

July 21, 2010

Distinguished Members of the Parliament of Catalonia,

We believe that bull-fighting cattle are little different from any other strains of domestic cattle (*Bos Taurus* L.) and, therefore, they are capable of experiencing pain and suffering. Pain, the sensation associated with actual or potential tissue damage that elicits an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience, is a warning that damage has occurred or may occur, and modifies physical and behavioral responses to alleviate the feeling (Mellor et al., 2000). It is an adaptive, biological signal that is essential for survival.

Bullfighting is a brutal event. During the contest, picadors and banderilleros pierce the bull's skin and muscle with lances and banderillas, sharp pointed flags, which are forced under the skin over the bulls' shoulders. These instruments cause bleeding and the bull reacts from the pain. Pain receptors are abundant in skin and muscle. The bullfight does not end until the bull becomes weakened from loss of blood and from pain.

The evidence that cattle are capable of experiencing pain and suffering is overwhelming (Benson, 2004). There are numerous studies showing that surgical interventions such as castration (Fell *et al.*, 1986; Robertson *et al.*, 1994; Obritzhauser *et al.*, 1998; Fisher *et al.*, 2001; Early and Crowe, 2002; Stafford and Mellor, 2005a; González et al., 2010), horn dis-budding (Taschke and Folsch, 1997; Stafford and Mellor 2005b; McMeekan *et al.*, 1998; Mellor and Stafford 1999; Graf and Senn, 1999; Grondahl-Nielsen *et al.*, 1999; Faulkner and Weary, 2000) and branding (Lay *et al.*, 1992a; Lay *et al.*, 1992b; Schwartzkopf *et al.*, 1997) are extremely painful. There is also good evidence that cattle are capable of suffering in other ways such as from fear (Price and Wallach, 1990; Boissy and LeNeindre, 1997; Grignard *et al.*, 2001).

Previous reports, published in the scientific literature, are very skeptical of the argument that bulls do not feel pain during a bullfight (e.g. Ödberg, 1992). Pain may be a necessary prerequisite to stimulate aggression in the bull (Ödberg, 1992). A bull must be tormented and provoked in order to give the matador a "good" fight, and even if stress were to inhibit pain during a bullfight, this raises the ethical question of the acceptability of substituting one form of suffering for another. It is not ethically acceptable to inflict serious tissue damage on an animal and argue that the pain experienced will be less severe because the animal has been tormented and enraged beforehand.

The claim that pain perception can be bred out of a line of animals is a very serious assertion, since a false claim would undoubtedly lead to substantial animal suffering. To produce an animal who was insensitive to pain, one would have to specifically measure pain sensitivity in the progeny of each mating, a procedure that is highly unlikely in breeding programs for fighting bulls. The hypothesis that pain sensation has been reduced deserves considerable experimental investigation, especially given that the vast

#### LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Andrew N. Rowan, PhD, Chair  
Washington, D.C.

Richard Bachman, DVM  
Vallejo, Calif.

Lauren Bartfield, DVM  
New Hill, N.C.

Gary Block, DVM, MS, DACVIM  
East Greenwich, R.I.

Holly Cheever, DVM  
Voorheesville, N.Y.

Kim Danoff, DVM  
Vienna, Va.

Nicholas Dodman, BVMS, MRCVS, DACVB  
Grafton, Mass.

Brad Evergreen, DVM  
Monroe, Wash.

Brenda Forsythe, MS, PhD, DVM, CAAB  
Guadalupe, Calif.

Madeline Graham, DVM  
Los Angeles, Calif.

Holly Hazard, JD  
Washington, D.C.

Barb Jones, DVM, MS  
Davis, Calif.

Paula A. Kislak, DVM  
Santa Barbara, Calif.

Patricia N. Olson, DVM, PhD  
Denver, Colo.

Larry Peetz, DVM  
Portland, Ore.

Gordon B. Stull, VMD  
Vincetown, N.J.

#### ASSOCIATE VETERINARIANS

Eric Davis, DVM  
Salinas, Calif.

Barbara Hodges, DVM, MBA  
Dixon, Calif.

Susan K. Krebsbach, DVM  
Oregon, Wis.

**LEADERSHIP COUNCIL**

Andrew N. Rowan, PhD, Chair  
Washington, D.C.

Richard Bachman, DVM  
Vallejo, Calif.

Lauren Bartfield, DVM  
New Hill, N.C.

Gary Block, DVM, MS, DACVIM  
East Greenwich, R.I.

Holly Cheever, DVM  
Voorheesville, N.Y.

Kim Danoff, DVM  
Vienna, Va.

Nicholas Dodman, BVMS, MRCVS, DACVB  
Grafton, Mass.

Brad Evergreen, DVM  
Monroe, Wash.

Brenda Forsythe, MS, PhD, DVM, CAAB  
Guadalupe, Calif.

Madeline Graham, DVM  
Los Angeles, Calif.

Holly Hazard, JD  
Washington, D.C.

Barb Jones, DVM, MS  
Davis, Calif.

Paula A. Kislak, DVM  
Santa Barbara, Calif.

Patricia N. Olson, DVM, PhD  
Denver, Colo.

Larry Peetz, DVM  
Portland, Ore.

Gordon B. Stull, VMD  
Vincetown, N.J.

**ASSOCIATE VETERINARIANS**

Eric Davis, DVM  
Salinas, Calif.

Barbara Hodges, DVM, MBA  
Dixon, Calif.

Susan B. Krebsbach, DVM  
Oregon, Wis.

majority of studies on pain in cattle would suggest otherwise. The work by Dr. Illera and others questioning pain during bullfights has yet to be published in a respected international journal, where it would undergo critical peer review, and given the lack of details in his papers thus far, scrutiny of his methodology is impossible. This body of work is not substantial enough to serve as a basis for any kind of parliamentary decision regarding bullfights.

We remain unconvinced and instead believe that fighting bulls like other bovines feel pain and suffer in the bull ring. Our opinion is based on the irrefutable science of anatomy, physiology and neurology governing pain receptors in the skin and muscle of the bovine. The average length of time for a bull to be killed in the bull ring is in excess of 20 minutes. Fear, aggression and rage cannot override these pain receptors for that length of time. The bull is subjected to ongoing acute pain caused by repeated lance and banderilla wounds during the bull fight. Therefore, the pain receptors are constantly stimulated.

Sincerely,



Dr. Gary Block DVM, MS, DACVIM, Past President Rhode Island Veterinary Medical Association



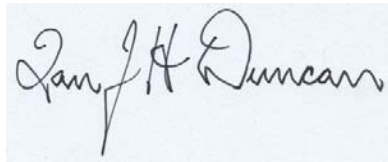
Dr. Holly Cheever, DVM, HSVMA Leadership Council member



Prof. Jean-François Courreau, DVM, Phd, Alfort Veterinary Medicine, Ecole Nationale Vétérinaire d'Alfort, France



Dr. Nicholas Dodman, DVM, Professor, Department of Clinical Sciences, Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine



Dr. Ian Duncan, Ph.D., Emeritus Chair in Animal Welfare, University of Guelph

**LEADERSHIP COUNCIL**

Andrew N. Rowan, PhD, Chair  
Washington, D.C.

Richard Bachman, DVM  
Vallejo, Calif.

Lauren Bartfield, DVM  
New Hill, N.C.

Gary Block, DVM, MS, DACVIM  
East Greenwich, R.I.

Holly Cheever, DVM  
Voorheesville, N.Y.

Kim Danoff, DVM  
Vienna, Va.

Nicholas Dodman, BVMS, MRCVS, DACVB  
Grafton, Mass.

Brad Evergreen, DVM  
Monroe, Wash.

Brenda Forsythe, MS, PhD, DVM, CAAB  
Guadalupe, Calif.

Madeline Graham, DVM  
Los Angeles, Calif.

Holly Hazard, JD  
Washington, D.C.

Barb Jones, DVM, MS  
Davis, Calif.

Paula A. Kislak, DVM  
Santa Barbara, Calif.

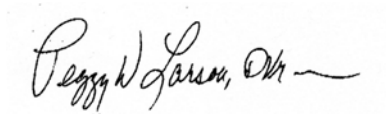
Patricia N. Olson, DVM, PhD  
Denver, Colo.

Larry Peetz, DVM  
Portland, Ore.

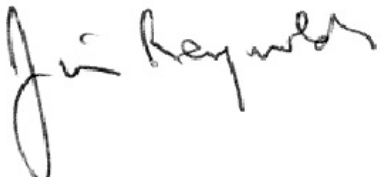
Gordon B. Stull, VMD  
Vincetown, N.J.



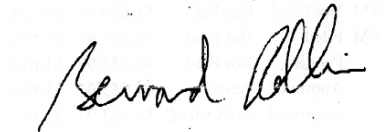
Dr. Andrew Knight BSc., BVMS, CertAW, MRCVS, Veterinary Fellow, Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics, UK



Dr. Peggy Larson, DVM, bovine practitioner



Dr. Jim Reynolds, DVM, MPVM, bovine practitioner



Dr. Bernard E. Rollin, Professor of Philosophy, Professor of Animal Sciences, Professor of Biomedical Sciences, University Bioethicist, Colorado State University



Dr. Sara Shields, Ph.D., animal behavior and welfare consultant, Humane Society International

**ASSOCIATE VETERINARIANS**

Eric Davis, DVM  
Salinas, Calif.

Barbara Hodges, DVM, MBA  
Dixon, Calif.

Susan B. Krebsbach, DVM  
Oregon, Wis.

cc: General Council of Veterinary Schools of Spain, Veterinary Councils of the Autonomous Communities, and the Councils of Provincial Veterinary Schools

**LEADERSHIP COUNCIL**

Andrew N. Rowan, PhD, Chair  
Washington, D.C.

Richard Bachman, DVM  
Vallejo, Calif.

Lauren Bartfield, DVM  
New Hill, N.C.

Gary Block, DVM, MS, DACVIM  
East Greenwich, R.I.

Holly Cheever, DVM  
Voorheesville, N.Y.

Kim Danoff, DVM  
Vienna, Va.

Nicholas Dodman, BVMS, MRCVS, DACVB  
Grafton, Mass.

Brad Evergreen, DVM  
Monroe, Wash.

Brenda Forsythe, MS, PhD, DVM, CAAB  
Guadalupe, Calif.

Madeline Graham, DVM  
Los Angeles, Calif.

Holly Hazard, JD  
Washington, D.C.

Barb Jones, DVM, MS  
Davis, Calif.

Paula A. Kislak, DVM  
Santa Barbara, Calif.

Patricia N. Olson, DVM, PhD  
Denver, Colo.

Larry Peetz, DVM  
Portland, Ore.

Gordon B. Stull, VMD  
Vincetown, N.J.

**ASSOCIATE VETERINARIANS**

Eric Davis, DVM  
Salinas, Calif.

Barbara Hodges, DVM, MBA  
Dixon, Calif.

Susan B. Krebsbach, DVM  
Oregon, Wis.

**REFERENCES**

- Benson, G.J., 2004. Pain in farm animals: Nature, recognition, and management. In: *The Well-Being of Farm Animals: Challenges and Solutions* (Eds G.J. Benson and B.E. Rollin). Blackwell Publishing, Ames, Iowa, pp. 61-84.
- Boissy, A. and LeNeindre, P. 1997. Behavioural, cardiac and cortisol responses to brief peer separation and reunion in cattle. *Physiology and Behaviour*, 61: 693.
- Early, B. and Crowe, M.A. 2002. Effects of ketoprofen alone or in combination with local anesthesia during castration of bull calves on plasma cortisol, immunological and inflammatory responses. *Journal of Animal Science*, 80: 1044.
- Faulkner, P.M. and Weary, D.M. 2000. Reducing pain after dehorning in dairy calves. *Journal of Dairy Science*, 83: 2037.
- Fell, L.R., Wells, R. and Shutt, D.A. 1986. Stress in calves castrated surgically or by the application of rubber rings. *Australian Veterinary Journal*, 63: 16.
- Fisher, A.D., Knight, T.W., Cosgrove, G.P., Death, A.F., Anderson, C.B., Duganzich, D.M. and Matthews, L.R. 2001. Effects of surgical or banding castration on stress responses and behaviour of bulls. *Australian Veterinary Journal*, 79: 279.
- Graf, B. and Senn, M. 1999. Behavioural and physiological responses of calves to dehorning by heat cauterization with or without local anaesthesia. *Applied Animal Behavior Science*, 62(2/3): 153.
- Grignard, L., Boivin, X., Boissy, A. and LeNeindre, P. 2001. Do beef cattle react consistently to different handling situations. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, 71: 263.
- Grondahl-Nielsen, C., Simonsen, H.B., Lund, J.D. and Hesselholt, M. 1999. Behavioural, endocrine and cardiac responses in young calves undergoing dehorning without and with use of sedation and analgesia. *Veterinary Journal*, 158(1): 14.
- González L.A., Schwartzkopf-Genswein, K.S., Caulkett, N.A., et al. 2010. Pain mitigation after band castration of beef calves and its effects on performance, behavior, *Escherichia coli*, and salivary cortisol. *Journal of Animal Science*, 88(2): 802.
- Lay, D.C., Friend, T.H., Randel, R.D., Bowers, C.L., Grissom, K.K. and Jenkins, O.C. 1992a. Behavioral and physiological effects of freeze or hot-iron branding on crossbred cattle. *Journal of Animal Science*, 70: 330.
- Lay, D.C., Friend, T.H., Bowers, C.L., Grissom, K.K. and Jenkins, O.C. 1992b. A comparative physiological and behavioral study of freeze and hot-iron branding using dairy cows. *Journal of Animal Science*, 70: 121.

**LEADERSHIP COUNCIL**

Andrew N. Rowan, PhD, Chair  
Washington, D.C.

Richard Bachman, DVM  
Vallejo, Calif.

Lauren Bartfield, DVM  
New Hill, N.C.

Gary Block, DVM, MS, DACVIM  
East Greenwich, R.I.

Holly Cheever, DVM  
Voorheesville, N.Y.

Kim Danoff, DVM  
Vienna, Va.

Nicholas Dodman, BVMS, MRCVS, DACVB  
Grafton, Mass.

Brad Evergreen, DVM  
Monroe, Wash.

Brenda Forsythe, MS, PhD, DVM, CAAB  
Guadalupe, Calif.

Madeline Graham, DVM  
Los Angeles, Calif.

Holly Hazard, JD  
Washington, D.C.

Barb Jones, DVM, MS  
Davis, Calif.

Paula A. Kislak, DVM  
Santa Barbara, Calif.

Patricia N. Olson, DVM, PhD  
Denver, Colo.

Larry Peetz, DVM  
Portland, Ore.

Gordon B. Stull, VMD  
Vincetown, N.J.

**ASSOCIATE VETERINARIANS**

Eric Davis, DVM  
Salinas, Calif.

Barbara Hodges, DVM, MBA  
Dixon, Calif.

Susan B. Krebsbach, DVM  
Oregon, Wis.

- McMeekan, C.M., Mellor, D.J., Stafford, K.J., Bruce, R.A., Ward, R.N. and Gregory, N.G., 1998. Effects of local anesthesia of 4 to 8 hours duration on the acute cortisol response to scoop dehorning in calves. *Australian Veterinary Journal*, 76: 281.
- Mellor, D. and Stafford, K. 1999. Assessing and minimizing the distress caused by painful husbandry procedures in ruminants. *In Practice*, 21(8): 436.
- Mellor, D.J., Cook, C.J., and Stafford, K.J. 2000. Quantifying some responses to pain as a stressor. In: *The Biology of Animal Stress* (Eds G.P. Moberg and J.A. Mench). CAB International, U.K., pp. 171-98).
- Obritzhauser, W., Deutz, A. and Kofer, J. 1998. Comparison of two castration methods in cattle: plasma cortisol levels, leukocyte count and behavioural changes. *Tierartzl Prax*, 26: 119.
- Ödberg, F.O. 1992. Bullfighting and animal welfare. *Animal Welfare*, 1(1): 3.
- Price, E.O. and Wallach, S.J.R. 1990. Physical isolation of hand reared Hereford bulls increases their aggressiveness towards humans. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, 27: 263.
- Robertson, I.S., Kent, J.E. and Molony, V. 1994. Effect of different methods of castration on behaviour and plasma cortisol in calves of three ages. *Research in Veterinary Science*, 56: 8.
- Schwartzkopf, K.S., Stookey, J.M. and Welford, R. 1997. Behavior of cattle during hot-iron and freeze branding and the effects on subsequent handling ease. *Journal of Animal Science*, 75: 2064.
- Stafford, K.J. and Mellor, D.J. 2005a. The welfare significance of the castration of cattle: a review. *New Zealand Veterinary Journal*, 53(5): 271.
- Stafford, K.J. and Mellor, D.J. 2005b. Dehorning and disbudding distress and its alleviation in calves. *The Veterinary Journal*, 169: 337.
- Taschke, A.C. and Folsch, D.W. 1997. Ethological, physiological and histological aspects of pain and stress in cattle when being dehorned. *Tierartzl Prax*, 25: 19.