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### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

#### Healthy Conversation About Meat?

Jessica Pierce, PhD, Marc Bekoff, PhD, Hope Ferdowsian, MD, MPH, Barbara J. King, PhD, and L. Syd M. Johnson, PhD

We write in response to the journal's inclusion of Temple Grandin's "Answers to Patient, Student, and Clinician Questions About How Animals Are Slaughtered and Used for Food" in the April 2023 issue.

Grandin claims that, because cortisol levels in cattle are the same on a ranch and in a slaughterhouse, the animals are not stressed. This is not an evidence-based assertion. Cortisol levels are considered a rough and misleading measure of stress,<sup>1,2</sup> and "at a ranch" could refer to any number of possible environmental conditions.

Moreover, Grandin says that because cattle walking up a chute to be slaughtered behave in the same way as cattle walking up a chute to be vaccinated, animals in a slaughterhouse aren't aware they are going to die—which could be taken as ethical support for killing them. The scientific inference is mistaken, as is the moral logic. Her discussion of carbon dioxide stunning methods is equally unsettling, as if deceiving animals about what's happening to them (moving pigs with their group so that they feel "calm and excellent") makes that practice ethically acceptable. It is now widely acknowledged that human and animal behavior vary considerably in response to stress and trauma.<sup>3</sup> It is also widely acknowledged that animals have an interest in their own lives, seeking not merely the absence of pain and distress but also opportunities to flourish.<sup>4,5</sup>

Grandin claims that grazing cattle "can improve soil health and regenerate the land." In fact, grazing as currently practiced has negative impacts on the land.<sup>6,7</sup> It is curious that she doesn't talk about concentrated animal feeding operations, which are where nearly all our meat supply comes from,<sup>8</sup> and which are an environmental and public health disaster.<sup>8,9</sup>

The fact that Grandin has a conflict of interest is noted at the bottom of her article, and this conflict infuses all corners of her perspective—from the way she presents science to the way she presents ethics. The essay does a great disservice to patients, students, clinicians, and animals by offering a scientifically and ethically misleading apology for the meat industry. Publishing her essay in this forum is irresponsible from a clinical and public health point of view, as well as in light of the profound threat of climate change, and it carries serious negative implications for animal well-being.

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**Jessica Pierce, PhD** is a faculty affiliate at the Center for Bioethics and Humanities at the University of Colorado School of Medicine on the Anschutz Medical Campus in Aurora. Her work focuses on animals and environmental sustainability.

**Marc Bekoff, PhD** is professor emeritus of ecology and evolutionary biology at the University of Colorado Boulder. He has authored numerous books and also writes for *Psychology Today*.

**Hope Ferdowsian, MD, MPH** is a professor in the Department of Internal Medicine at the University of New Mexico School of Medicine in Albuquerque. She is also the cofounder and president of Phoenix Zones Initiative, a global nonprofit that uses medical and public health expertise to advance human, animal, and planetary rights.

**Barbara J. King, PhD** is emerita professor of biological anthropology at William & Mary and a freelance science writer. The author of 7 books, including *How Animals Grieve* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), she writes about animal cognition and emotion and challenges human exceptionalism.

**L. Syd M. Johnson, PhD** is a philosopher, bioethicist, and ethics consultant at State University of New York Upstate Medical University in Syracuse. She’s interested in brains

of every kind, in neuroscientific research, and in pushing bioethics to be less anthropocentric.

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