

**Show Transcript  
Deconstructing Dinner  
Kootenay Co-op Radio CJLY  
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**Title: Livestock - Updates and Issues**

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Transcript: Laurie Chan**

*Jon Steinman:* And this is Deconstructing Dinner, produced at Kootenay Co-op Radio in Nelson, British Columbia. My name's Jon Steinman, your host for the next hour.

As this weekly program has evolved since its inception in January 2006, there has been an increasing frequency with which I have been finding myself referring to previous broadcasts and their content. And so it's been decided for today that for the next hour, instead of just referring *back* to previous broadcasts, we will instead *revisit* with previous guests who in most cases introduced issues that were ongoing and are now in much need of an update.

The title of today's broadcast is Livestock: Updates and Issues. We have aired a number of shows on the topic of animal welfare, environmental impacts of livestock production, the regulations surrounding the production of meat, egg and dairy products, and three previous broadcasts in particular will be focused on today. We will revisit the January 12<sup>th</sup> 2006 broadcast titled Eggs, the March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2006 broadcast titled Bacon and Marshmallows: The Story Behind Pork and rounding off the show we will look back on the May 4<sup>th</sup> 2006 broadcast titled Slaughterhouses on the Butcher Block.

Joining me once again on the program will be Bruce Passmore of the Vancouver Humane Society, Vicki Burns of the Winnipeg Humane Society, Elaine Hughes of the Stop the Hogs Coalition in Saskatchewan, Cathy Holtslander of the Beyond Factory Farming Coalition, also in Saskatchewan, Faye Street of the Kootenay Livestock Association in Cranbrook British Columbia and a new voice on the program, Don Davidson of the Vancouver-based British Columbia Food Processors Association.

**increase music and fade out**

The second broadcast to ever air on Deconstructing Dinner was titled Eggs. We learned of the deplorable living conditions for the hens producing 98% of all of Canada's eggs. That broadcast aired on January 12<sup>th</sup> 2006, and I encourage listeners to take a listen to our archived broadcast located on the Deconstructing Dinner website.

Launching that show was Bruce Passmore, the Farm Animal Welfare Project Coordinator for the Vancouver Humane Society. Bruce has been behind the society's Chicken Out

campaign, a nation-wide effort to eliminate the use of battery cages within Canada's egg industry. Egg-laying hens raised using these cage systems are often undisputably said to represent the cruelest example of all agricultural practices, with many of course arguing that such systems are in no way a form of agriculture.

I checked in once again with Bruce Passmore to find out what kind of progress their Chicken Out campaign is achieving, and while there is still much work to be done to eliminate battery cages in Canada, there has been some very promising progress. One project launched shortly prior to my first interview with Bruce, was an effort to see one of Canada's largest grocery retailers, Loblaws, begin labeling all cartons of eggs from caged hens with an indication that such practices were used. And Bruce comments on the progress of this effort.

*Bruce Passmore:* I'm working with large corporations like Loblaws. Progress is slow and incremental and what we have seen particularly in the last few months is a huge shift in the willingness on the part of Galen Weston who's taken over from John Lederer. So we're seeing a shift—we don't have a time line in place but we are seeing that the corporation is now a bit more supportive of the idea of labeling and increasing cage-free options within the store.

*Jon Steinman:* Yet another effort undertaken by the Chicken Out campaign was an ongoing petition to the federal government, demanding the same thing, that all eggs from battery caged hens be labeled as "eggs from caged hens."

*Bruce Passmore:* Last year we started a petition from the federal government asking them for clearer labeling on eggs. And what that coincided with is that the government is currently been going through a review of labeling in Canada. We're hoping that one of those avenues of that review will be to label eggs from caged hens as eggs from caged hens. We're still collecting signatures. The number is increasing. The government is still reviewing the process so we are in a bit of a limbo with that one. With government, things often do take quite a long time because there are a lot of interest groups that have to be represented or asked and consulted. So we hope that will come out soon and we hope, we're definitely still taking signatures if people are able to sent them in.

*Jon Steinman:* One very interesting issue raised during the original eggs broadcast in 2006 was the topic of free-range and free-run labeling falling under no regulated standard. And with the ever-changing labels appearing on cartons of eggs, Bruce Passmore indicates how important the federal petition is in addressing what is, essentially, a very confused Canadian public.

*Bruce Passmore:* This initiative is really important too because consumers are confused, no question, every time we do a poll or anybody else does a poll, it's really obvious that consumers are confused by the labeling. The same labels still exist. For example, Omega 3 eggs come from a company that's called Nature Egg. There's a picture of a hen in front of the sun and of course, Nature Egg, they're battery-caged hens—they'll never see the sun. So it's very, very confusing for consumers and they don't know what they're buying.

The labeling initiatives have worked in other places...we've seen California, we've seen in New Zealand, and various other places, and the European Union has also got labeling issues.

*Jon Steinman:* This confusion surrounding the purchase of eggs at Canadian grocery stores became a pressing concern for the Vancouver Humane Society, and in May 2006 they authored a report that looked into the availability of cage free eggs in the City of Vancouver, and Bruce Passmore indicates what their research uncovered.

*Bruce Passmore:* In May 2006, we authored a report looking at the availability of cage-free eggs in Vancouver, British Columbia. And what we found was that the majority of consumers are looking for cage-free alternatives. But when you go into the supermarkets, less than 10% of the shelf space is allocated for cage-free eggs. What we also found though was that so many times when we went into these stores that actually the shelf space allocated for cage-free was empty. This is perplexing for all of us and is most likely a result of producers unable to meet the demand in its current state but over time we think that will change and we're going to do a review of this report and we expect to see that the numbers should increase closer to something like 15 or 20 percent. It's a slow, incremental increase but consumers are making different choices now.

*Jon Steinman:* One method through which retailers and producers are beginning to get the message that consumers are not willing to support eggs from caged hens, is the increasing media coverage that this issue is beginning to receive. And I asked Bruce to comment on this exposure.

*Bruce Passmore:* There's been fantastic coverage on this egg issue all across North America; in fact, actually, globally. Eggs are a really hot topic and because so much is happening so quickly and I think this is occurring because I think this is a simple issue and anyone who looks at the images, anyone who reads the signs, any rational caring, compassionate person who looks at this information, it's such a clear and simple issue - don't buy eggs from caged hens. And I think it's become much more of a hot topic. We've got celebrities involved. We've got hundreds of businesses and universities and colleges across the country going cage-free. We've got celebrity chefs like Wolfgang Puck, dropping eggs from caged hens. Burger King even announced a slow phase-out that's starting to happen immediately. We're seeing huge, huge change and it's just such a simple issue and I think the media has finally decided that consumers are concerned about this and so they're taking it more seriously.

*Jon Steinman:* Yet another exciting announcement in response to this growing concern is the lead now being taken by municipal governments in proposing to ban all eggs from caged hens throughout their facilities.

*Bruce Passmore:* We're really excited. We've been working with the City of Richmond to create a policy that removes eggs from caged hens from all city-run facilities. Coming up soon the city council will be voting on this initiative. Right now we are certain that they will choose to basically put a proclamation out to all residents and businesses and

consumers of eggs. We're hoping that they will also accept the idea themselves and remove eggs from caged hens from all city-run facilities. It's such an important move because it sends such a strong message to all municipalities across the country that they can do the same—that again, it's a simple issue that all you have to do is choose cage-free, and suddenly you've made a world of difference to each of the hens.

This initiative is also moving through so many different sectors. So far there's been over a hundred universities and colleges in the U.S. and the University of Guelph here in Canada, Canada's premiere agricultural university, went cage-free as of March. And there's numerous other colleges and universities that are currently in the process of creating policies and should be having their own announcements soon, including the three largest universities in Canada: UBC, (the University of British Columbia), Concordia, McGill, and the University of Toronto. Not to mention some of the smaller places like Langara College here on the west coast and numerous others. So the changes are happening and they're happening in a big way, and they're happening quickly.

*Jon Steinman:* And this is Deconstructing Dinner where we are revisiting with Bruce Passmore of the Vancouver Humane Society. Bruce joined me in January of 2006 for our broadcast titled Eggs. I spoke with Bruce yet again to learn about the progress their Chicken Out campaign has been making since we last spoke. While their progress is promising, there is still much work to be done, and this was made evident following the recent surfacing of an undercover video containing footage of the inside of a barn owned by Canada's largest egg producer, the Southern Ontario-based Clark Egg Farms. Bruce Passmore comments on whether Clark Egg Farms has responded to the release of this disturbing video.

*Bruce Passmore:* When footage of the inside of farms surfaces, most companies choose not to respond, because they know that when they respond, it actually draws more attention to the issue. What was most disturbing and distressing I think for people with this footage from Clark Egg Farms in Ontario was that nothing had changed. Footage was exposed in October of 2005 and the conditions were absolutely horrendous; they were just deplorable. But yet again, or a year later, this is the largest poultry producer in Canada so this is a very significant company. And their conditions were almost identical. So nothing has changed, despite the fact that the industry keeps saying that the images from either one of these farms are not characteristic of egg farms in Canada, and that we're showing the worst-case scenario. This was random video footage and yet the conditions were almost identical.

*Jon Steinman:* The video that Bruce speaks of *is* available on the Chicken Out website and will be linked to from our own Deconstructing Dinner website as well, and I will say that the images are very graphic and difficult to watch. One approach to getting an idea of what the modern approach to raising egg-laying hens is like, is also to simply listen to some of the audio from this video. And so here is a one-minute clip of what it sounds like inside a Canadian egg factory raising hens in battery cages.

**sound from Clark Egg Farms**

*Jon Steinman:* And that was the audio from a recent undercover video that took a look inside a barn operated by Clark Egg Farms in Caledonia, Ontario. The video can be viewed on the Chicken Out website at [chickenout.ca](http://chickenout.ca), or you can access it through a link from the deconstructing dinner website at [cjly.net/deconstructingdinner](http://cjly.net/deconstructingdinner).

In closing out my conversation with Bruce Passmore of the Vancouver Humane Society, and in light of the recent passing of Mother's Day, Bruce shares his thoughts on why hens should become a symbol for mothers day.

*Bruce Passmore:* Hens are incredibly caring creatures, so they're the perfect symbol for Mother's Day. You might not know this, but actually hens talk to their eggs while they're incubating them and they actually pass on various different points of what would be considered cultural knowledge. Believe it or not, hens will pass on, basically, survival tips, they'll pass on vocalizations, and all sorts of things to newborn, or pre-born chicks before they're hatched. And once the eggs are hatched, the mother is incredibly protective and she'll teach the various different vocalizations including the difference between predators from air, predators from land, predators from water. She'll mimic injury on herself to draw a predator towards her rather than her chicks, so she's incredibly caring and protective of her young, which seems like the perfect symbol for Mother's Day.

*Jon Steinman:* And that was Bruce Passmore of the Vancouver Humane Society. More information on their Chicken Out campaign including their May 2006 report that explored the egg options available in Vancouver grocery stores will be linked to from the Deconstructing Dinner website listed under the title of today's show, and that title is Livestock - Updates and Issues. The original January 2006 broadcast when Bruce first spoke with me, will also be linked from there.

### **soundbite**

*Jon Steinman:* On today's broadcast of Deconstructing Dinner we are revisiting with previous guests who have joined me in the past to discuss issues around livestock production in Canada. Later on the broadcast we will revisit with the new meat inspection regulations in British Columbia that have been threatening the viability of local meat production, but first we will revisit the March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2006 broadcast titled Bacon and Marshmallows - The Story Behind Pork. Joining me on that broadcast was Vicki Burns, the Executive Director of the Winnipeg Humane Society, an organization that also launched a campaign called Quit Stalling. Vicki spoke about the cage systems that confine sows (or adult female swine) for most of their lives. Such systems were at the time we spoke being phased out all over Europe, yet remained in both Canada and the United States, despite ongoing public pressure to eliminate their use. But there has been some recent news both here in Canada and the United States, because in January of this year 2007, North America's largest pork producer Smithfield Farms announced they will phase out the use of stall systems. One week later, Canada's largest pork producer Maple Leaf Foods, announced they too would do the same and essentially force all producers in

North America to move towards group housing systems instead of confining the animals to individual stalls. John Youngman of The Canadian Coalition for Farm Animals suggests that this is the most significant advancement in farm animal welfare in Canadian history. Vicki Burns of the Winnipeg Humane Society joined me once again over the phone and shared her response to this announcement.

*Vicki Burns:* Well, I'm absolutely thrilled that they're doing it. It's about time, but still I was amazed that it actually happened. Sometimes you lose hope for these things, so I think it's very, very significant and it really signals to the rest of the Canadian hog industry that it's about time for them all to embrace this change. But it certainly is all very positive for the animal welfare.

*Jon Steinman:* While Maple Leaf Foods has announced that within ten years they will phase out their sow stall systems, the Canadian Pork Council and other Canadian producers are hesitant to support such a move. The council's Vice-President Florian Possberg who is also the CEO of Big Sky Farms, Saskatchewan's largest pork producer, has suggested that this move does not in any way address an animal welfare issue and is just a response to public pressure. Vicki Burns comments on such a position.

*Vicki Burns:* Well I think that Mr. Possberg is just kind of, digging his heels in and not wanting to acknowledge the very real animal welfare benefits there are to allowing the animals to have more space. I'll always say—I've said it for a long time and I'll continue to say that I cannot understand how any rational human being can defend the idea of keeping an animal so confined that it can't even turn around for the entire adult life of the animal. And that's the situation that has been existing for the adult female pigs. So I think that sometimes it's hard for people in the hog industry to actually acknowledge that perhaps there were some animal welfare problems. I think we shouldn't bother worrying too much about those comments because the move is happening, it's going to happen, and we're going to continue the pressure really to encourage retailers to start sooner rather than later bringing in pork that is labeled as coming from farms where they don't use gestation cells. I think that's the next move—to get this happening a lot faster than ten years. We need to push retailers to start identifying where the meat has come from.

*Jon Steinman:* With stall systems now planned to be phased out within the next ten years, the next question becomes, well does the alternative group housing systems proposed for the industry come with their own animal welfare concerns, and in wrapping up my conversation with Vicki Burns, she responds to this issue.

*Vicki Burns:* I think that because a lot of hog producers have gotten away from really the animal husbandry that's required when you have animals that are group-housed, there definitely are concerns. Producers have to understand animal behaviour. They have to learn how to move animals in and out of the group so that you're not putting any one animal in jeopardy of being picked on too much. I think one of the concerns is that we have to make sure that hog producers have enough information and enough training to understand the animal behaviour and to understand how they can minimize any fighting that may occur when you have animals group-housed.

But, really, when you think of it, for hundreds of years human beings have been raising animals for food, and most of those hundreds of years the animals were in groups—they weren't individually confined. So it certainly is possible to do it. One of the things that we've been trying to really encourage is that the animals should be in straw-based systems. They should be in barns or outside where they have actually have some natural material like straw, grass, or whatever, to root in, to create nests. I think that's what pigs instinctively want to do and if that's not provided then there is probably a greater likelihood that they'll fight. But even without that...for example, the Prairie Swine Centre in Saskatoon, has been group-housing sows for quite a few years now, and they aren't using straw, and they manage their groups quite well.

So it's about understanding pig behaviour. But I really hope that more and more we can move all of our animal agriculture toward systems that really respect what the animals need instinctively. And for pigs, it's to have straw or other material to spend a lot of time foraging for, to root in. If animals can satisfy what they instinctively want to do, then that goes a long way to providing good animal welfare.

*Jon Steinman:* And that was Vicki Burns, the Executive Director of Manitoba's Winnipeg Humane Society. Vicki first appeared on the program back on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2006, and should you like to learn more about the animal welfare concerns posed by the stall systems used throughout Canada's pork industry, that broadcast is archived on the Deconstructing Dinner website under the show titled, Bacon and Marshmallows: The Story Behind Our Pork.

### **soundbite**

*Jon Steinman:* And this is Deconstructing Dinner and today's show titled Livestock: Issues and Updates. During the second segment of that March 2006 broadcast, I was also joined by Elaine Hughes of Archerwill Saskatchewan. Elaine had been actively involved with the Stop the Hogs Coalition, a group of concerned residents who oppose the operation and construction of ILOs or Intensive Livestock Operations. On that broadcast Elaine shared many of the environmental and health issues that local residents are faced with when such large hog factories arrive in their communities, and I caught up with Elaine once again to find out what has happened in her area since we last spoke. Of a pressing concern was an application by the province's largest hog producer Big Sky Farms to build a 5000-sow hog operation in the Tisdale/Archerwill area. There was such significant public opposition to the project, that the company along with the help of the provincial government, made attempts to amend the discretionary use clause and to bypass the authority of rural municipality's or RMs, to have the final say on whether such a facility could be constructed. And Elaine Hughes comments on whether this move was successful.

*Elaine Hughes:* Essentially, the discretionary use clause didn't change, and developers find this...and I spoke to a fellow in the government this morning and he used the word *frustrating*. Developers find this *frustrating* that the amendment didn't get done. The

discretion use remains if the RM says no to a pig factory, the developer can appeal. If the council still says no then that's the end of it. Unless of course as in the case of Moosomin, Saskatchewan, which just recently went through a court case with Elite Twine. Elite took the RM to court but lost their appeal anyway. So we celebrate our victories when we get them. Our petition is still table at the RM council. We still have two of our supporters on council. Their term comes up for re-election this November again. They'll be ending their second term in November. We can only hope and pray and ask them to stay on. At least with them there we have a fair idea of what's going on.

*Jon Steinman:* The environmental impacts of factory hog production was an ongoing topic of discussion during the original March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2006 broadcast, and Elaine comments on the recent flooding in the northeastern part of the province, and how this may impact the area's watershed.

*Elaine Hughes:* North-eastern Saskatchewan again this year has undergone extensive flooding. The ground is saturated with rain and run-off from two and three years already. My nightmare of course is that the cesspools outside the pig factories are full and running over, perhaps I don't know, I haven't seen any. But there's nowhere—they cannot get on the fields to spread this horrible stuff around, even if the ground was able to absorb more of it. So it is left to a person's imagination what kind of scenario that could create downstream. We've got the Assiniboine River, the Assiniboine watershed, which picks up water all through this area, and in the area, Big Sky has about seven or eight projects with 5000 sows each, popping out pigs every four months. So you can take it from there.

*Jon Steinman:* As the plans by Big Sky Farms to open their 5000 hog factory have run into a road block, I asked Elaine Hughes if she sees the company giving up anytime soon. Her response introduces one issue that will be elaborated upon by my next guest, and that is the issue of labour.

*Elaine Hughes:* I don't think it will happen in my lifetime, but miracles do happen occasionally. The industry itself is shrinking for three reasons, across the prairies anyway. The shortage of labour, especially in Alberta because of the tar sands, they can't get workers. And they bring in immigrants from China or Philippines or wherever to work, and that's still ongoing, but the pressure's on in Alberta. Saskatchewan, they can't keep workers, there's a continual display of workers wanted in the newspapers. And the cost of feed in the US is so much lower so maybe they will implode on themselves, but as far as giving up, Mr. Possberg likes his position of being Saskatchewan's biggest hog producer, and Saskatchewan government is doing everything in their power to see that that continues.

The developments around us here, Maple Leaf Food is closing, Mitchell's is down the end of this month. The government has put up \$375,000 as an investment, along with Big Sky, and Fishing Lake First Nations, plus one, fourth mysterious investor in a new slaughter project for Saskatoon, to replace Mitchell's. We don't know if that's going ahead. So there's \$375,000 out of my pocket, plus another \$175,000 for the feasibility study for that project which may or may not go ahead, I don't know.



*Jon Steinman:* My next guest on the program is Cathy Holtslander of the Beyond Factory Farming Coalition, an organization that recently authored a guide whereby community groups can learn how to confront an intensive livestock operation. As such efforts to keep hog factories out of communities is ongoing in rural areas across the country, I asked Elaine if company's like Big Sky Farms are winning the battle.

*Elaine Hughes:* No they're not winning. We are on to them with the networking. This is a blessing. If there are any blessings with the internet, it's the communication, we can keep people informed, we can bring them in. They slowly, slowly are learning that they can go to be on Factory Farming Coalition now that the citizens' guide is out there. This is a wonderful thing, we have to make sure that people know about that and use it. We've been in the papers and in the news enough so that people aren't as naive as they once were, and somebody like Big Sky going into a community as they did here in our RM, and I don't think that could happen quite as smoothly as it did at one time because people are being educated. They're informing themselves, they understand about the terrible pollution and health problems potentially behind these things. A lot of people are very concerned about the treatment of the animals, and even more so we are encouraging and supporting local producers and getting the local food directory out and available to people, producers and consumers produce pigs outside without the antibiotics and hormones and encouraging the consumers to go to this website and find somebody in your neighbourhood that's producing animals in a humane and healthy way, and buy your meat from them. And this is slowly, slowly, it's like turning the Titanic around, but all these little pieces, on many fronts, are coming together, and the industry feels the heat.

*Jon Steinman:* And this is Deconstructing Dinner, where we are hearing clips from my conversation with Elaine Hughes of the Stop the Hogs Coalition. In closing out my conversation with Elaine, she touches on the difficulty that rural municipalities face when confronting these intensive livestock operations, and that is that much of the revenue generated by these operations is coming from overseas, and so long that those customers in these markets are unaware of the environmental, social and ethical impacts of their pork products, such ignorance presents a real barrier for someone like Elaine to successfully discourage the existence of such practices.

*Elaine Hughes:* The problem I have, and it's a constant frustration, I do not have enough contacts overseas. Because the Chinese and the Japanese people *love* Canadian pork. They see pork advertised with the mountains and Banff in the background. Well, give me a break! You want two extreme ends of the spectrum, that's one of them. And this is the trade mission that Mr. Wartman and his gang go to Japan. They just got back in January and February from another trade mission pushing this pork. People over there don't know how these animals are being raised. Their consciousness perhaps is not as keen as ours. They don't know the potential for traces of antibiotics and the hormones and how that could affect their health. They're going to hell in a hand-basket as far as pollution problems with the development that's out of control especially in China, so I mean a little more pig manure on that land, who has time to care?

*Jon Steinman:* And that was Elaine Hughes of the Stop the Hogs Coalition, a coalition of residents living with the Rural Municipalities of Barrier Valley and Ponass Lake Saskatchewan. Their website is [stopthehogs.com](http://stopthehogs.com). Elaine spoke to me over the phone from her home in Archerwill, and you can also listen to her speak more on this issue by checking out our March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2006 broadcast titled Bacon and Marshmallows: The Story Behind Pork. And that website is [cjly.net/deconstructingdinner](http://cjly.net/deconstructingdinner).

### **soundbite**

*Jon Steinman:* And you're tuned in to Deconstructing Dinner, a weekly one-hour radio program and podcast produced at Kootenay Co-op Radio in Nelson, British Columbia. My name is Jon Steinman. On today's broadcast titled Livestock: Issues and Updates, we are revisiting with previous guests who have shared their thoughts on issues surrounding meat, egg and dairy production here in Canada. With most Canadians now living in urban centres and with such populations increasing in size, the impact that our food choices have on the *rural* communities in the country is becoming more and more obscure and hidden from the public eye. But as Elaine Hughes has just introduced, such impacts on these communities can be considerable, and there is one group based in Saskatoon Saskatchewan that was created as a network for the many community groups who are opposed to the industrial production of livestock near their homes. That organization is the Beyond Factory Farming Coalition, and I recently spoke with Cathy Holtslander about their recently launched Citizen's Guide to Confronting a Factory Farm. Cathy first appeared on our program back in January 2006 just prior to our most recent federal election. The idea of creating such a guide can hopefully raise the awareness among Canadians that there's more to our meat than meets the eye.

*Cathy Holtslander:* Well, the Beyond Factory Farming Coalition was formed a number of years ago when a lot of communities were faced with a proposal for a factory farm going into their community. Big hog barns, 5000 sow hog operations, that's 5000 sows and all of their little ones being raised in big industrial closed barns with a liquid manure system, the manure being spread over the land in their area and all sorts of concerns about what kind of impact these new industrial livestock operations were going to have on their communities, on their water, on their quality of life and so on. And people began organizing, but people have different levels of experience with community organizing, and what we realized was needed was a how-to guide.

So we kind of took what successful groups were doing and put it all together in one package so that when communities faced with a proposal for an industrial livestock operator wanting to build in their community or something has already gone up but they're having problems with it. How do you deal with that? And one person by themselves feels rather powerless but if you can organize the group and work together, you can actually be effective in either stopping the barn from going ahead or getting some enforcement in place for one that is already there so that it's not causing as many problems. And in some cases, in one community in New Brunswick, they actually were able to get the barn to shut down and go away.

*Jon Steinman:* The intensive livestock operations or ILOs that threaten the environmental health of rural Canadian communities is of often the greatest worry, and Cathy Holtslander describes how the guide directs communities groups in assessing such impacts.

*Cathy Holtslander:* First of all, what we're doing is providing the kind of questions that you need to look up to investigate, finding out about flood zones, finding out about the water supply in the area and whether it's surface water. Is this barn going to be getting its water from surface water or from underground aquifers. What is the location of the manure lagoon? Is it going to be near an aquifer? Is there going to be the potential for it to leach into the ground and pollute the underground water? Is the land that the manure is going to be applied to, is it sloping towards any water bodies? I mean, generally, all land is drained so where is it drained to? So we have questions that will help people get the picture of what is going to happen when this, or if this barn goes into operation, what are the potential problem areas? And if you can actually check into those in advance and raise those questions and raise those issues, it can create concern and perhaps affect the proposal and whether it goes ahead or not.

*Jon Steinman:* Within any industry in Canada, the most convincing argument to justify the creation of a factory or any business, is the creation of jobs. This is the very perceived benefit that Intensive Livestock Operations promise to the communities for which they are proposed, but it is in most cases, a false and misleading promise.

*Cathy Holtslander:* Yes, this is very interesting, particularly on the prairies. One of the big selling points for Intensive Livestock Operations was hey, this is going to create jobs. People are concerned that their town is dying. The young people are moving away. And so the idea that this would create jobs is very, very attractive. What we found in the years since these barns have begun to be established, is that these barns can't keep their workers. There's a high rate of turnover. Working conditions require people to work for their full shift right in manure-laden air, ammonia. People develop breathing problems, there's respiratory problems, and people can get asthma and allergies and bronchitis.

The Intensive Livestock Operations are categorized under *farm* rules for labour, for the most part, and not industrial rules. So it's actually an industrial workplace because it is dealing with the animals and production and so on in a very industrial fashion, but the workers are largely exempted from the protection that industrial workers get. For example, Workers' Compensation is not required for the worker who can get hurt on the job, and with no recourse. The labour standards don't apply the same way they do to industrial work sites so hours of work, statutory holidays, the ability to refuse unsafe work, those sorts of things, hog barn workers don't have those protections.

*Jon Steinman:* And this is Deconstructing Dinner where we are listening to segments from my conversation with Cathy Holtslander of the Beyond Factory Farming Coalition. The coalition recently authored a guide titled a Citizen's Guide to Confronting a Factory Farm. As such operations promise jobs, the trend within the industry often sees such jobs disappear and replaced with foreign workers, and Cathy explains why this happens.

*Cathy Holtslander:* And another aspect of the whole labour issue is because local workers have cycled through these Intensive Livestock Operations and the local labour forces are *yeah, I don't want to work in a hog barn*. The companies are recruiting people from China, from the Philippines, from the Ukraine. They're bringing in people from other countries to work in these barns. They may well be on the Guest Worker program. The people can come to Canada and work. But they're only allowed in Canada as long as they're working for this particular employer and they don't have the full rights of citizens. So the use of migrant workers in the hog industry is an issue.

*Jon Steinman:* In closing out my conversation with Cathy Holtslander, I presented her with some of what was learned from my previous guest Elaine Hughes, whereby many of these companies wishing to build factory farms make attempts to bypass public opposition and remove the provincial and municipal barriers there to protect the interest of people. I asked Cathy if she thought such abilities reduced the effectiveness of such a guide designed for citizens.

*Cathy Holtslander:* It's not just the companies, it's the provincial governments as well. The provincial governments are responding to the effectiveness of local citizen group pressure by taking away jurisdiction from the municipalities to regulate Intensive Livestock Operations. The response of provincial governments has been to take jurisdiction away from municipalities. So it is definitely a concern, it's kind of like an unfortunate tribute to the effectiveness of local people's opposition. But people are still doing what they can. I think you do have to get organized at the local level and maybe what needs to be done beyond that is get organized at a more regional or provincial level and to put pressure on the provinces to change the laws so that local people do maintain some control over their quality of life in their local areas.

*Jon Steinman:* And that was Cathy Holtslander of the Beyond Factory Farming Coalition, based in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. You can learn more about the coalition on their website at [beyondfactoryfarming.org](http://beyondfactoryfarming.org), and there you will find their Citizen's Guide to Confronting a Factory Farm.

## **soundbite**

*Jon Steinman:* In the last segment of today's broadcast of Deconstructing Dinner titled Livestock: Updates and Issues, we will revisit yet another show that first aired in May 2006. The broadcast, titled Slaughterhouses on the Butcher Block spent the full hour speaking with farmers from across British Columbia who continue to face new meat inspection regulations that have already encouraged some small-scale slaughterhouses to close down, while others go through a very complicated process through which funding for the transition can be acquired. This story is an important one, not just for meat eaters, but food eaters all across the country, because these new BC slaughterhouse regulations provide a window into how the regulatory framework throughout the provinces and the country are not accommodating to small-scale local agriculture and processing. Such a

regulatory system is conducive to the industrial size operations that have already put much of Canada's small-scale food systems, out of business.

In September of 2004, the province of British Columbia announced changes to meat inspection regulations at slaughterhouses throughout the province. Currently, there are three types of slaughterhouse facilities in British Columbia – there are federally licensed facilities, provincially licensed facilities, and unlicensed facilities. And it is this latter category that in September of this year 2007, will be eliminated, requiring any facility wishing to process meat for sale to the public to become provincially or federally licensed. The reasoning behind such a move was largely in part due to concerns raised following incidents of meat infected with Mad Cow Disease, but as Michael McBane of the Canadian Health Coalition shared with us during our original broadcast on this topic, addressing such safety concerns at the point of slaughter is essentially managing the disease instead of eliminating it altogether. Former Health Canada scientist and whistleblower Shiv Chopra had long called for a complete ban on the feeding of ruminant animal byproducts to Canada's population of cattle, indicating that without a complete ban, mad cow disease will *always* be an issue. He was later fired from his job.

One of the farmers who has been placed in a position to conform to these new regulations was Faye Street, who also represents the Kootenay Livestock Association, based in Cranbrook. This area of the province is home to many ranchers who are not willing to put their animals on trucks to send off to feedlots in Alberta. They instead wish for a local industry serving local communities. The KLA has proposed a substantially sized facility in the region to adhere to these new regulations, but when I last spoke with Faye Street, they were faced with having to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars as government funding was not enough for such a proposal. I spoke with Faye over the phone yet again, and she provides an update on what is happening with their slaughterhouse proposal.

*Faye Street:* The key thing that we're really pleasantly surprised to find is that there are a lot of people out there today, there's a huge movement of consumers who are not interested in eating industrialized meat and who want to buy their products closer from gate to plate and like or enjoy being able to have a look at how their food is produced and how their animals are raised. The value-adding for the producer is crucial, right? So those are the things that we're looking at and that's the marketing plan we have. Now, what we've firmly decided is we're not just going to put up a basic backwoods chop-shop abattoir here. We'd like to put up a facility that's big enough and can handle the marketing and the whole ball of wax, in order to not only sustain the industry that's here Jon, but also to help build small-lot agriculture. So that's what we're trying to do.

We've also had discussions about putting a training kitchen onto our facility whereby young mothers, single gals who have got children, can come and maybe take advantage of some of the cuts from the abattoir like soup bones and stuff that a lot of your high-end customers don't care to have, and I'm sure would gladly donate to a lot of these young mothers so that they could learn how to make good home-made soup for their children, stews, other things. So we're looking at sort of a full meal deal here, not just an abattoir.

*Jon Steinman:* Faye further describes whether enough money has been raised.

*Faye Street:* No, it hasn't been raised, Jon. We've met with the government several times. We're at the moment...as a matter of fact we have a meeting tomorrow night with a gentleman that has been sent up by the Premier and by Minister Bell to try and work something out here with us. They understand that what we're trying to do is a full meal deal and I know Premier Campbell was very much in favour of it and certainly gave us his support. So we're trying to work through that because the \$100,000 that the government is offering, yeah, that's okay if all you're planning to do is put up a chop-shop so that you can process, or just kill a few animals a week. We're still trying to work our way through it.

We've made applications at the Columbia Basin Trust, which we firmly feel has an obligation to the ranching industry, and they certainly have the money, and they certainly funded a lot worse projects in their history, I can tell you that. This is a very good project for the Columbia Basin Trust to fund, not only for the producers in this valley, but for every single consumer in this valley who chooses to eat as close to gate to plate as possible. There's a huge movement of environmental people out there who understand how good it is for the environment to try and get their food as local as possible. So what better thing for the Columbia Basin Trust to step forward and fund. However, to this point, they've turned us down. But we are no closer to actually having the money in the bank.

*Jon Steinman:* With the September 1<sup>st</sup> deadline for the new meat inspection regulations fast-approaching, Faye comments on their current position.

*Faye Street:* September 1<sup>st</sup> is the deadline and we know there's no way we'll have an abattoir built by September 1 even if we start tomorrow. And so yes we're concerned about the timeline, and no I don't think there are going to be any more delays, but if we can get something going in the next couple of weeks and get started on it, then at least, you know, we won't be too far behind the deadline date, and at least we know we have something coming, so then people can plan around that.

*Jon Steinman:* Of the most pressing concern, once the deadline approaches there will be many farmers without a facility to process their product, and in closing out my conversation with Faye Street, she comments on what will happen to farmers in the southeastern corner of the province should no slaughter facilities exist.

*Faye Street:* It's always a serious concern. We lost seven or eight major herds out of this valley last year. No different than the Kamloops area. I mean, the industry is toppling over like dominoes and it's high time that people realized that and if we don't get more pocket money in the pockets of the producers, they're going to keep going over, because people are not going to keep doing this for nothing. There's a huge amount of capital investment and a huge amount of hard work to produce this good quality beef that our consumers eat. And if people are going to keep going in the hole and starving to death doing it, well there's just going to be more herds sold off. And that concerns me because,

are we going to end up like we did with our medical system years ago somebody should have figured out that the baby boomers were coming, right? That we were going to need more hospitals, more care facilities for older people...where was all that planning? Were these people asleep?

And we're doing the same thing with our food industry. Somebody's going to wake up some day and go, *holy cow, where did all our farmers go?* Well it's time to wake up and do something about that before it happens, instead of always allowing the wreck to happen and then scrambling like hell, and then every single taxpayer suffers, as people are with the medical system today because a couple of decades ago there was no planning done. And it seriously concerns me that that's what's going to happen to our food supply. There's not a lot of people that are interested in doing this for nothing anymore, and that's exactly what you get when you just raise these animals and put them on a truck and head them east.

*Jon Steinman:* And that was Faye Street of the Kootenay Livestock Association in Cranbrook British Columbia. Faye further added that they will know within the next couple of weeks whether the necessary funding will be made available to them, and if it is not, she suggests that the Kootenay Livestock Association will cease to exist. And you can hear more from Faye Street on our May 4<sup>th</sup> 2006 broadcast archived on the Deconstructing Dinner website.

### **soundbite**

*Jon Steinman:* My last guest on today's broadcast titled Livestock: Updates and Issues is a new voice on the program, and that is Don Davidson of the BC Food Processors Association based in Vancouver. Don is the Project Coordinator for their Meat Industry Enhancement Strategy, a project launched to act as a voice for farmers and processors within the province who are working towards meeting these new slaughterhouse regulations. The BCFPA has been put in charge of administering the funding that the province has laid out for upgrading existing facilities, and Don first spoke to me on the role of the organization in doing so.

*Don Davidson:* The government provided a total of \$5 million to the BCFPA, which consisted of three parts. \$3 million was for the individual plant assistance program, there's \$1 million for community solutions, which were designed to fill in gaps or try to provide some funding to areas that were clearly going to be short of capacity, and a million dollars to the BC Food Processors to provide resources to help put this into place. Resources like we have hired a number of people that are acting as our help-desk function, who are working with individual abattoir operators to help them through what's turned out to be a fairly complicated maze of government regulation.

*Jon Steinman:* The BCFPA has been working very diligently to ensure that the farmers and processors applying for the government funding to upgrade their facilities can do so in as stress-free of a manner as possible, but there have been ongoing roadblocks on both a provincial and federal level that have made the work very problematic.

*Don Davidson:* Yeah, you're right. The clock is ticking and September is coming very quickly. One of the challenges that we face and we have made an effort to help government agencies understand, that this has turned into a very complex procedure. It's not simply a licensing agency that an abattoir has to deal with. There's the health authorities, the Ministry of the Environment, federal SRM regulations. It's extremely complicated. It's not getting a license, it's just not as simple as presenting a plan to the Centre for Disease Control. We've had recent issues where there's been some question about getting certification that the water is potable. We've had the Ministry of the Environment has just published a draft Code of Practice information on waste handling. This is coming at virtually the eleventh hour. It is adding uncertainty for operators and we are very sympathetic with the kinds of challenges they're facing. And what we're trying to do is help various agencies involved, understand the complexity of what's going on here.

I think there's been a lot of honest effort from various agencies to try to get coordinated, but at the end of the day, there have been just so many things that keep adding uncertainty. Some of them are totally out of the control of the provincial government. For example, the federal SRM handling regulations, they're just coming into effect. That's impacting people that are picking up waste like West Coast because their costs are going up. It's added more cost and significantly more uncertainty to operators. We're not moving as fast as we would like to see it, and the reason we're not moving as fast as we would like to see it is because the complexity of the problem continues to change.

*Jon Steinman:* And in closing out this segment, Don Davidson of the BC Food Processors Association ends with these remarks.

*Don Davidson:* We know people are very concerned out there, and we are very concerned as well, and we are working very hard to simplify what's turned into a complex process. And we share the concern and frustration because we've been all over the province. We've got half a dozen people working in all parts of the province and we understand the issues quite clearly and we're trying to be a voice for these people with regulatory agencies.

*Jon Steinman:* And you can learn more about the BCFPA on their website at [bcfpa.ca](http://bcfpa.ca), and again you can hear more from British Columbian farmers by checking out our May 6<sup>th</sup> 2006 broadcast titled Slaughterhouses on the Butcher Block, and that show is archived on our website.

In closing out today's broadcast, I'll leave you with two clips courtesy of my guest Faye Street of the Kootenay Livestock Association.

*Faye Street:* The reason I stay in this business is for the satisfaction of knowing that I am raising and producing a really good quality product and that I can sell it farm gate to my consumer, and I can look in his eye and I see the satisfaction, I can hear his voice when he says, *God...Faye, that meat is so wonderful.* That's why I stay in this business, not so



that I can become a low-income prostitute to a high-profit pimp called the big food processors out there who take all the profit. Somebody's going to wake up some day and say *holy cow, where did all our farmers go?*

### **ending theme**

*Jon Steinman:* And that was this week's edition of Deconstructing Dinner, produced and recorded at Nelson, British Columbia's Kootenay Co-op Radio. I've been your host Jon Steinman. I thank my technical assistant John Ryan.

The theme music for Deconstructing Dinner is courtesy of Nelson-area resident Adham Shaikh.

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