

“Stealth Visits” Concern the Livestock Industry

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A California egg farm was the victim of “stealth visits” by an animal activist group. Industry groups warn growers to be vigilant about basic security and educating employees.



The Animal Agriculture Alliance issued a press release that states a radical animal rights group called Direct Action Everywhere entered a California egg farm after hours several times in September and early October. The radical group released a video of the footage they claim they obtained during “stealth visits” of the egg farm. The group’s leader said in an interview they did not have permission to enter the farm but they suspected animal cruelty.

The Animal Agriculture Alliance said this is alarming behavior that shows the extent these activists groups will go. Communications Director Hannah Thompson-Weeman said aside from the disregard to private property, these actions are a major risk to biosecurity on farm. “In this instance, this farm had to destroy the whole barn of chickens because these guys were in there,” Thompson-Weeman said. “They’re not worried about the health and welfare of animals. They want to get in the headlines and they want to get attention to their cause.”

The alliance reminds growers to check their basic security like door locks, no trespassing signage and motion sensing lights. They also suggest that producers train their employees on how to handle people who show up to the farm unannounced. Thompson-Weeman said although this case took place mostly at night, the alliance has also heard about people showing up to the farm and claiming to be a government employee or part of the same company.

Press release from the Animal Agriculture Alliance:

October 24, 2016 – The Animal Agriculture Alliance is extremely alarmed by the recent actions of Direct Action Everywhere, a radical animal rights group. Last week, Direct Action Everywhere released video footage that it claims was obtained during “stealth visits” to a California egg farm. Activists entered barns several times in late September and early October, mostly at night. Direct Action Everywhere’s founder, Wayne Hsiung, stated in a media interview that the group did not seek permission to enter the farm, but felt they had the right to enter the property because they suspected animal cruelty.

This complete disregard for private property as well as the safety of animals is deeply concerning, and Direct Action Everywhere cannot be allowed to continue to operate in this manner. The organization is clearly willing to take extreme, dangerous measures to further its mission of “trying to destroy animal agriculture” (as stated by Hsiung at the 2016 Animal Rights National Conference). The Alliance urges law enforcement and policymakers to take a strong stance against this illegal activity. Every state has animal cruelty laws in place, and any concerns about animal care should be reported to local law enforcement – not “investigated” by extremists with an obvious agenda.

In addition to blatantly violating the law, unauthorized visitors on farms present serious threats to the health and safety of livestock and poultry. “Biosecurity” refers to measures taken to reduce the chances of infectious diseases being introduced to farms by people, animals, equipment or vehicles. Activists breaking into and entering farms flies in the face of every principle of biosecurity and violates common USDA-recommended practices such as not allowing visitors near livestock or poultry unless absolutely necessary, making sure they have clean footwear and clothes and requiring visitors to shower-in and shower-out of barns.

One need to look no further than last year’s devastating outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza to understand

the importance of closely following biosecurity measures and avoiding any risks – such as unauthorized visitors with camera equipment that has likely been on other farms and not properly cleaned. Because of the potential for contamination due to the activists entering the barn, the farm targeted by Direct Action Everywhere’s video had to destroy all of the birds in it – a clear consequence of the group placing their true agenda, promoting animal rights, above ensuring the health, safety and even lives of the birds.

The Department of Homeland Security has recognized agriculture and food production as critical components of our infrastructure and national security. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that business owners continue to strengthen the security of their facilities and that law enforcement provide support to farmers and ranchers. The Alliance urges farmers and ranchers to remain vigilant and aware of threats posed by extremists who have no respect for the law or animal safety. We also ask law enforcement to provide any assistance possible to the agricultural community in preventing these unlawful “visits” from occurring.