

December 10, 2004

Dear Rabbis Kohn and Edelstein:

I am writing to you on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), our 800,000 members and supporters, and the millions of Americans and others around the world who are horrified by the KAJ's continued defense of the shocking cruelty that we discovered at the AgriProcessors slaughterhouse in Iowa.

I was pleased to speak with Rabbi Edelstein last week, and we left the KAJ out of our call for criminal prosecution as a result of that conversation—in which he agreed that animals who are walking are clearly conscious and said that in 28 years as a shochet, he had never seen such a horrible procedure as ripping the tracheas and esophagi out of the throats of conscious animals.

After such a promising conversation, we were deeply disappointed that he is no longer able to work with us and that Rabbi Kohn is unwilling to return our phone calls. We're also stunned by Rabbi Kohn's comments to the media that there's nothing to worry about at the Iowa slaughterhouse and—despite the indisputable evidence to the contrary—that these animals are not conscious. You will be hard pressed to find a veterinarian who would try to defend such a statement. Our footage clearly shows animals walking around with their throats hanging open for up to three minutes after they should have been rendered insensible to pain, in direct violation of both kosher and federal laws.

In fact, our unedited videos indicate that all the animals had their esophagi and tracheas ripped out within a few seconds of shechitah (so they would all have been conscious at the time) and that fully one-fourth of them showed clear signs of consciousness after they had been dumped onto the floor. Many of the animals were shocked in the face with electric prods, and all of them were slaughtered in an atmosphere that Dr. Temple Grandin says would be terrifying for them. These conditions are standard at AgriProcessors.

Our goal with AgriProcessors and the KAJ—as has been the case with many of our largest campaigns—is to improve the dying conditions for these animals. We can't stop all animals from being slaughtered, but we can do our best to make sure that they are slaughtered in accordance with basic legal requirements and, in this case, with the statements of assurance from the KAJ and AgriProcessors' attorney that the slaughter is as humane as possible. We hope that you will again consider working with us in our efforts to ensure the humane and kosher slaughter of these animals.

Please know that we agree with the KAJ's stance that shechitah is not supposed to be worse than standard slaughter. PETA knows that shechitah is supposed to quickly render the animal insensible to pain. The chief rabbinate of Israel told *The Jerusalem Post* that it normally takes 30 seconds to a minute for the cow to lose consciousness if shechitah is done properly, and others have suggested 20 to 30 seconds. We are encouraged by the support of Rabbi Ezra Rafal, who spoke out against AgriProcessors after seeing our footage of cows bellowing and writhing in pain for up to three minutes after having their throats slit. With this in mind—and now that you have had ample time to watch this footage for yourselves—we respectfully ask that the KAJ do the following:

First, quite obviously, the KAJ must clean up AgriProcessors. It would be a good start to require that AgriProcessors stop ripping apart live animals. But the KAJ must, based on its



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own statements that shechitah is painless and causes instantaneous death, require that the plant get rid of its electric-shock prods, that the plant atmosphere be analyzed by Dr. Grandin to make it less stressful for the animals, and that animals be neither touched nor moved until after they are dead.

All AgriProcessors shochets should undergo training in creating a calm atmosphere for the cattle and recognizing the physiological signs of consciousness—blinking, bellowing, standing, rhythmic breathing, and attempting to right the head—to ensure that animals are respected and that no animals are touched or moved until they are unconscious. Animals who are not rendered quickly insensible by shechitah should be stunned via captive-bolt gun. All equipment must be inspected to ensure that it is not harming animals (e.g., conveyor belts should not trap chickens and break their legs).

As we know from speaking with Dr. Grandin, the Facoima pen terrifies the animals. We were heartened to learn from the first *New York Times* story that the Orthodox Union prefers the ASPCA pen for kosher slaughter. It should be required that the kindest methods of slaughter available be used—please, require the use of this ASPCA pen at AgriProcessors. Please require that AgriProcessors hire Dr. Grandin to help the plant improve its practices. Please also require that AgriProcessors install a video surveillance system that can be monitored by Dr. Grandin or that Dr. Grandin be hired to conduct periodic unannounced audits.

Next, in order for the statements of the KAJ to be taken seriously, it must institute explicit and publicly available guidelines for the humane treatment of animals in all slaughterhouses that it oversees. These guidelines should require the above improvements for all certified slaughterhouses, especially the commitment to train shochets in recognizing the physiological signs of consciousness—blinking, bellowing, standing, rhythmic breathing, and attempting to right the head—to ensure that animals' lives are respected and that no animals are touched or moved until they are unconscious.

Recognizing that there is a problem—as Rabbi Edelstein did—is preferable to denying it, of course. But these animals were treated in ways that may warrant felony cruelty-to-animals charges. This was in gross violation of both federal and kosher laws—as well as basic human decency—and it happened on the KAJ's watch. It is time for serious corrective action and the drafting of a specific policy to make sure that these horrors never happen again.

We are happy to work with the KAJ in any way that you think might be useful, but we're also happy to step aside—once you've committed to making the above changes—and allow you to work with Dr. Grandin, whom you know to be a “friend of shechitah,” and move forward. We look forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce Friedrich". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline.

Bruce G. Friedrich
Director of Vegan Campaigns