

Animal Welfare as a Consumer “Must Have”

The United States branch of a global nonprofit dedicated to creating a better world for animals was seeking to understand consumer awareness of animal welfare issues in the production of dairy products, eggs, meat, and poultry., and the extent to which these issues affect their food purchase decisions, In commissioning this research, they were hopeful that research findings could be leveraged to encourage corporations and consumers to support humane farming practices.

An online “shoppers’ study” was conducted among members of a nationally representative panel of consumers using a questionnaire approved by our client. To qualify, respondents had to personally purchase and eat at least one of the following products: milk from dairy cows or goats; eggs in the shell; meat; chicken.

Key learnings from the research were most encouraging to our client:

- Animal welfare is an important topic for more than one third of American consumers, and that it was increasingly becoming a “must have” in the purchase decision.. More than one fourth have bought a different product when they learned the animals weren’t being well treated, and four in five would consider doing so.
- Consumers also largely believe that humanely-raised animals result in healthier, tastier, and more nutritious meat, eggs and dairy products and are willing to pay a premium price for these products. At the same time, overall spending patterns across the four categories indicate that they are very price-sensitive.
- Many report being aghast at stores about badly mistreated animals and fowl, and now avoid specific products for this reason. Chicken and eggs were the most frequent mentions in this area.

Based on these learnings, our client was armed with the hard numbers needed marketing communications and public relations, meetings with key food and restaurant industry business executives, and most importantly, in persuading large national supermarket chains to offer more options in terms of products from humanely-raised animals.

Perhaps the greatest testament to the success of this work is the transformation of the egg section of the supermarket from a mere decade ago. Whereas most supermarkets once offered few options to factory farmed eggs, they now offer a multitude of options ranging from bulk “value packs” to multiple cage free options and even eggs of different colors.

