

Take Steps Now To Secure Your Farm or Ranch

by: Ann Olsson, former AEA President & Joylene Reavis, N.E.W. chair, 2002 AEA Newsletter

Over the years there have been numerous accounts of animal rights activists who have taken the law into their own hands. These well intentioned, though misguided, people have caused great suffering, and sometimes death, to the animals they have "set free", as well as, anguish and financial loss to the farmers and ranchers that have been targeted.

Farmers and ranchers who raise milk cows, veal calves, beef, hogs, chickens, turkeys, rabbits, mink and lab rats, to name a few, have all had individual instances where animals have been turned loose or facilities destroyed.

It is extremely important for us to realize that this is a real threat. In 2001 mink were released in Wisconsin about 20 miles from an AEA member's farm, so this threat became very real to them. Most of the mink that were "set free" were killed by vehicles on the highway. A young girl was bitten by one that wandered into her backyard. Most kits that were left behind, died without their mothers to feed them.

The emu farm has added several Akbash and Maremma dogs to their 10 acres (which is totally enclosed by a 6 foot fence). These livestock guardian dogs are their security system, since their breeder pens are within 12 feet of the perimeter fence that runs along the road in front of their farm. Having the pens that are close to the road is great for people to stop and watch the birds but, it does raise concerns about the radical few who can cause such problems.

As the emu industry grows, it will become more visible. This could possibly make us a target of these activists who believe that no animal should be eaten or caged. We cannot, and should not, live our lives afraid of what these people might do but, we must be aware of the possibilities that are out there. They say being, "forewarned is forearmed!"

The following is presented to you not to scare you but, to empower you to protect your birds and facility. We should not be afraid, then again, we must be prepared for anything.

ANIMAL RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

The world is full of animal lovers. People receive many hours of enjoyment from extremely devoted pets. We name them, bathe them and coddle them. Some people go so far as to buy burial plots for when their beloved pets die and others purchase expensive airline tickets to maintain a constant union with their chosen pet when traveling. We have even seen them carried in papoose type contraptions, wearing booties and sweaters. Americans do receive immense gratification from animals and nurturing them is a very healthy and stimulating form of therapy.

In comparison to these pets are those in the agricultural area, animals that we have raised in captivity, for the purpose of need and survival. These needs include food, clothing, milk, medicine, income and many other numerous values. Intellect tells us that in order to have these essentials, we must care for the source, the animals, to the best of our ability. We can go back as far as written knowledge takes us and find that even God provided man with animals, to care for and nourish, for man's own use. This indicates that not only was our practice of 'raising animals for our own use' good, but, that there is an order given for man to have dominion over the earth along with the plants and animals.

Animals, when established for the purpose of the survival of man, were meant to be used and care for. Still there are those who believe we need to free all captive animals and become vegetarians. Comprehension of trodden fields that would be ruined by, let's say, a herd of cattle or the increased area needed to raise vegetables to compensate for the lack of milk or meat, would be phenomenal. Those few, misguided activists who free "imprisoned" animals don't realize that city people (a.k.a., pavement people) don't like manure dotting their well-groomed yards and they can't sleep with the bawling of weaned calves, let alone the odor that offends their delicate and self-proclaimed superior senses.

The riding of an ostrich in the movie "Swiss Family Robinson" that was then seen as sport and entertainment, would be looked upon as cruelty today, much the same way our rodeos are viewed by animal rights activists. While keeping our animals safely contained behind fencing, away from the harm of freeways, vehicles or predatory animals, is viewed by animal rights activists as cruel, it is for the animals own good. They see turning loose a barn of mink with baby kits, as freedom, where, in fact, the majority will die due to lack of a natural nest and not being pampered with food as they have grown accustomed. The mother finds herself unable to provide for herself while her babies die. Even a parrot will either scatter her eggs or kill her young to protect them from intruders. Again, an animal activist thinks that turning these animals loose is the answer. No value is given to protecting endangered species that would not survive without the intervention of man.

Eventually these people leave a paper trail and names begin to re-appear from one ranch to another. The following suggestions can help law enforcement officers find the people responsible for these criminal acts.

- * When you have visitors to your farm or ranch, be sure to have a guest sign-in book.
- * Install motion lights outside your barn areas.
- * Never show ALL of your operation. Some areas are not necessary for the public to see.
- * Discretely take down license plate numbers of all visitors, not just those who refuse to give their full name or act suspicious. Even friends and neighbors could be innocently pumped for information from someone else..... and, this too, creates a trail. According to the police...."ALL" license numbers need to be written down.
- * If someone refuses to give a name, do not allow admission to your property.
- * Immediately report the license number of anyone who refuses to give their full name or acts suspicious to your local law enforcement officers for future reference.
- * If your property is violated, turn your list of names in to the police.
- * All e-mails and letters of threat need to be kept and turned over to authorities.

We are each dealt a hand of cards that we play every day of life. Perpetrators eventually misplay the hand of cards they are dealt and the deal folds. Don't allow someone's extreme views to cause upset in your life and on your ranch.

Some very simple rules of care can be taken to protect your family and facilities.

- * Allow only scheduled tours.
- * Take down names.

- * Take down addresses.
- * Take down license plate numbers.
- * Light strategic areas.
- * Don't show it all.
- * Keep all correspondence of ill nature.

As we begin promoting National Emu Week across the nation, be sure to follow these simple rules.

You are running a business. Farming and raising animals is one of the oldest and most respected of businesses in the world. In our zest to promote don't lose sight of professionalism. People will respect you when you show them you are conscientious, caring and above all knowledgeable. We wish the best of ranching to all of you.
