

The Ranch

One of my guilty pleasures is to watch “The Ranch” television program. The language is horrible, but I do like to watch for accuracy. I get amused that every fall they sell their cows. They seem to have problems with the terminology, bulls, cows, calves, cattle. All of their “cows” are halter broke and when sick they are led into stalls. Their cows resemble a Hereford market steer ready for market. At least they are trying to acknowledge that ranch work is not easy.

Farming and ranching is not easy, it is stressful and not always profitable. An added stress is the list of people who are trying to put us out of business with “fake news” and damaging videos of animals being mistreated.

Last year different activist groups posted 104 animal abuse videos. These videos generated a lot of buzz, but had little impact on consumer buying practices.

So, what have we learned from all of this? Social media can accelerate a story, it can be shared a thousand times over and reach a huge number of people. Activists can target certain audiences that they might feel are more vulnerable to their cause.

So what should you do regarding attacks or videos on social media? Don’t share the story, don’t help the activists by promoting it, even if it’s to people that are like-minded as you. Help “kill” the story instead. Be proactive, instead of talking about the bad actors tell stories of how you do things “right” on your farm or ranch. If you are asked directly about an animal abuse case, you can acknowledge your concern. Assure consumers that it will be investigated and correction steps will happen.

Avoid any knee jerk reactions, don’t get mad and don’t act out of retaliation. Your anger could fan the fire for some activists.

Clearly, this is just the tip of the iceberg. There are powerful forces out there that will stop at nothing to end animal agriculture and abolish, meat, milk, and eggs from the dinner table, and I think the first step we as producers need to take is share the original study as far and widely as we can.