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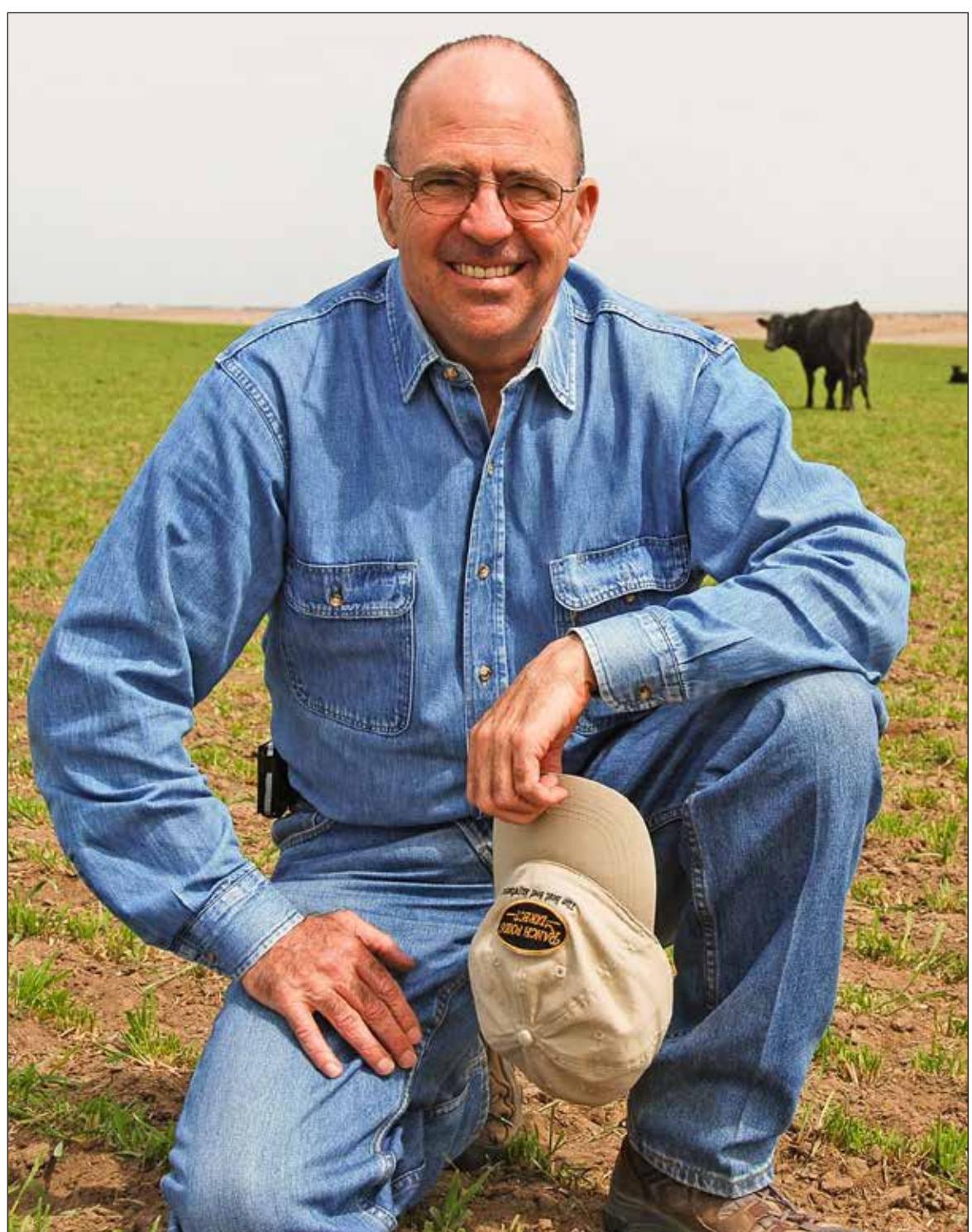
Callicrate Banders: improving agriculture's future through improved animal husbandry

Like many in agriculture, Mike Callicrate dreams of a better future for farmers, ranchers and rural communities. He's worried about consumer distrust of management decisions; angry that big food corporations are boxing farmers into impossible corners; unhappy that the rural way of life is becoming eroded and unsustainable. Unlike most of us, however, he's doing something about it.

President and founder of No-Bull Enterprises, Callicrate invented and now markets a variety of ultra-humane, high quality, easy-to-use, bloodless castrating tools for use on newborn to full-grown livestock. His tool doesn't just improve castration, it's a step towards fundamentally changing agriculture as a whole.

"I don't want to talk about how great our product is. I want to talk about what drives our company. Our priority is improving the lives of farmers, ranchers, and animals; restoring rural communities; re-establishing a personal connection with consumers. You have to go back to the '70s to find all of that," he says.

"Our livestock producers are under serious financial pressure because they don't have access to fair markets. They're being squeezed by big corporate power. Considering their investment, labour and risk, farmers and ranchers deserve much more of the food dollar than they are currently getting. I believe there are many things we can do to make the family farm more profitable. First: restore fair,



Mike Callicrate, president & founder of No-Bull Enterprise.

open and competitive markets. The reason I get out of bed every morning is to work towards increasing income at the farm and ranch gate."

How does a new form of castration rejuvenate agriculture, you might ask?

The answer to that has its origins in a farmyard chat Callicrate had with renowned scientist and animal welfare expert, Temple Grandin. As they stood at a fence line watching a group of cattle, the conversation turned to the spectrum of pain experienced by livestock. Callicrate asked Grandin which routine animal management technique was,

in her opinion, the very worst and most painful to livestock.

"She didn't even have to think about it. She immediately said those green elastrator rings have to be near the top. Because they don't get tight enough, they don't kill the pain," Callicrate says. "If you just put the ring on and then walk away, you won't see when that animal doesn't nurse; that it's stressed, compromising its immune system; that its mama is stressed, too, and her udder is full. When Temple and I had that conversation, the seed for inventing the Callicrate WEE Bander for small calves, lambs and goats

was planted. The Callicrate SMART Bander was already a popular choice for the larger animals."

Understanding exactly why elastrator rings cause such pain made the solution obvious to Callicrate: humane banding requires proper tension, enough to cut off 100 percent of the blood flow and impact the nerve to kill the pain, a process known as "compression analgesic".

Fast forward to today and No-Bull Enterprises now offers a line of easy-to-operate Callicrate castrating tools that achieve proper tension with consistent results, including the



Easy and safe application is better for the person and the animal than traditional castration methods.

next generation Callicrate PRO Bander for delayed castration. Because the tensioning system immediately shuts off the blood supply to the scrotum, this form of castration is low stress and relatively pain-free for the animal, eliminating the need for pain management medication, reducing complications and improving weight gain.

"They're not going to experience pain in the chute. After the band is applied, they usually lay down as they lose feeling in the scrotum. Within 20 minutes they're back up and heading to the feed bunk. You don't have to worry about bleeders; you don't have to worry about days off feed; you don't

groups and are conditioned to immediately think that those groups want to end animal agriculture. That is absolutely false. They just want better raised animals," he says.

"They don't want hyper-industrially produced meat. They care about how animals and the environment are being treated. They don't want overuse of drugs. If we can facilitate more people producing their livestock in a more humane, more respectful, less medication-dependent manner, we will improve demand for our product."

Currently, less than one percent of the population is involved in pro-

A producer's choice to switch from elastrator rings or castration via cutting to a Callicrate Bander isn't just better for the animal, it's better for the farmer and for agriculture, too.

have to use any pain meds."

A producer's choice to switch from elastrator rings or castration via cutting to a Callicrate Bander isn't just better for the animal, it's better for the farmer and for agriculture, too.

"A lot of people just don't realize that if we can handle animals in a way that is more comfortable for them and less stressful, it will improve the bottom line. That needs to be our priority: getting more dollars into producers' pockets."

Using the Callicrate system, bull calves can be left intact until they reach sexual maturity, allowing their own testosterone to promote improved weight gain. Late-castrated calves average around 15 percent improvement in the rate of gain and feed conversion over early-castrated calves: an even better benefit than can be achieved through performance-enhancing drugs. The castration event itself is significantly lower stress to the animal than any other castrating option, resulting in no loss of condition.

But there's more, says Callicrate. As consumers have increasingly easy access to information at the click of a button, animal welfare is becoming more than a political stance: it is becoming a marketing cornerstone.

"Customers are a lot more focused on the humane treatment of animals. That movement is being spearheaded not by animal rights groups but by animal welfare groups like the Human Society of the US, 95 percent of whose members are meat eaters. A lot of ranchers hear about animal welfare

ducing our food. Family farms will only survive over the longer term if the general public sees value in family farming.

Callicrate has a degree in Animal Science from Colorado State University, but he cautions that one should not confuse animal science with animal husbandry.

"It wasn't animal husbandry that put a hen in a battery cage or a sow in a gestation crate, or an elastrator ring on a baby calf. That was done by animal science, which puts profits over people and animal welfare, and profits over the environment and our rural communities. When I graduated it was all about treating agriculture as a business rather than a vocation or way of life. But views are changing, both in education and in consumers' minds. As family farmers and ranchers, we're not alone in believing people in ag should care about the animals, their community and the environment."

"The fast paced, get-big-or-get-out mentality that we've been conditioned to believe over the last few generations is wrong. They say the fastest way to move cattle is slow. The best way to save family farms is to provide a living income. An agriculture and food model based on animal husbandry is more productive and sustainable than a model based strictly on animal science. A good first step is to move agriculture towards more humane approaches, which will ultimately put more people on farms, and with a return to fair and competitive markets, farms will be more profitable." ■

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