

IBP Statement on the allegations concerning its Pasco, Wash., plant Feb. 1, 2001

We are pleased the state's review of activities at our plant is completed and we are prepared to answer any questions the county attorney may have.

Like many other people, we are very upset over the hidden camera video. We do not, in any way, condone some of the livestock handling that was shown. It does not accurately represent the way we operate our plants. We take the issue of proper livestock handling very seriously. It is not only a moral and ethical obligation, it is also important from an employee safety and product quality standpoint.

We are also very concerned about how those who created the video are spreading false allegations about our company. It is our hope the public will see their efforts for what they really are: an appalling aberration created by a group of activists trying to raise money and promote their own agenda.

While we have never been allowed to see the hidden camera video in its entirety, we are very concerned about portions that were broadcast on TV. They show actions by employees that are clearly in violation of company policies and practices. However, contrary to claims by the Humane Farming Association (HFA) the video does not present any evidence of animals being "skinned" while still "conscious." The video, in addition to being carefully edited, also appears to have been taken with the knowledge and possible help of some employees working in that area of the plant, furthering our concerns that some of these events may have been staged.

Our efforts to identify the employees responsible for improper livestock treatment have been hampered, since employee faces are not shown on the video. We have even offered a reward for information leading to the workers responsible. If representatives of the HFA know the identity of these workers, but are not sharing this information with authorities, they are hampering the very enforcement efforts they claim to be pushing.

We have also never been allowed to see the employee affidavits the HFA reportedly collected, so it is difficult to determine their credibility.

As an additional assurance to customers and others that we are doing the right thing in this important area, IBP has instituted an enhanced livestock-handling program at all our fresh meat plants. Entitled "Handle With Care," it includes the following steps:

--Designation of a professional veterinarian and former USDA inspector to oversee IBP's animal welfare programs and practices. His duties include coordinating plant audits and monitoring the effectiveness of the company's employee training efforts.

--More intensive and extensive employee training on proper slaughter procedures.

--Training materials/programs for truck drivers who transport livestock to IBP plants.

--Installation of production monitoring cameras at all beef and pork slaughter plants to help management observe the slaughter process more closely.

--Posters/signs in livestock areas of the plant emphasizing animal welfare.

--Support of industry efforts designed to enhance proper handling and slaughter practices.

--Open invitations to food companies that do business with IBP to have their own livestock handling expert conduct independent humane slaughter audits of IBP plants.

IBP conducts numerous audits every year to make sure the livestock are being handled properly. This includes reviews by plant quality assurance staff, the plant manager and corporate quality assurance. Some customers also send representatives to company plants to specifically audit animal handling practices, and we openly welcome their visits.