

# CATTLE BUYERS WEEKLY

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## Cargill Beefs Up Animal Surveillance

CARGILL, Inc. becomes the first major U.S. beef processor to implement round-the-clock third party video auditing of cattle handling at its plants. Cargill makes the move to further enhance its animal welfare protection systems, it says. Cargill's eight U.S. and two Canadian beef harvesting plants will all have the program in place by the end of 2009. The auditing service was developed and will be managed by Arrowsight in collaboration with Dr. Temple Grandin, one of the industry's leading animal welfare experts.

The program involves having eight to 14 video cameras at plants, positioned at strategic spots from the unloading area to the knock box in the plant (where cattle are stunned). Cargill already had been using multiple cameras, which were monitored internally. Arrowsight auditors will now do this on a 24-hour, seven-day per week basis. The program is designed to help plant operators teach and monitor performance in animal handling, says Cargill.

Cargill has adopted some of the most rigorous animal care guidelines in the industry, says Cargill Beef president John Keating. This additional investment gives it the objective input it needs to effectively train its people and improve its processes. Cargill has also created a humane animal-handling training and certification program for employees, he says. Its commitment and actions demonstrate Cargill's drive to be the industry leader in evaluating, developing and continuously improving animal welfare protection programs. Cargill believes that through its efforts it can raise the performance bar for the industry, he says. Cargill declined to say how much the auditing service will cost.

Grandin says Cargill has been a strong industry leader in the area of animal handling for many years. She describes the Arrowsight service as the most comprehensive solution out there. It follows the American Meat Institute's animal welfare audit system, compiles the data, and sends it to plants for their use to continually help improve their animal welfare programs, she says.

Arrowsight, based in Mt. Kisco, N.Y., is a leader in remote video auditing services. One of its entries into beef processing was after last year's Hallmark-Westland animal abuse case. The plant's owners called in Arrowsight to install 15 video cameras. This action didn't save the business. But the plant reopened as American Beef Packers, which uses the Arrowsight auditing system. Other companies to use the system are: FPL Food, Augusta, Ga. (the first to use the system); XL Four Star Beef, Omaha, Neb.; Central Valley Meat, Hanford, Calif.

The Arrowsight service has two components, says CEO Adam Aronson. The first part is an exact replica of AMI's animal handling guidelines. The service provides a certain number of sampled observations per week based on AMI guidelines. The second part involves the retrieval every hour, on the hour, 16 still pictures taken during the hour at the unloading dock and other critical places. This is a safety net for a company because the system keeps an eye out for any egregious behavior, says Aronson. It also addresses the fact that cattle are unloaded 24 hours a day, seven days a week at plants. Arrowsight auditors in Huntsville, Ala., both observe the video pictures and each of the 16 still pictures. They notify plant operators electronically when a failing animal handling score is detected. Plant operators receive highly detailed daily and weekly reports on every aspect of animal handling, along with accompanying video footage.

### **Arrowsight System Can Improve Yields**

Another Arrowsight video auditing system has the potential to add millions of dollars to companies' bottom line. Cameras installed inside plants at key processing points allow companies to improve their productivity levels and their yields, says Aronson. Two beef processing plants are using the system. In one, throughput improved by 10% and yields improved by 1% in less than four weeks. The system employs cameras in key production areas such as carcass trim, boning tables and hide pulling. Different types of cameras are used in certain places and can detect problems that line supervisors cannot, he says. A camera can zoom in and see if a worker is over-trimming, whereas the naked eye might not catch it because of the speed at which a worker trims beef.

The system's database is pre-programmed to automatically alert by email a designated plant employee of a problem as soon as it is detected. A plant can set specific times of the day to get update reports on a wide variety of tasks in the plant. Arrowsight almost becomes part of a plant's management team, says Aronson. Overseeing Arrowsight's meat-related business is Mark Moshier, president of its manufacturing division. He previously worked for Keystone Foods, Tyson Foods and other top food and beverage companies.