



# DOING TOUGH THINGS WELL DEFINES A CHAMPION

Euthanasia and animal abuse questions are two of the toughest

In sports terms it is called playing through adversity. Tough situations often define champions, an athlete and a team's success.

In the beef industry how tough issues are handled can define you as a person, your farm and your industry team.

Two of the toughest are on-farm euthanasia and handling instances of neglect in the neighbourhood.

Ontario beef producer Dan Ferguson has seen many cases firsthand over several years as an educator with the Beef Farmers of Ontario. He has some simple advice from that experience.

## EUTHANASIA: BE HONEST

Putting an animal down is an emotional decision that not everybody is equipped to do, says Ferguson.

"They have worked at keeping that animal as healthy as they could and ensuring quality of life. When they make the decision that the best outcome for that animal is to end the suffering, it can be tricky for producers to get their head around that.

"It's like putting down your dog. You are connected with that animal. It doesn't mean you are weak or vulnerable or anything else to have to call in somebody to help."

## UNDERSTAND TRANSPARENCY

Farmers need to accept that euthanasia is going to happen on their farm. Today the industry is



**Most producers enjoy their cattle and provide excellent care, but a rare incident of neglect could cost the industry.**

so transparent producers are forced to handle the situation properly, says Ferguson.

They need to use the tools that have been developed for this to handle the situation properly.

"Dwelling on the fact that an animal worth something mere days ago, is now a cost makes no sense," he says. "Think what it will cost if you mismanage this situation and it is taken out of context by media."

## REPORTING ANIMAL NEGLECT

Suspected animal neglect or abuse is no easier to handle. It is never easy to know

exactly how best to handle it and there is no one best approach, says Ferguson.

"But ask yourself if you can recall cases of animal abuse where in hindsight there would have been less damage if it had been handled sooner?

"Most of us would answer yes to that," he says.

"We never want people ratting out neighbours or looking for opportunities to settle personal grudges," he says. "But as an industry we want to continually ensure producers understand what is acceptable in the countryside. Looking the other way is not acceptable.

"At the very least people should be prepared to quietly report suspected abuse to people who are trained to deal with the situation. Sometimes neighbours may not be the best people to take the lead. Something as simple as people from a nearby county can help as a first step."

Some provinces have a helpline to call as a first step. The discussion is confidential and respectful and does not result in a full-scale intervention unless or until it is necessary.

## HELP AVAILABLE

There is more help available to industry all the time for the tough issues in production, says Ferguson. It is simple to check what is available through provincial associations or Verified Beef Production co-ordinators. 🍁