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NEW MILESTONE REACHED IN ANIMAL AGRICULTURE

ANIMAL WELFARE APPROVED PROGRAM IS THE FIRST US ANIMAL WELFARE AUDITING GROUP TO RECEIVE TRAINING FROM TOP VETERINARIANS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL, UK

WAKE FOREST, NC— Twenty Animal Welfare Approved program auditors, advisors and staff members met from May 5 through May 9 in Wake Forest, N.C. to receive advanced animal welfare training from the top animal behavior and welfare program in the world. The Animal Welfare Approved team, part of the Animal Welfare Institute, is the first group in the United States to be trained by veterinarians from the Animal Behaviour and Welfare program of the UK's University of Bristol Department of Clinical Veterinary Science.

"Animal Welfare Approved" is a select food label granted for meat, poultry, dairy and eggs. More than 600 farms comply with its standards, which provide consumers, grocers, chefs and other food buyers a single comprehensive food label that promotes, differentiates and identifies high-welfare family farms.

AWI's standards address all aspects of an animal's life starting with genetic soundness through opportunities to socialize and behave naturally to assurances of comfort and freedom from intensive confinement. Every Animal Welfare Approved farm is an independent family farm and farmers must adhere to Animal Welfare Approved standards for all animals of an approved species—no split or dual production is permitted. The program is helping to revitalize a culture of family-owned and managed farms, out of a belief that family farmers have a true connection to and stake in the health of their animals--something that has been lost in industrial factory farming. Unlike other verification programs, farmers pay no fees to participate in the Animal Welfare Approved program.

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The Bristol Department of Clinical Veterinary Science is recognized internationally as the top center for excellence in animal welfare. The program was founded and developed by Emeritus Professor of Animal Husbandry, **John Webster**, who has been involved in the science and promotion of animal welfare for more than 30 years. He was a founding member of the Farm Animal Welfare Council and the original proponent of the 'Five Freedoms' upon which the Animal Welfare Approved standards are based. His current major activities include the development of animal-based systems for assessing the welfare of farm animals and the problem of lameness in dairy cattle. His latest book, *Animal Welfare: Limping towards Eden* was published in 2005.

Dr. David C.J. Main, Bristol Animal Welfare Foundation Senior Lecturer, remarked, "We are very pleased to be working with the Animal Welfare Institute on welfare assessment systems for livestock certification programmes. The Animal Welfare and Behaviour group at the University of Bristol has developed welfare assessment procedures for certification schemes in the UK and we are keen to share experiences with similar programs in the United States, beginning with the Animal Welfare Approved program. The objective of the workshop organised for the Animal Welfare Institute is to consider how welfare assessment techniques can maximise the assurance such schemes can provide to consumers on compliance with high animal welfare standards."

"We are very pleased to be the first recipient of this intensive training from the University of Bristol," remarked Cathy Liss, president of the Animal Welfare Institute. "While this training is for our team, the ultimate beneficiaries will be the animals on the farm."

The twenty Animal Welfare Approved staff, auditors and advisors participating in the training are based across the US including the states of Washington, Arkansas, Oregon, Kansas, New York, North Carolina and Minnesota.

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