

Farm News

Red flags in livestock industry

Grandin: Humane handling techniques needed

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SOUTH SIOUX CITY

— Temple Grandin has serious concerns about the health of today's dairy and beef cows.

Grandin, a best-selling author and professor at Colorado State University, holds a doctorate in animal science and designs livestock handling facilities that are used worldwide.

She spoke at the 100th annual meeting of the Lewis and Clark Veterinary Conference in South Sioux City Oct. 1-3. In an exclusive interview with Farm News, Grandin said the development of lameness in dairy cows after two lactations is a red flag — as are leg problems with confinement cattle and over-selection in bovine genetics.

"I'm very concerned about our dairy cows of today," said Temple Grandin. "Lameness in dairy herds has skyrocketed upwards by 30 percent. This isn't a normal situation, but a horrendous one, and dairymen aren't seeing it."

"The dairy industry needs to be paying attention. I don't understand how they do their financing," Grandin said. "It takes two years to grow a heifer, and then you only milk it for two years. I don't know how this can possibly be economically profitable."

The beef industry has management versus herd health problems, Grandin said.

She said she sees more leg problems in beef cattle going into confinement operations, due in part to producers having limited pastures available with more acres are under row crops.

"The cattle going to inside facilities," Grandin



—Farm News photo by Jolene Stevens

TEMPLE GRANDIN, right, autographs one of her books on livestock handling for Dr. Tia Joslin-Crone, of Sioux City, during the Interstate Veterinarians' 100th anniversary meeting Oct. 1 through Oct. 3 in South Sioux City.

said, "have the potential for what I consider horrendous leg issues - collapsed ankles or distorted toes - not unlike what has been seen in pigs since the 1980s."

Yet another of Grandin's concerns is what she called over-selection for cattle production traits.

"This is going to get producers in trouble," Grandin said, as new genomic tools are employed.

"It's OK to use these tools," she said, "but with caution. Beef producers had best be making sure of what they want in produc-

tion and that selection is for optimal production."

When asked about swine gestation crates, Grandin said, the industry "has been cleaning up a lot of things."

However, consumer reticence must relegate gestation crates from farrowing houses to the landfill, she said.

"Gestation crates have got to go," she said. "Two thirds of our consumers are not going to accept them."

"Our recent surveys have shown that this two-thirds of consumers will not accept pork (products)

from anything but group housing.

"The good news is that most people are fine with indoor pigs such as those coming from the Pig Adventure Farms in Indiana, fully factory farms, but farms without gestation crates and opening their doors to let consumers know how the pigs are being raised."

The Sioux City conference marked the centennial year for the Interstate Veterinary Association Inc., representing veterinarians from Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota.