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Central Coast Cattlemen respond to shocking video of animal cruelty at Southern California slaughterhouse



Wednesday, February 20, 2008

Reported by: [Melissa Mecija](#)

SANTA YNEZ

Cattlemen speak out after a shocking video of animal cruelty at a Southern California meat company is released.



The USDA issued the largest recall in U.S. history: 143 million pounds of beef from the Westland-Hallmark Meat Company. This, after an undercover video showed animals being kicked, shocked, and shoved. The meat was used for the federal school lunch program and fast food chains.



At a meeting on the Central Coast, representatives from the California Cattlemen's Association say they are disgusted by the video, and add they are working to gain your trust back.

"You can only describe the video as entirely inappropriate. The treatment of animals that's displayed there is entirely abhorrent, and it's entirely correct that there should be an outcry," said Matt Byrne, Executive Vice President for the California Cattlemen's Association.



A picture worth a thousand words: a video affecting the entire industry.

"It's an example that is by no way indicative of what's happening around the entire country, but at the same time, any instance of this is one time to many," Byrne added.

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The recall was one of the agenda items at Wednesday's Cattlemen Association Meeting in Santa Ynez. Dozens of ranchers from Santa Barbara and Ventura counties sat down to listen about what's going to happen next.

"Our main thing is the consumer confidence," said Bruce Hafenfeld, President of the California Cattlemen's Association.

The recall affects meat all the way back from 2006 to now. The USDS ordered the recall not because of food safety, but because Westland-Hallmark did not follow protocols for handling cattle.

Regardless, Hafenfeld knows many customers are upset.

"Out of the bad will come the good. The good will be, we will tighten

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things up in the industry, and if we got problems, we need to face them on right up front," Hafenfeld said.

Now, more questions than answers, as ranchers here try to ensure the public the local industry is safe.

The head of the Humane Society is skeptical about changes to the business. He calls the cattle industry's response the "typical false assurances" that comes after problems are exposed.

Prosecutors are continuing to investigate the Southern California slaughterhouse for possible labor violations.



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