



THE CENTER FOR  
**FOOD INTEGRITY**

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### **Expert Panel Examines Undercover Video Report at Colorado Hog Farm**

KANSAS CITY, MO. (May 6, 2015) – The Center for Food Integrity’s (CFI) Animal Care Review Panel has examined video obtained from a Colorado hog farm according to the group Mercy For Animals. CFI created the Animal Care Review Panel to engage recognized animal care specialists to examine video and provide expert perspectives for food retailers, the pork industry and the media.

The expert panel was comprised of Dr. Temple Grandin, Colorado State University; Dr. Janeen Salak-Johnson, University of Illinois; and Dr. Tom Burkgren, executive director of the American Association of Swine Veterinarians.

#### **Animal Handling**

In the video, farm employees are seen using “sort boards” (hollow plastic panels used to guide the animals a desired direction) and “shakers” (plastic jugs filled with BBs or other items that create noise) to move hogs from a barn. In a number of scenes, the panels and shakers were used to strike the animals, presumably to get them to move.

“I would call that ‘rough handling’ of the pigs,” said Grandin. “The sorting panels should not be used to hit the animals. I would not call it abuse but it was rough handling.”

“They were definitely overly aggressive and improperly using animal handling devices, but I didn’t see anything that would lead me to believe the animals were in pain,” said Johnson.

“That’s not how those tools are supposed to be used,” said Burkgren. “It’s disappointing that it appears these workers have forgotten their training. That’s really a counterproductive way to move pigs.”

“They were also trying to move too many pigs at a time,” added Grandin. “The research is very clear, if you’re loading out market-sized hogs you should be moving them 4 or 5 animals at a time. It appeared they were trying to move them in groups of 9 or 10. That’s too big of a group and it is one of the causes of the rough handling.”

#### **Euthanasia**

In another segment of the video, a hog is seen being euthanized with a captive bolt gun – during which a pointed bolt is propelled by pressurized air or a blank cartridge and penetrates the animal’s skull.

“There are a wide variety of non-recoverable conditions in pigs where euthanasia is the humane option,” said Burkgren.

Dr. Grandin says it appears the procedure shown in the video was carried out properly.



“It’s normal for the animal to do a lot of kicking in this situation and I’m sure it looks terrible to people who are unfamiliar with it, but it’s completely normal,” said Grandin. “The animal has been rendered senseless and there is no pain or suffering.”

“This form of euthanasia is accepted by the American Veterinary Medical Association,” said Salak-Johnson. “The pig went down quickly with one shot, which is what you want to happen. From a worker safety perspective, I was surprised it was done in the pen with other pigs around.”

“I have an issue with a single person catching the pig, holding it and applying the captive bolt,” said Burkgren. “He should have had some help. The pig went down immediately and the movement seen is probably involuntary muscle contractions and relaxations. At some point, the employee needs to check to make sure the pig is insensible. We didn’t see that in the video, but we only saw a brief clip. So we don’t know if that took place.”

The video’s narration indicates the animal was euthanized simply because it was not growing fast enough.

“While it’s obvious the pig that was euthanized is smaller than the other pigs, we don’t know that it was euthanized because it wasn’t growing fast enough,” said Salak-Johnson. “I would speculate something else must have been wrong with that pig.”

### **Crowded Conditions**

The video narrator states, “Pigs are crowded in metal and concrete pens. They can barely move without pushing and climbing over other animals.”

“When you see pigs jumping on top of each other, there’s probably something going on nearby that we can’t see in the video – probably some human activity,” said Johnson. “Even when in open space, pigs will lay on each other. But, when you see pigs jumping on each other like that, it’s probably something that’s happening nearby that’s making the flightier pigs react that way.”

“It’s not uncommon to hold pigs temporarily in a pen like this before loading them into the truck,” said Burkgren. “From my experience, I would say those pigs were not necessarily living in those pens but were being held there temporarily during the process of moving them from the barn and into a truck. It’s difficult to judge given the lack of context in the video.”

### **Bar-Biting**

In the video, pigs are seen biting the metal bars of a pen. The narrator states, “Many experts consider this to be a sign of serious mental collapse.”

“There is no scientific evidence to support that comment,” said Johnson. “The animal might be manipulating its mouth on the bar because it’s feeding time. We can’t tell from this brief video.”



“‘Serious mental collapse’ is not really a scientific term,” said Burkgren. “Experts look at this not as just a sign that the pigs are in distress. Pigs are curious animals and explore their environment with their mouths. If a pig is in a pasture it will find a stick and chew on it. It’s real common for pigs to pick up stones and chew on them. Many experts refer to this as ‘oral/nasal/facial’ behavior and it is not necessarily indicative of poor psychological health. It’s a narrow-minded view to lump this behavior into some kind of psychological category.”

### **Other Observations**

Early in the video, a pig is seen walking with its head hanging at an awkward angle.

“It’s probably an external ear infection, but it’s hard to tell from the brief shot we see in the video,” said Burkgren. “That pig that needs to be diagnosed and treated appropriately.”

“The animal doesn’t look abused,” added Salak-Johnson. “You can’t tell a definitive cause and effect. It might be having some sort of fluid buildup in an ear that’s causing it to hold its head that way.”

In another scene, an animal is seen with what appears to be an abdominal hernia.

“It’s probably an umbilical hernia of some kind or a very large abscess,” said Burkgren. “It’s not appropriate to leave an animal like that. They should separate it from the rest of the animals and treat it if possible. If it can’t be treated to a full recovery it should be humanely euthanized or removed to an alternative market.”

The final two minutes of the video is devoted to video reviewed by the Animal Care Review Panel in December 2014. That report can be viewed [here](#).

Hidden camera investigations at livestock farms have heightened public attention on animal care issues. In an effort to foster a more balanced conversation and to provide credible feedback to promote continuous improvement in farm animal care, CFI created the Animal Care Review Panel.

The Panel operates independently. Its reviews, assessments, recommendations and reports will not be submitted to the pork industry for review or approval. CFI’s only role is to facilitate the review process and release the panel’s findings.

### **About the Experts**

#### **Dr. Temple Grandin Colorado State University**

Dr. Temple Grandin is one of the most noted experts in animal behavior and animal welfare. She is a bestselling author and consultant to the livestock industry. Dr. Grandin is a professor of animal science at Colorado State University and also designs livestock handling facilities. She has authored over 400 articles in both scientific journals and livestock periodicals on animal handling, welfare, and facility design.



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**Dr. Janeen Salak-Johnson**  
**University of Illinois**

Dr. Salak-Johnson is an Associate Professor in the Department of Animal Sciences at the University of Illinois. She has extensive research in stress and environmental physiology and animal well-being – specifically, sow housing, prenatal stress, mechanism of stress effects on immune status and behavior of pigs. Dr. Salak-Johnson has presented extensively and published on these contemporary issues and challenges in animal well-being. She received her PhD from Texas Tech University in 1994.

**Dr. Tom Burkgren**  
**American Association of Swine Veterinarians**

Dr. Tom Burkgren is the Executive Director of the American Association of Swine Veterinarians (AASV). He provides analysis and advocacy on issues related to the practice of swine medicine. Further, he develops public policy and manages the business affairs of the AASV. Dr. Burkgren received his DVM from Iowa State University in 1980 and his MBA from Drake University in 1989. His practice experience includes mixed animal practice as well as exclusive swine practice.

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