



Protect Your Farm Against Animal Activists



Before an undercover activist strikes: be smart and do the right thing. Over the past two decades, livestock and poultry farms across the United States have been under siege by animal activist groups advancing their vegan agenda. These groups have resorted to getting undercover workers hired at local farms, where they then work for extended periods of time, engaging with on-farm workers and shooting undercover video, staging on-farm protests, or breaking into facilities to capture video which is released on social media and other channels.

These actions perpetuate the challenge we face each day – ensuring our consumer believes in how we farm, in how we produce food, and that we are firmly committed to responsible care of our animals. It doesn't matter who put the video out. What matters is the visual image our consumers remember after watching the video. By doing the right thing every day, we can manage and mitigate activist activity and maintain consumer trust in today's farming practices.

1. **Do the right thing.** Make sure your farm is exceeding all expectations for animal care, cleanliness and environmental responsibility.
2. **Watch your back and your neighbor's back.** Pay attention to strange vehicles and try and get license numbers off any suspicious vehicles. Encourage your managers and supervisors to be aware and alert. Engage local law enforcement if needed.
3. **Use the hiring process to spot the activists.** Do appropriate background checks, reference checks and ask for **actual** Social Security cards and other hiring documentation. Watch for common lies used by activists, including that they cannot provide a home address because they say they are "new to the area" or "staying with a friend or family member." Create an oversight process for new hires and monitor them for the possibility they are an undercover activist. If it doesn't feel right, pay attention to your concern and check it out. Seek counsel from an employment lawyer if appropriate. And if a potential hire turns out to be an activist that has tried to lie their way into employment with you, share that information with other farmers.

4. **Set codes of conduct for animal care.** If you don't have them, establish animal care standards and train your employees on those standards. Require **ANY** farm worker that handles animals to sign a written Code of Conduct. This is important both for animal care protocol and to verify all employees understand their shared obligation. Affirm that all employees understand what is expected of them in maintaining standards.
5. **Regularly train on proper animal care and reporting procedures.** Provide all new hires with training on proper handling and care of your animals. Let them know how to report any concerns. Repeat the training often, ensuring employees remember and understand your commitment to doing the right thing.
6. **Empower your farm workers.** Let them know of their importance as a team member in ensuring animal care and protecting the farm. Ask your workers how new people are performing. Make sure new employees and contract workers are always supervised, especially when in barns. And let them know you expect them to immediately report any strange behaviors, animal mistreatment, improper animal care or handling skills, or if they suspect any undercover activity.
7. **Stay active and in touch with your industry leadership.** There is so much happening in egg and poultry farming right now, you can't afford to NOT be engaged. Likewise, **share** with your peers any information you gather in your local community about any of these activities.
8. **Develop an emergency plan for all facilities.** This plan should expand beyond power outages and fires, to included issues related to activism. Train management and staff to maintain strict security procedures on your farms and be vigilant at all times. Provide staff with specific actions to follow should activists come on to the farm property. Consider adding cameras and ensure they are regularly monitored.
9. **Develop a relationship with your local law enforcement.** Let them know there have been issues on farms across the country and ask them to do a few extra "drive-bys." Learn who to contact if you suspect an incident or if there is activity on your farm. Share your emergency plan and ask law enforcement if other actions should be taken if activists attempt to enter your farm.