

People Are Not Robots

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People are not robots. If called upon to visit with robots about a problem, a service manual is all that is needed because a quick adjustment could resolve the issue.

When I am asked to visit with people, I realize people come with emotions. Issues, such as animal identification, tend to trigger emotions that certainly add life to any discussion.

If one hits a finger with a hammer, a response will occur, despite any formal upbringing. As one intrudes on another person's space, similar kinds of responses may occur. Taking the bureaucratic position, the boxes should be checked, and not unlike a robot, a service adjustment should be able to modify any undesirable response.

The fact is that the animal identification discussion triggers feelings. A better understanding of the issue by all of those involved is needed. The process of relegating the care, management and ultimate disposal of living things to numbers is fundamentally offensive to people.

The care of people, perpetuated by many indefinable end points, likewise cannot be managed by checking boxes. You are good until box "201" is checked, but then you go.

When the care of living things around us and our care are combined, the topic becomes even more difficult. People are not robots nor are the living things entrusted to our care.

Modern-day agriculture seems to challenge the centuries-old processes of caring for resources entrusted to us. This is apparently justified with the excuse of feeding the world for the betterment of all humans. In addressing the seemingly simple question of tracking livestock, one finds out very quickly how deep the roots grow. These roots are the very essence of how we live our lives.

This essence involves being a good shepherd of entrusted resources. This was a message that was pronounced by much of the Christian world in its weekend readings recently. Written in the first century, the mes-

sages are heavily influenced by the agrarian communities of the time and remind us how deep these roots are for all of us. The agrarian communities have not changed much over time, at least until recent times. In fact, the only significant change occurred 8,000 to 10,000 years ago, when we quit hunting and focused our attention on herding livestock.

To paraphrase John from around A.D. 90, "The good cow hand lays down his life for the cows. The hired hand, who is not the cow hand and does not own the cows, sees the lion coming and leaves the cows and runs away – and the lion snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the cows." We are the good cow hands.

Present animal identification issues are bringing change in the livestock world. There are days when I believe a lot of progress has been made, but quick reality checks say differently. Events or processes that modify the fundamental principles in the way people and living things interact face tremendous resistance.

Is the well-being of all human beings significant reason to violate the centuries-old process of living and raising livestock? I will let each of you answer that.

As presentations and discussions continue on what direction we are going in the world of raising livestock, one certainly should be prepared to see some smoke. Usually where there is smoke, there is fire. In this case, the fire is fueled by emotion.

People are not robots. People care for those around them and life entrusted in their care and frankly, people get offended when it is implied that they do not.

May you find all your NAIS-approved ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at www.BeefTalk.com. For more information, contact the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association, 1133 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to www.CHAPS2000.com on the Internet. In correspondence about this column, refer to BT0299.

A Good Shepard of the Resources

