



(Photo by Kevin Blayne Photography)

*As she rifles through a weathered, soft-sided briefcase crowded with pages of notes and blueprint-looking sketches en route from Kansas City International Airport to a downtown hotel, she finally finds a one-inch-thick stack of business cards bound by a thick rubber band. It is quickly evident this is no typical corporate-type business traveler. Having recovered the phone number she almost frantically sought, Dr. Temple Grandin jabs at her cell phone and passes along a message to someone at her office, Grandin Livestock Handling Systems Inc., in Fort Collins, Colo. Wafting from the well-traveled briefcase is a welcome and not-so-subtle scent of what can only be the aromatic evidence of papers, notepads and drawings used on-site at one the many feedlots, auction barns or processing plants Grandin has visited during the past weeks. Adding to her already jam-packed schedule of meat-industry meetings, teaching and autism conference presentations, a big part of Grandin's time in 2010 has been dedicated to promoting the movie about her compelling life and her industry-changing work. This day, though, she's focusing on the twelfth annual Animal Care & Handling Conference where her reputation and expertise are in the industry's spotlight for two days. Her spotlight is expanding – and that's good news for the processing industry.*

# Leading role

## Dr. Temple Grandin's celebrity status keeps animal welfare at center stage

**BY JOEL CREWS**  
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**W**ith the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act of 1978 as the backdrop, Dr. Temple Grandin has dedicated her career and her life to improving animal-welfare practices throughout the meat industry. While her name has long been a household

name within the industry and among those whose lives have been affected by autism, Grandin has garnered the additional attention of millions in the public after the broadcast debut of an HBO movie this past February, simply titled: "Temple Grandin," star-

ring Claire Danes. The movie, which HBO officials have told her is in the running for an Emmy Award, chronicles how Grandin has not only coped with autism, but how she has used it to launch herself into the industry spotlight as the authority on animal-welfare

practices and livestock-handling systems in feedlots, auction barns and livestock-slaughtering facilities throughout the world. Millions of HBO viewers have already seen Grandin's compelling story and thousands more are lining up to purchase the movie on DVD. Affectionately revered by many as "the meat industry's rock star," she is no longer its best-kept secret. Grandin has proven to be a very unlikely Hope Diamond in the rough whose charisma and underdog success story has captivated throngs of new fans and has her longtime meat-industry followers cheering her on.

"Now the whole world has discovered Temple, but we discovered Temple a long time ago," says Janet Riley, senior vice president of public affairs with the American Meat Institute and a close colleague of Grandin's. "When I watched that movie, I just wanted to stand up and cheer; Good for her, but good for us [the meat industry] that

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we had the smarts to partner with her many years ago."

Indeed, Grandin played a key role in the development and growth of one of the AMI's most important annual events: The Animal Care & Handling Conference, which recently adjourned its twelfth meeting in Kansas City, Mo., where it started in 1999. The conference was somewhat of a next step in AMI's development and establishment of humane-handling standards, which started when it published its animal-welfare guidelines and recommendations in 1991. "In 1997 we added the auditing component, which has been modified over the years," says Riley, including the 2010 revisions (which makes "slips" a secondary auditing criteria and includes auditing guidelines for transportation of livestock). The conceptual vision for the first conference was a far cry from the actual meeting.



(Photo courtesy of HBO)

### Starting small

"I thought we should hold it at Colorado State," where Grandin is an associate professor of animal science, says Riley, who hatched the idea for the event on the heels of McDonald's announcing its commitment to animal welfare by requiring its suppliers to be audited using an objective scoring system. "I thought too, that somehow we needed to have live animals. When I told Temple about my idea, she said, 'Janet, working with live animals will never work; you just can't teach that way.'" Grandin pointed out that teaching the finer points of livestock handling to animal-welfare auditors and plant workers could be accomplished in a conference environment, using photos and graphics. As for the location for the conference, everyone agreed Kansas City made sense because of its centrality.

Remembering the anxiety of the first year of rolling out the new conference, Riley's goals were modest, needing 40 attendees to break even. She was pleasantly surprised.

"I was a nervous wreck. I'll never forget – we ended up with 138 people the first year," Riley says.

Back then, the conference was structured so all presentations were made to all attendees. Later, specie-specific tracks were added and more recently, a management and policy-focused track was included to appeal to senior-level managers. A track

addressing applications for poultry processors was added for a couple of years, until the U.S. Poultry & Egg Council officials split off to do its own conference, which turned out to be short lived. "I'd love to see them come back in," says Riley, "even if they weren't in every year."

Since its first year, conference attendance has steadily grown and topped out at just over 300 in the mid 2000s. Even when the economy has challenged everyone, participation is seemingly unwavering. The 2010 event drew about 290 attendees. "It's a testament to industry's commitment to animal welfare and is testament to the reputation the conference has developed," Riley says

### The Temple Grandin show

Grandin has always been an integral part of the conference. "Temple is the star attraction; she always has been the star attraction. And now, thanks to the success of her movie, she's the star of the show more than ever," says Riley.

And Grandin wouldn't skip the event for the world and hasn't missed it in 12 years. In fact, the AMI doesn't sign a contract with the host hotel until Grandin confirms her availability (although this year's plans were almost thwarted by a freak spring snowstorm in Denver). "It wouldn't be the same without her," Riley insists.

Just as the animal-welfare issues and challenges facing the industry evolve and shift, so, too, must the focus of the people responsible for animal welfare at each plant. And with the issues becoming more complex and diverse, a growing number of experts have emerged, as is evidenced by the presentations at recent animal-handling conferences. Many of those experts, some of whom work in the processing industry while others are academics or consultants, serve a vital role as members of AMI's animal-welfare committee, which meets regularly, including at each year's event in Kansas City. Jerry Karczewski, general manager at the Cargill Meat Solutions beef plant in

Milwaukee, was elected one of the first chairmen of the AMI Animal Welfare Committee. After becoming a believer in the practice of auditing by regularly performing welfare audits himself, he was one of the first people who actually championed the concept of auditing to the industry. Karczewski's tenure as chairman was followed by Tyson's Pflanzgraff, Cargill's Dr. Mike Siemens, Frank Howell at Odom's Tennessee Pride Sausage, and later, Hormel's Glee Goodner. Riley says none of the early chairmen could have guessed the prominent role animal welfare would play in their careers and in the industry, but all of them are 100 percent dedicated to the concept. "They get it and understand it's what customers expect and that it makes good business sense. And they hold their people to very high standards," says AMI's Riley.

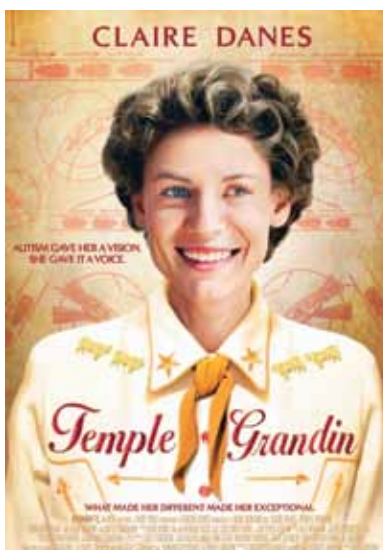
Grandin still makes presentations during the event, on everything from determining insensibility in cattle to properly stunning pigs, but the program now includes plenty of peer-to-peer instruction, from experts within the processing industry who are more than willing to share their company's knowledge when it comes to livestock handling.

Looking back at the events leading up to the first animal-handling conference, Grandin recalls, "1999 was a massive tipping point. That's when the McDonald's and Wendy's [animal welfare] audits started," and Grandin led the groundbreaking training for the auditors of the fast-food giants. Burger King quickly followed suit. Also significant in the 90s was Grandin's U.S. Dept. of Agriculture survey in 1996, laying the foundation for the objective scoring of animal-welfare audits. The survey results were published by the USDA the following year. "Then in 1998, I had an article published in the *American Veterinary Medical Journal* explaining the objective scoring system," Grandin says. "I saw more change in 1999 than I had seen in my entire 25-year career prior to that."

Unfortunately, the significance of

that tide shift went largely unnoticed. "One of the things that frustrates the crap out of me, and I wish a lot more people knew about it; is about how the plants changed." She characterizes the 1980s and early 90s as "horrible" and "awful." Thankfully, more people are being exposed to the progress, due in large part to Grandin's movie.

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(Photo courtesy of HBO)

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nificant, adding that "once McDonald's embraced our audit, which was about 1999, that really advanced the audit," and the company also gave the AMI a grant to make auditing training videotapes, which are widely used today and are being updated later this year, when they will be available on DVD.

### A watershed moment

Events like the Hallmark-Westland undercover videotape depicting egregious acts of abuse to downer cattle at the Chico, Calif.-based plant served as a gut-check for the industry. Riley says it was a watershed moment for the industry and was a devastating develop-

ment for the members of the AMI Animal Welfare Committee.

"After all the work that had gone in and after almost evangelizing about animal welfare, to see that video, we were all asking, 'how could this be happening?', and we were asking 'how could this be happening with USDA there?' It was like we couldn't reconcile it."

To the company's credit, just weeks after the news of the events at their plant was made public, its operations executives attended the animal-handling conference. And it was Riley who welcomed them to the event. It was one of the more memorable happenings during the conference's history.

"They were scared to death to walk in to be with their industry peers," she said, "because they knew what a domino effect they had set in motion. It was a very emotional time for them."

### Adapting and evolving

Job titles such as "director of animal welfare" didn't exist when the animal-handling conference was getting started. When it awarded that title to Dr. Kellye Pflanzgraff, Tyson Foods became one of the first processors to designate a person to address animal handling on a full-time basis. Nowadays, says Riley, "There are so many other companies that have dedicated people whose jobs are to focus on animal welfare. It's incredible how our thinking on this has changed." The other industry giants soon followed suit, assigning similar, dedicated positions. One of those is Glee Goodner, corporate manager of animal welfare and handling at Hormel Foods. He says the level of attention and expertise to maintain an effective animal-welfare program warrants a designated person to spearhead the efforts and educate others.

"The responsibility of the individuals in charge of animal care at Hormel Foods is to ensure we have a consistent and measurable industry-leading program," Goodner says. "Upholding this standard requires ongoing review of scientific information and new



Temple Grandin during a feedlot audit in Brazil. (Photo courtesy of Voogd Consulting)

technologies combined with hands-on experience.”

Part of maintaining the high standards includes comparing notes with others in the industry and establishing positive working partnerships with them, even if they are competitors. The annual conference in Kansas City, facilitates this, says Goodner.

“The annual AMI Animal Handling conference is an opportunity for anyone who is responsible for animal care and handling principles to share ideas and network,” he adds.

Each year’s event also serves as an educational forum to teach the fundamentals of animal welfare, while addressing the newest issues and challenges. “The program for each conference is updated to keep the content current and relevant with today’s industry practices,” Goodner says.

As for the role Grandin has played in advancing the processing industry’s commitment to animal welfare, Goodner says her standards are the gold standards. “When new guidelines related to animal handling are released today, a measurement of value is the acceptance of Temple Grandin,” he says. “We have reviewed and incorporated many of these industry-leading standards into our facilities and practices.”

Erika Voogd, president of West Chicago-based Voogd Consulting agrees that the standards Grandin has developed have been embraced throughout the world. “Those guidelines are the Bible,” says Voogd, who worked for nine years as the corporate quality assurance manager for OSI Industries Inc. a supplier to McDonald’s, before starting her

company in 2003. Throughout her career, she has used the guidelines to train hundreds of auditors in the McDonald’s system in the US and abroad. She’s also spent hundreds of hours traveling internationally to conduct training alongside Grandin and has attended 11 of the 12 conferences in Kansas City. “For Temple, this [annual conference] is her baby,” says Voogd. “It’s her chance to really shine and to influence the industry as a whole.” It also serves as a forum for her to address some of the latest hot topics she learns about in her extensive travels each year.

Voogd has seen first-hand how many disciples Grandin has out in the field, especially among those who work in the trenches who have been given the opportunity to attend one of the conferences. “For someone’s whose job it is to work out in the pens, they come back from an event like this and their enthusiasm is contagious,” she says, “and it spreads throughout the entire organization at that plant.

“Humane handling, because of social responsibility and because of Westland-Hallmark and other events, is a hot topic at this point and everybody’s very focused on it,” she says. And the attention and interest is worldwide. “If you’re exporting to Europe, humane handling has to be part of your plan.”

As for Grandin’s role in influencing the direction of humane handling, Voogd says a subtle transition is taking place. “For years, she’s been ‘the’ expert, but what she’s trying to do is create many more experts and instill the passion for this in others and carry it forward.”

Grandin’s passion is evident in her well-known reputation for being accessible, almost 24-7, to give advice, and always returning every phone call personally. “I’ve had her call me from Australia in the middle of the night,” says Voogd. “She’s returned a call to me when I was traveling in Italy and had a quick question.

“There’s nobody I know of who carries that passion and shares it and makes herself that accessible to the industry as a whole. She does it through the animal-handling conference; she does it through the books she’s written and through the videos she’s made and her Web site.”

Voogd is among the minions whose career has been altered by Grandin’s undying commitment to animal welfare. She considers her a mentor. “The expertise that I have in humane handling and the passion that I have for it comes directly from working with her and the McDonald’s system.”

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### **New challenges, new solutions**

As the industry is held to an ever-higher standard and is expected to be more transparent than ever in its operations, some promising technology has evolved. Installation of remote video-auditing systems at all of Cargill Meat Solutions’ North American red meat and turkey slaughtering plants is well underway already. Led by Mike Siemens, the company is working with Arrowsight Inc., a Kisco, N.Y.-based system integrator that uses a team of auditors in Huntsville, Ala. to provide Cargill with round-the-clock, third-party audits using a system of in-plant video cameras and Web based software to improve animal-welfare practices.

With Grandin as a leading champion of video-auditing technology, Arrowsight's solution will likely be showing up in other plants in the near future. "Video auditing is coming on strong and the people who've implemented it speak very favorably of its benefits, including Cargill," AMI's Riley says. "You're definitively going to see more and more of it."

Today, Grandin's work focuses much less on the construction and design of plants and more on training, consulting and troubleshooting animal-welfare challenges. While her company still offers construction and design services for handling systems, a full-time, designated person handles the "crafting."

She insists that improvements in livestock-handling systems and animal-welfare programs rarely mean multi-million-dollar investments to completely remodel a facility. "The



(Photo courtesy of New Mexico State Univ.)

thing I want to say that I'm proud of is that out of those 75 plants on the original McDonald's list, only three had to do capital improvements to pass. Everybody else I fixed with maintenance, non-slip flooring,

lights, solid sides – whatever piece of junk they had, we made it work," she says. And a huge part of the "fixes" included educating and properly training the people handling the livestock. "It was about 50 percent people we had to fix and the other half was small equipment fixes, like stunner maintenance."

Mike Simpson, executive director of Redfield, Iowa-based Professional Animal Auditor Certification Organization Inc. (PAACO), has benefited from the progress AMI and Grandin have made, especially in the past five years. PAACO promotes and provides education on the AMI animal-welfare guidelines through certification of animal-welfare auditors through regularly scheduled in-plant training at some of the industry's most prominent slaughter plants.

"Every cause needs a figurehead or a spokesman that has gone out and shown leadership and obviously Temple has been that," for the animal-welfare cause, says Simpson, who utilizes Grandin's expertise during the PAACO two-day training sessions, which include classroom and in-plant instruction from several of the members of the AMI Animal Welfare Committee. Simpson has been providing meat plant training sessions using the AMI guidelines alongside Grandin since 2005, after demand for training the quick-service auditors became unmanageable for her to handle single-handedly.

Simpson equates the impact Grandin has made in humane handling with the progress made by industry giants like Rolland "Pig" Paul, who was the first – and perhaps the most colorful and charismatic – president of the National Pork Producers Council or Kenny Monfort. "These kinds of people, including Temple, are viewed as patriarchs of the industry and other people tend to follow them." ■

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