

Temple Grandin to speak at BVA Congress

By Alexia Yiannouli

TEMPLE Grandin has a very simple approach when it comes to identifying welfare problems on farms and fixing them – she views the farm through the animals' eyes.

The pioneering American animal welfare scientist has devoted her professional life of over 30 years towards developing engineering and management solutions designed to make life better for animals.

Almost half of all cattle-processing facilities in the USA and Canada have adopted her centre track restrainer (a conveyor belt machine that reduces stress at abattoirs by holding the animal in a comfortable and upright position) and curved loading chute (a mechanism for humanely moving cattle from one part of a facility to another, geared around their natural behaviour).

She attributes her success to her distinct ability to recall and process details entirely visually. When analysing meat processing systems, she was able to notice what others overlooked – a coat carelessly draped over the side of a chute, a hose pipe laid absentmindedly on the ground, interfering background noise.

Her sensory hypersensitivity, caused by her autism, allowed her to fully visualise what cows would be able to see and experience as they travelled through the system.

Through careful observation of American slaughter facilities, Grandin was able to gain an insight into what changes needed to be made to improve the cows' welfare – something she has continued to do for more than three decades.

She explained to *Vet Record*: 'Novelty can be both frightening and attractive. It's attractive if you let the animal approach it – it's scary if you just shove it in their face suddenly.'

Grandin will be delivering the Wooldridge Memorial Lecture at



Rosalie Winard

Temple Grandin believes that to identify welfare problems on a farm, it must be viewed through the animals' eyes

BVA Congress at this year's London Vet Show.

Her lecture 'Improving stockmanship and welfare' will present key learning from her lifetime's work, including how she has refined welfare audits by using critical control points to measure the most important aspects of animal welfare.

This, she says, has required a focus on details. She compares her approach to improving animal welfare with road safety campaigns. Here, issues such as speeding, texting while driving and drink driving are regarded as more important than not indicating, but they all have huge implications for road safety. In the same way, while lameness and the presence of swollen joints are critical control points in animal husbandry, so is the cleanliness of the farm.

'I like measuring things,' Grandin explained. 'I have my measurements for regular stunned slaughter. I count how many cattle out of 100 are made unconscious on the first shot, and I also measure the number of cows

vocalising, which is a really sensitive measure of bad things happening during the slaughter process.'

It all comes down to stockmanship, she said. On a recent visit to feed yards in Mexico, she noted that two farms located within metres of each other differed hugely in their welfare standards. One had cows that were well cared for, with workers showing good handling skills, while the other showed much lower standards of welfare.

One of the differences she noted was that the farm with better welfare brought only six cows at a time into the holding pen before slaughter, compared to the other farm, which brought much larger groups into the pens.

Temple said: 'It all comes back to the importance of management – I can't say that enough times.'

- Temple Grandin will be speaking at the Wooldridge Memorial Lecture at the London Vet Show on 14 November 2019. Register online or visit london.vetshow.com for more information.

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