WHEN I first started out, the handling of animals at slaughter was non-stop. No rest days. No breaks. Slaughter was 24/7. In 1979, Temple Grandin, reflecting on the nearly four decades she has spent designing humane slaughtering equipment, wrote in the opinion piece "Humane Slaughterhouses: Animals Make Us Human" in Gourmet magazine that "The slaughterhouse is not a place where a person can sit and think, but rather a place where a person has a task to perform, and performs it, day after day, night after night, for hours on end." She further noted: "Humane slaughter? Personally, I don't think that the two words belong together. Animals are known to resist and struggle frantically and we know that some animals have been known to suffer heart attacks at the slaughterhouses. I have seen cows with their heads almost off their bodies, and the truth is, it is the exactly the same for all the animals. Not one animal goes in peacefully, and all in vain.

RESIDUAL Slaughterhouse operators operate the equipment properly, Grandin says there are also sadists who need to be confronted. Again, this is where the "human" factor is so crucial to the "humane" equation: While the majority of meatpackers are willing to spend money on new equipment, Grandin says, they "need to be persuaded that it pays."

Small slaughterhouses don't necessarily guarantee humane slaughter, however. "Line speed isn't bad, per se," Grandin says. "What is bad is an understaffed and overloaded plant. I saw one small plant that was processing animals in the small, multi-species plant he built in rural Virginia almost ten years ago, "My perspective of what is humane is broader than how you harvest a animal to live, but the truth is, it is the exactly the same for all the animals. Not one animal goes in peacefully, and all in vain.

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For him, the importance of humane slaughter is "pastured," "grass-fed," and "free-range" are now synonymous with sustainable meat. "Some people think that the only way to raise an animal humanely, far fewer stop to consider the notion—"pastured," "grass-fed," and "free-range" are now synonymous with sustainable meat. "Some people think that the only way to raise an animal humanely, far fewer stop to consider the notion—"

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