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Stakeholders Summit: Influencing the Debate on Animal Welfare

ARLINGTON, VA –The Animal Agriculture Alliance (Alliance) announced plans to host its eighth industry-wide Stakeholders Summit. This day and a half conference focusing on animal welfare, ***“Politics, Activism and Religion: Influencing the Debate on Animal Welfare in America,”*** is scheduled for May 12-13, 2009 at the Hotel Monaco in Alexandria, Virginia.

This Summit will host a powerhouse line-up addressing important topics including improved security, proposed legislation, potential ballot initiatives, and much more from experts in their fields. The Summit’s goal is to build bridges across the food chain to develop solutions that can be implemented to address the challenging issues of animal welfare, the prudent use of antibiotics, environmental concerns and public health. The Summit will feature a multitude of prominent speakers from across the food chain—including individual farmers, legislative leaders, leading veterinarians, issue management specialists, government officials and other top professionals in their fields—relating the most important information in these areas today, in addition to highly interactive breakout sessions that will build important networks and relationships.

“Food production companies, food processors, restaurants and retailers—everyone in involved in the food chain, in the USA and internationally—needs to examine the issues and take advantage of the network building opportunities that the Stakeholders Summit provides,” says Kay Johnson Smith, Executive Vice President of the Alliance. “In the USA, animal welfare issues have been among the most significant challenges the animal food chain has faced this decade. Aggressive animal rights campaigns are being mounted globally and it is important that we address them strategically and in a unified manner.”

A key presentation of this year’s Summit will be a presentation by Dr. Wes Jamison, Associate Professor of Communication at Palm Beach Atlantic University and an ordained Southern Baptist Minister, who will unveil a study on how animal rights groups are using religion to advance their agenda. “Given Dr. Jamison’s previous extensive study of the animal rights movement and his understanding of their overall tactics, we eagerly anticipate the first disclosure of his findings at the Stakeholders Summit,” said Johnson Smith.

Another key presentation at the meeting will be delivered by Dr. Nancy Halpern, Director of the Division of Animal Health for the New Jersey State Department of Agriculture. New Jersey is the only state in the USA that has adopted farm animal welfare standards. Dr. Halpern will compare the positive and negative aspects of regulating farm animal welfare as opposed to legislating it.

The breakout sessions of this year's Summit will focus on reaching audiences effectively. Barbara Jackson, an award-winning independent rancher and member of the American National Cattlemen's Association, will lead a session on reaching students on college campuses and in secondary schools. Patty Enecking of the American Chemistry Council, a nationally-known communications expert, has been invited to lead a session focusing on delivering positive messages to the public. Krissa Thom, Members Services Manager at the Animal Agriculture Alliance, will lead a third breakout session providing a step-by-step lesson on establishing a Facebook presence—one of the most used and effective social networking sites on the web today.

"The Summit's breakout sessions have been particularly popular due to their participatory format," explains Johnson Smith. "The goal of these sessions is to continue expanding the educational and networking components of the meeting."

Previous Summits have shown the benefit of cross-industry communication in debunking many of the myths and misperceptions presented in many campaigns of the rapidly growing activist industry. "This breakout format is designed to help further expand the cross-industry communication that has been a hallmark of this meeting," explains Johnson Smith. "We are particularly pleased to have received rave reviews from participants at last year's Summit."

The Summit is targeted at mid- and senior-management of all companies involved in the food chain—including restaurants, grocery stores, farms, ranches, feedlots, processors of meat, milk and eggs and all others who are part of the global food chain, as well as government and legislative decision makers. "Our goal is to provide attendees with the insight and information to successfully meet future challenges," says Johnson Smith. Program and registration details are available at www.animalagalliance.org.

For registration by April 25, 2009, the cost for attendance is \$325 per person for Alliance members. After April 25, the cost is \$375. For non-members, the registration fee is \$375 prior to April 25, 2009, and then \$425. Again in 2009, the Alliance will offer a special rate of \$275 per person or \$325 after April 25 for those in government or academia. Registration includes one

reception, continental breakfast each day, lunch on Tuesday and a copy of the Summit Proceedings.

Hotel accommodations should be made directly with the Hotel Monaco-Alexandria for the special rate of \$219 single/double. Reservations must be made directly with the hotel by April 19, 2009 under the Animal Agriculture Alliance Summit block to receive this special rate by calling 1-800-368-5047 or book online now at www.monaco-alexandria.com, booking code AIL.

Current Summit registration and hotel information are available on the Alliance website. Registration for the Summit can also be made securely via the Alliance website at www.animalagalliance.org, or the registration form can be faxed to (703) 524-1921.

All registrations must be submitted in advance of the conference. For additional information regarding the Summit, contact the Animal Agriculture Alliance at (703) 562-5160 or summit@animalagalliance.org.

Event sponsors currently include Vance Publishing's Food 360° Group, Murphy-Brown, Cargill, U.S. Poultry and Egg Association, Intervet, North American Nutrition Companies, Tyson Foods, Bayer Animal Health, PCS Sales, United Soybean Board, American Feed Industry Association, Penton Media, Brakke Consulting, *Poultry Times*, National Pork Board, United Egg Producers and Watt Agribusiness Media.

The Animal Agriculture Alliance, a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, is a broad-based coalition of individual producers, producer organizations, suppliers, packer-processors, private industry and retailers. The Alliance's mission is to communicate the important role of animal agriculture to our nation's economy, productivity, vitality, security and that animal well-being is central to producing safe, high-quality, affordable food and other products essential to our daily lives.

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