

Combating Animal Rights Extremists

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If you are processing meat, milk or eggs, the goal of these groups is to shut down your facility.

A recent survey, funded by Vegetarian Times, indicated that just over 3 percent of Americans say they follow a vegetarian-based diet. Approximately, 0.5 percent claim to be vegans, consuming no animal products at all.

Though this survey probably overstates the number of vegetarians and vegans in the nation, the Animal Agriculture Alliance (Alliance) has no concern about people choosing to be vegetarian. However, the Alliance is concerned about a movement of animal rights extremists, many of whom are vegans, who are willing to use drastic measures in their attempts to impose their dietary choices onto others.

Most notorious of these groups is Animal Liberation Front (ALF), the FBI's top domestic terrorism concern, along with Earth Liberation Front and Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty. All three groups operate in independent cells like other international terrorist groups. ALF cells have firebombed restaurants and meat processors, smashed computers, etched windows, glued locks, and much more.

Next are unabashed vegan animal-rights groups that do not participate in violence, but often do not denounce it. A well-known example is People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). On its website, PETA sells buttons with the message, "Animals are not ours to eat, wear or experiment on." The organization has proudly touted the phrase for over a decade. These groups would like to impose veganism upon the world, but their weapons of choice are most often the video camera, the internet and nude protestors.

Finally, there are groups that appear to be mainstream animal welfare organizations, but whose primary goal is to slowly wage a methodical multiple front attack on the food chain in order to drive meat from people's diets. Chief among these groups is Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). HSUS is often confused with American Humane Association. But under 6 percent of HSUS' \$121 million annual budget goes towards supporting animal shelters. The rest goes to various lobbying campaigns, fundraising and other expenses.

Rather than directly state their purpose, groups like HSUS tend to mask their objections to animal use in concerns about animal welfare, public health and the environment, using these issues to advance a vegan agenda. Like PETA, one of their favorite weapons is the video camera.

What food processors can do

If you are a processor of meat, milk or eggs, you need to understand that your plant

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is likely to be on a target list of one of these groups (one list of meat processing facilities can be viewed at www.finalnail.com). Given the variety of approaches and varying level of threats, understanding what actions your plant should take can seem overwhelming. Fortunately, it isn't.

First, make sure your own house is in order. So called "undercover video" where an activist group employee gains employment then films poor management is a technique that is rapidly rising in popularity. It currently is most popular at plants handling live animals, but it is likely to be just a matter of time before these groups target substandard practices that may exist in facilities that don't handle live animals, but instead process meat, milk and eggs. Keep in mind that their goal is to promote vegan and vegetarian lifestyles.

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