendly™ and Predator Friendly® certification programs are now open to farmers—but what do they mean in practice?

BY PETER MUNDY, WRITER/EDITOR

Livestock losses from predators can have profound economic and emotional impacts on producers, and affect livestock welfare and stress. Perhaps as a result, predator management on many farms and ranches across North America has tended to focus on eradicating any threat—perceived or actual.

Over recent years, however, a growing number of agricultural producers have sought ways to coexist with wildlife. The reasons for this include an increasing recognition about the damage that human activity is inflicting on the environment, as well as a growing understanding of the key role that native U.S. predator species—such as coyotes, wolves, and mountain lions—play in the functioning of ecosystems.

In response, AWA, Predator Friendly, and the Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network launched the Certified Wildlife Friendly™ and Predator Friendly® certification programs earlier this year to assess—and reward—producers who are committed to coexisting with wildlife and predator species (see *AWA Newsletter*, spring 2013, page 3).

As the name suggests, the Predator Friendly® standards focus on the protection of native predators. While the Certified Wildlife Friendly™ standards also incorporate predator protection, they include additional measures to protect a broader range of wildlife. In both cases, participating producers undergo an annual third-party audit, carried out by an AWA auditor, to demonstrate compliance with the specific standards. Successful producers can market their products—including wool, meat, eggs, honey, leather goods, and soap—using the Certified Wildlife Friendly™ or Predator Friendly® logos.

Both standards cover a number of areas relating to wildlife and predator conservation—from the provision and preservation of wildlife habitats, to monitoring requirements and the permitted non-lethal predator management strategies. But the underlying principle is that it's possible to maintain wildlife and wildlife habitats and keep livestock safe without resorting to lethal predator control measures. Furthermore, there should be rewards in the marketplace for making that choice.

### A RANGE OF TECHNIQUES

An awareness and understanding of the wildlife on and around the farm is a fundamental part of both standards and serves as the primary tool to minimize any potential conflict with livestock. Producers are encouraged to educate themselves about the habits of any potential predator species and to monitor the farm to recognize changing situations, which will alert them to times of the day or periods of the year when the threat of predation is highest.

An understanding of the wildlife species in the area can inform practical protection measures. For example, farmers can schedule grazing to take advantage of seasonal lulls in predation pressure or avoid grazing young or vulnerable animals near active dens or areas where predators can easily use cover. As many predators are nocturnal hunters, simply moving animals to secure locations at night, such as a poultry house or a fenced corral, can be highly effective.

Predators will often target newborn and young animals. Where possible, altering calving, lambing,



David Baron



East Fork Farm, NC

At left, a coyote. Research suggests that attempts to control these animals by lethal means may actually encourage them to increase breeding. Guardian dogs, like the one shown at right, are increasingly found on U.S. farms and are an effective form of non-lethal predator control.



*Llamas are territorial and are instinctively suspicious of canines, and some will strike at small predators. Living Earth Farm, OR, runs a guardian llama with the herd of Nubian goats during the day to deter coyotes.*

## LIVING EARTH FARM

*Living Earth Farm, near Eugene, OR, was one of the first farms in the U.S. to become dual certified for AWA and Certified Wildlife Friendly. Sharon and Jim Blick manage laying hens and dairy goats, as well as pigs and sheep. Since 2007, they have recorded over 120 different bird species on the farm.*

kidding, farrowing and/or poultry hatching schedules to avoid periods when predators are most active—or when natural prey is least available—can help minimize predation risks. Moving animals to smaller, well-fenced pastures, fenced lots, or sheds during this vulnerable period is also a key strategy to avoid predation.

Grazing larger and smaller livestock species together, such as cattle with sheep or poultry, can act as a significant deterrent to predators. Some livestock species are also more alert than others and will effectively warn their companion species of potential threats.

Predators can quickly become familiarized to a farm's daily routines, learning when it is "safe" to approach. Changing where and when humans are present, making frequent patrols in pasture, and employing differing means of transportation will all help to avoid predictability. Although the certification programs are wildlife and predator "friendly," this doesn't mean that discouraging wildlife from hanging around your livestock isn't permitted. Noise and activity at unpredictable times and in different parts of the farm will help keep wildlife at a distance.

Barriers such as electric fencing can help protect small areas of land from predators. Fladry is a low-tech option for keeping species such as wolves away from domestic livestock for short periods. It involves fitting a

line of rope on the top of a fence and suspending strips of fabric, which flap in the wind. More high-tech solutions include motion-sensitive alarms, which use lights and noise to discourage predators.

Perhaps the most well-known non-lethal predator control strategy is the guardian dog; common breeds include the Great Pyrenees, Anatolian Shepherds, Akbash and Maremma. Each breed has different characteristics, making them suitable for different roles, landscapes and predator threats. Llamas and donkeys are also often used (see "Living Earth Farm" at right), where their size and presence can be an effective deterrent to certain predator species.

## THE FUTURE

While there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution to living with wildlife, adopting the above strategies can significantly reduce livestock losses without recourse to lethal methods or destroying important habitats. In so doing, the Certified Wildlife Friendly™ and Predator Friendly® production standards may also offer new market opportunities.

*For more information about the Certified Wildlife Friendly™ program, visit [wildlifefriendly.org/north-america](http://wildlifefriendly.org/north-america). For more information about the Predator Friendly® program, visit [predatorfriendly.org](http://predatorfriendly.org).*

Despite covering just 15 acres, and being so near the city, we have a very diverse wildlife population. The farm is situated near a number of managed habitats, including the West Eugene Wetlands, and ensuring the farm was a corridor for all wildlife—including predators—is important for us.

We regularly see coyotes and we know that cougars live in the area. Various predatory birds present a threat to our chickens, including a particularly tenacious red-tailed hawk which started taking chickens soon after we established the flock. Since we decided to run a guardian border collie with our hens, we haven't lost a single bird. We also run a guardian llama with our goats, which is very successful in deterring coyotes.

One of the reasons we chose Certified Wildlife Friendly accreditation was that even the most lauded "green" farm certifications have no rules on coexisting with predators or using lethal control against wildlife. It's something that the public incorrectly take for granted. We wanted a way to show customers that our concern for animal welfare extends to all wildlife on the farm.

Visit [thelivingearthfarm.com](http://thelivingearthfarm.com).



*Getting to the point: AWA standards state that vaccines must be used where there is disease or known risk of disease on a farm. Where antibiotics are used, AWA farmers must observe at least twice the recommended withdrawal period for any meat, milk or eggs.*

## TO DOSE OR NOT TO DOSE

**When is it appropriate to use medication according to the Animal Welfare Approved standards?**

BY ANNA BASSETT, LEAD TECHNICAL ADVISOR

**AWA farmers manage their animals so they remain healthy.** This management includes resting and rotating pasture areas, avoiding overstocking, and ensuring animals receive the right nutrition at all stages of their lives. Nevertheless, we fully understand that animals may still get sick or injure themselves, and that medicinal treatment is sometimes necessary to treat disease or to prevent pain and suffering.

Several standards within the AWA program relate to the use of medication, but perhaps the most important is the requirement that any animal who falls sick or is injured must be treated immediately. Use of medication at such a time may be an obvious call. However, there are other times when things may not be quite so clear. What about ongoing parasite problems or recurrent diseases in certain animals or at certain times of the year; and how should you manage and market treated animals? This article will consider some common situations and best practice management under the AWA standards.

### ANTIBIOTIC USE

First, let's be clear that AWA does not prohibit the use of antibiotics. The AWA standards promote the use of alternative treatments, where suitable and effective. However, if antibiotics are the most appropriate treatment then they must be used. There is growing evidence that the overuse of antibiotics, most particularly in industrial farm

settings, is leading to bacteria that are resistant to these medications—the same medications that humans need to ward off serious illnesses caused by the bacteria. So it is important to use antibiotics carefully. But the right antibiotic at the right dose, as a targeted individual treatment, is unlikely to contribute to such resistance problems.

Many consumers are concerned about antibiotic use in farm animals. While treatment with antibiotics does not exclude an animal or its products for sale under the AWA logo, our standards do require farmers to observe at least twice the recommended withdrawal period before any meat, milk or eggs are sold under the AWA logo to ensure that no antibiotic residues remain in any AWA products.

### SUBTHERAPEUTIC TREATMENTS

AWA standards prohibit the use of subtherapeutic treatments. Therapeutic treatments are those intended for particular animals (or groups of animals) to treat and cure a specific ailment. Subtherapeutic treatments are those that are administered when animals are not sick or injured, for the purpose of promoting growth or overcoming disease challenges that are inherent in the system of management.

Perhaps the most commonly cited subtherapeutic treatment is the routine inclusion of antibiotics in the diet of feedlot beef cattle to prevent liver problems or respiratory diseases that arise from the conditions in which they are kept. But while this specific situation will not arise on AWA farms, other problems might. Some farms might see recurrent problems with certain diseases. For example, pig herds that need to bring weaned piglets off pasture in the winter can see pneumonia as a problem, while scours can occur in several different species of young animals—particularly if birthing has to take place indoors. As discussed above, the first and most important thing is to treat the animals that are actually sick. However, it is also important to recognize the triggers for these



iStock



Anna Bassett

*Purchased feed—like this chick pellet at left—may contain medication to prevent common diseases, such as coccidiosis. At right: Good management at farms that house weaned piglets helps prevent occurrences of pneumonia that can result from inadequate ventilation or damp bedding.*

recurrent illnesses and to take action to avoid them in the future. Pneumonia can often be traced back to ventilation problems, damp housing conditions, and significant fluctuations in daily temperatures, such as in the spring and fall. Attention to stocking density, bedding, and ensuring housing is well-ventilated without drafts can all help reduce pneumonia risks.

Problems with scours often come later in a calving, lambing or kidding season when bugs have had time to build up. Cleaning and disinfecting birthing areas—or moving farrowing huts after each pig litter has been weaned—can help reduce illnesses and the need to treat. It can be heartbreaking—not to mention costly—to lose any animal, so it's all too easy to slip into a “just in case” medication use to try to avoid further losses. However, the long-term health of the herd or flock is best served by assessing what went wrong and making appropriate changes in management, rather than repeated dosing.

Over-cautious or “just in case” usage of anti-parasite treatments, such as wormers and coccidiostats, could also amount to subtherapeutic use. While AWA does not require farmers to wait until animals are suffering from parasites before treatment, the first defense should not be the medicine bottle. Good management for preventing disease can resolve a lot of problems (see our article on coccidiosis in the *AWA Newsletter*, winter 2012). Recognizing which animals are most at risk from parasites—often young, freshly weaned stock—and which pastures carry the heaviest parasite burden will allow you to avoid putting the two together and reduce the risk of having to treat. All animals will carry some parasites, but the trick is to avoid the parasite burden getting so high that animal health and welfare are affected (for more information, download our free Technical Advice Fact Sheet on reducing the risk of internal parasites at [AnimalWelfareApproved.org/Farmers/TechnicalSupport](http://AnimalWelfareApproved.org/Farmers/TechnicalSupport)).

### MEDICATED FEED

Farmers should be aware that the well-known risks of certain diseases, such as coccidiosis in young animals or scours when rearing dairy calves, means that feed suppliers can make it very simple to take the “easy option” and use medicated feeds. In fact, it can sometimes be difficult to find suitable feeds that do *not* contain any medication.

Farmers should not lose heart or feel that they must be wrong to avoid using medicated products. Remember: the feed company's main interest is its bottom line—not the elimination of potential triggers for disease on your farm. To put it another way, if you feed medicated feed and don't make any changes to your management, you'll probably buy medicated feed again next year.

### VACCINATIONS

Assessing the farm's vaccination program is another useful tool to avoid repeated medication use. The AWA standards state that if there is a known disease problem within the herd or flock or a known disease risk—for example, if a neighboring farm has developed disease problems—then vaccines must be used (if available). However, the need for vaccination against different diseases can change over time. Introduction of new stock or the emergence of new diseases can bring new risks, so reviewing the farm's health plan at least once a year can help to identify and address such problems.

In summary, the AWA standards on medication define best practice. AWA farmers must seek to manage their livestock to stay healthy, and to identify—and avoid—any specific risk of disease to their herds or flocks. If things go wrong and animals get sick, then treatment is essential. However, it must be targeted specifically to the affected animal or animals, and the underlying reasons must be investigated—and addressed. 🐷

## Scheduling Re-audits

BY TIM HOLMES, LEAD AUDITOR

Many farmers have questions about how we determine when re-audits are scheduled during the year. Our current policy was developed with a number of goals in mind.

First, we wanted a process that would be fair to all farms in the program. The first audit is scheduled shortly after we receive an application: this could be winter, spring, summer, or fall. But in order to ensure that farms are not audited at the same time every year, our policy is to rotate the re-audits across different times of the year.

We achieve this goal by rotating the re-audit one month in advance of the previous year's audit, which means that the program will eventually audit each farm on every month of the year, giving us the fullest picture of a farm's operation. This allows the auditor to observe pasture conditions at different times of the year and view farms at calving, farrowing, lambing, and kidding. It also means the program is in a far better position to verify specific standards relating to seasonal operations, such as castration, dehorning, and housing/shelter.

While we understand that many farms would prefer to be audited when conditions are at their best, this is not practical from an auditing perspective. Some farms will inevitably have their audit in the winter, when conditions may be at their most challenging. However, our auditors are trained to take account of the varying conditions on any farm at time of audits and we can conduct audits whatever the weather conditions. This allows the program to gain a true understanding of a farm's compliance with the standards throughout the year. It also allows consumers to have complete confidence that our farmers are meeting the standards year-round—and not just at the best of times. To further facilitate impartial auditing, it is our policy that an auditor cannot carry out three consecutive audits on the same farm.

We realize that many farms have heavy workloads during certain times of the year. Our auditors will do their best to minimize any disruption to your business, while making sure the requirements for certification or re-certification are fully met. 🐾



Mike Suarez

*AWA standards require participating farmers to develop a dedicated health plan, in consultation with the farm's qualified expert advisor.*

## Farm Health Plans

*Farm Health Plans* is one of a range of over 20 Technical Advice Fact Sheets available from AWA.

Introducing a farm health plan—and keeping it up to date—can help prevent health problems in livestock and significantly improve overall farm performance. This fact sheet provides farmers who are participating in the AWA program with information and advice on creating a dedicated farm health plan (a requirement under the AWA standards). It covers what farmers should include in their health plan and how to use it in practice.

Download a copy of *Farm Health Plans* at **AnimalWelfareApproved.org** (select "Farmers" tab, then "Technical Support") or call **(800) 373-8806**.



Le Biscornu, Québec, Canada

*Rotating the annual re-audit allows our trained AWA auditors to see every farm in operation at different times of the year—and in various weather conditions.*

# Michelle Hartman of Three Cowgirls, South Dakota

Farms across the U.S. and Canada are joining the AWA program. We meet Michelle Hartman, who manages the 2,000-acre Three Cowgirls with Tammy Baus and David Heib.

## WHERE DO YOU FARM?

Three Cowgirls is situated near Hoven, about 60 miles west of Aberdeen. The ranch is 2,000 acres, plus rented land. We have 200 AWA- and American Grassfed Association (AGA)-certified cow-calf pairs, plus 40 finishing steers at any one time, mainly Black Angus, but we also incorporate British White and Highland genetics. I focus on marketing and consumer education, Tammy manages operations, and David is responsible for the day-to-day management of the cattle.

## WHO ARE YOUR CUSTOMERS?

We used to sell to larger operations, but we knew our beef was consistently special and we had a good story. We now sell at

farmers' markets in the Chicago area, and Asheville, NC. We also sell online and will ship anywhere in the U.S. Our beef is also available in grocery stores, including Look's Market, Sioux Falls, SD, and West Village Market, Asheville, NC. We're now focusing on expanding our retail presence.

## HOW DO YOU LIKE BEING PART OF THE AWA PROGRAM?

We chose AWA and AGA because we wanted to stand out. We wanted something which proves we follow the most stringent welfare standards and that we're 100 percent grassfed. The AWA logo sets us apart from everyone else, offering integrity for both the producer and consumer. For more information, visit [threecowgirls.com](http://threecowgirls.com).



Three Cowgirls Ranch, SD



Three Cowgirls Ranch, SD

The AWA logo provides visibility and credibility—at no cost to you. To learn more about our program and standards visit [AnimalWelfareApproved.org](http://AnimalWelfareApproved.org) or call (800) 373-8806.

David Heib (left) inspects some of the cow-calf pairs on pasture at Three Cowgirls, SD. Michelle Hartman (right) is primarily responsible for marketing, public relations, and the ranch's work to educate consumers.

## Meet Your AWA Farmer and Market Outreach Coordinator



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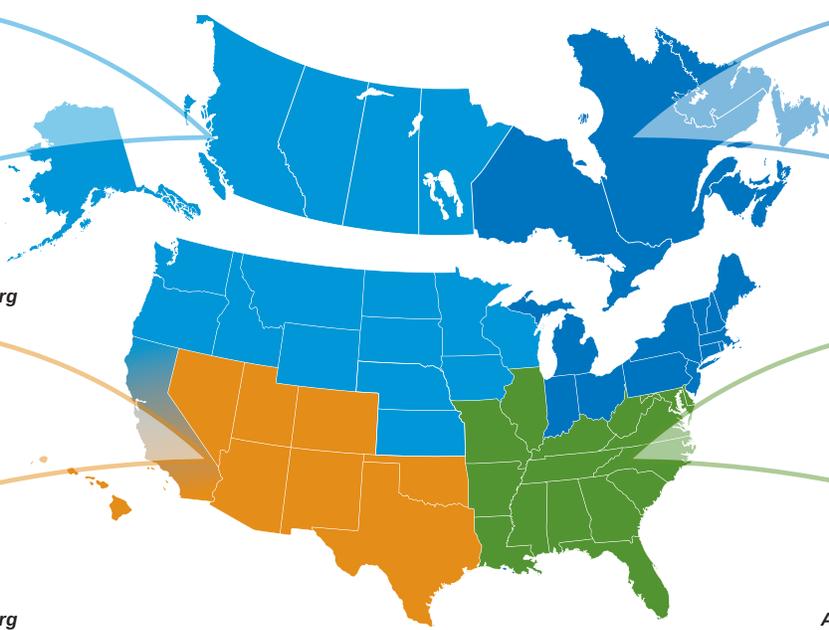
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# Animal Welfare APPROVED newsletter

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“The AWA audit was very smooth and efficient, and the follow-up communication was very clear and straightforward. We're very happy to be in the program.”

—Sharon Blick, Living Earth Farm,  
Eugene, OR (see page 11).

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Parker Farm, NC (Mike Starez)



AWA certification lets consumers know your animals were sustainably raised on pasture or range with the highest welfare standards—all at no charge for farmers!

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