



WAS COW VIDEO 'TERRORISM?'

Last week an undercover video spurred condemnation in Congress and massive product recalls when it revealed the abuse and misuse of sick cattle in a slaughterhouse. But are such undercover videos acts of illegal "terrorism?"

The video from the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) made national headlines when it showed that California dairy cows are not happy cows after all, despite the perky cheese commercials.

The video shows workers at a Chino, Calif., slaughterhouse dragging and rolling downed dairy cows with a forklift, spraying them in the face with a high pressure hose (cow "waterboarding," says the HSUS) and shocking them repeatedly, among other abuses, in an effort to get them to stand up in order to be slaughtered. These practices are illegal under federal law, as is slaughtering "downer" cows that can't walk and may have a higher risk of disease, according to the USDA.

The Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (AETA) was signed into law by President Bush in November 2006. It targets actions that damage "animal enterprises" with long prison sentences, including life in prison. Since these damages include economic damages, Eugene attorney Lauren Regan says the law could make whistleblower recordings, such as the one that exposed the Westland Meat Co. in California, illegal. Westland temporarily suspended operations after the video made headlines.

"One of the primary targets the pharmaceutical corporations were attempting to silence and destroy by purchasing votes for the AETA were undercover individuals or watchdogs who acquired access into labs and secured video footage of horrific, illegal animal testing and torture which they provided to the government agencies," Regan says. Regan is the executive director of the Eugene-based Civil Liberties Defense Center (CLDC).

The Humane Society video has caused outcry across the country. Westland Meat Co. slaughters cattle for Hallmark Meat Packing Co., which is a major supplier of meat for the National School Lunch Program. Congressman Peter DeFazio issued a statement not only deploring the abuses but also saying, "Frankly, I am stunned that beef from downed animals may have been fed to Oregon schoolchildren."

Although Eugene 4J officials say they did not get any of the beef, Springfield and twelve other Lane County school districts did get meat from Hallmark. There have been no reports of children sickened by the beef, but politicians and others have reacted not only to the abuse, but to the idea of feeding weak and "cullled" cattle to the nation's schoolchildren.

Regan says CLDC attorneys and others "would step up immediately to represent any videographer pro bono who documents animal torture and is charged with violating the AETA."

To see the video, which the Humane Society warns is "graphic," go to <http://video.hsus.org/> or the EW blog. — Camilla Mortensen

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



news Briefs

CITY SPLITS ON MANAGER SELECTION

A sharply divided Eugene City Council voted 5-3 Saturday night, Feb. 2, to select Jon Ruiz as the powerful city manager. The vote marks the first time in Eugene history where

the city's top official was chosen on such a divided vote.

Council conservatives refused to support another candidate who might have won unanimous support and instead voted as a block for Ruiz.



Jon Ruiz

Ruiz is a retired Army colonel and an assistant city manager of Fresno who was criticized in a *Fresno Bee* editorial for being too "cozy" with developers. At Fresno Ruiz also hired Peter Calthorpe, a progressive planning pioneer, to help control sprawl and increase sustainability.

Councilor Alan Zelenka provided the swing vote to back the conservatives' candidate. Progressive Councilors Betty Taylor, Bonny Bettman and Andrea Ortiz voted against hiring Ruiz. Zelenka and council conservatives Mike Clark, Jennifer Solomon, Chris Pryor and George Poling voted to hire Ruiz.

The council majority made the job offer contingent on Ruiz passing more formal background and reference checks and agreeing to a salary offer.

Councilors Bettman and Taylor said they favored Joe Lessard for the manager job. Lessard has worked as a consultant with an interest in progressive planning since leaving an assistant manager job with the city of Austin, Texas.

"I thought we had an outstanding candidate in Lessard, and I'm very disappointed that we didn't choose him," Councilor Taylor said.

EMERALD CITY ROLLER GIRLS

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PHOTOS AND ONLINE SLIDESHOW BY KURT JENSEN

