



Our Hen House

CHANGE THE WORLD FOR ANIMALS

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Interview with Taylor Radig

By OUR HEN HOUSE

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*Following is a transcript of an interview with **TAYLOR RADIG** conducted by **JASMIN SINGER** and **MARIANN SULLIVAN** of [Our Hen House](#), for the [Our Hen House podcast](#). The interview aired on Episode 207.*

JASMIN: Today we have a very special interview. I'm just so grateful that we're ending this year with this interview with Taylor Radig.

MARIANN: Yeah, I'm very excited to be talking to her. I think Taylor is a person whom the entire animal protection movement needs to rally around.

JASMIN: Yeah. You'll find out why, because let's talk to the undercover investigator, Taylor Radig.

Taylor Radig is a student who has worked as an undercover investigator for Compassion over Killing.

Welcome to Our Hen House, Taylor.

TAYLOR: Hi, how are you doing?

MARIANN: It's great to have you on. We're very, very excited about this interview, and we really want to hear what's going on. First, just to put us in place, can you tell us how long you've been doing undercover work?

TAYLOR: Yeah, so I've been doing it a little over a year.

MARIANN: Now, just give us the basic idea of what happened in Colorado. Just to start off, can you describe the type of facility you were working in?

TAYLOR: Sure, so I got a job at a company called Quanah Cattle Company. This company specializes in raising newborn calves, so they're a calf-raising facility where they will actually go to local dairy facilities and get male calves that are useless to the dairy industry, and raise them and then sell them eventually to be slaughtered for their meat.

JASMIN: What was your day-to-day there? I just can't even imagine. What kind of work were you doing?

TAYLOR: My position there was a general labor position. And some of my tasks included feeding the calves, a lot of manual labor, so yeah, feeding the calves, giving vaccines, and then also I would help assist with tagging the calves and also on transport days.

MARIANN: How old are the calves at this facility?

TAYLOR: Typically they're there for about a week, so sometimes they're just days old. They typically would have their umbilical cords still attached to them.

MARIANN: So, where do they go after they're at this facility?

TAYLOR: They're shipped off to another farm which raises them, and then they will be slaughtered for their meat.

MARIANN: What were these calves like? Can you describe a few of them, just what they were like, what kind of condition they were in, how they reacted to you?

TAYLOR: Sure, so calves are generally very, very, you know, they have a very sweet nature, so during feeding, a lot of these calves are bottle-fed because they're so young, they're taken away from their mothers. Typically they'd be feeding from their mothers, so I would bottle feed them and just interacting with them. They're very, very sweet, nonaggressive animals, and they're raised in plastic hutches with fencing where they don't have the opportunity to play with their mothers or -- they're kept there the whole time at Quanah.

MARIANN: What were the other workers like who were in the facility and how did they behave toward the animals?

TAYLOR: Yeah, so working with them, there were three men that were eventually charged with animal abuse, and all I can say is that they were unnecessarily violent toward these calves who are, they're completely innocent. They -- during transport days is when I saw much of the abuse, and they would unnecessarily, when we were feeding them, drag them by their limbs out of the hutches, drag them by their ears, when it's just as easy to lift them up onto their feet because they're so young, they can barely stand at some point or barely walk. And they're violent, they're completely violent unnecessarily, pushing them, dragging them by their ears, by their limbs, slamming them onto trucks. All these things were completely unnecessary.

MARIANN: Was this true of all of the workers?

TAYLOR: Yeah. I worked with three people on that facility, and even someone who was my immediate supervisor was partaking in these cruelties.

JASMIN: What was the attitude of the supervisors toward the workers' behavior?

TAYLOR: They encouraged it. During transport days, when they were moving calves and I was just assisting, they would tell me, "pull on their ears, push them, pull them," and obviously I didn't. They witnessed -- my immediate supervisor witnessed all these cruelties happening and also partook in it, and so he was completely okay with that treatment of the calves.

JASMIN: How did you manage personally in these types of situations? I think a lot of people listening to this are probably trying to imagine what they would be like if they were in your shoes. And I'm not sure most of us can. Where did you put all of that? How did you deal with it?

TAYLOR: Investigations is really hard work. It's both -- it's manual labor, so it's physically intensive, and then you're also having to deal with a lot of the emotional aspect of witnessing these cruelties that are happening whether you're there or not. And so, during all of this, I'm incredibly sad, witnessing these people do these things that's completely unnecessary to these innocent baby calves. Specifically I just -- I just put myself in a mindset where it's like, well, this is going to happen whether I'm here or not, and I want to show the public what's happening, and really expose this facility for the mistreatment of animals.

JASMIN: Yeah, so I guess it's the overall point of why you're there that would get you through it. I think that would be the only thing that would be able to get you through something like that. It sounds like it would be just incredibly difficult. Did you have any kind of support system around you?

TAYLOR: Yeah. Investigations are really hard work and you do have to remain completely anonymous, and so I had my lawyers who I was speaking with every day, telling them what was happening. And they were really supportive of me, both as my lawyer team and also as friends.

MARIANN: So, you had mentioned that the cruelty that you saw was really unnecessary. I'm just wondering where that line gets drawn. Like, would it be possible to do this kind of work without being abusive to these calves? I know you're saying that they were extra abusive, but is the system itself inherently abusive in any way?

TAYLOR: Yeah, with this particular industry, calf-raising, what the employees at Quanah were doing was completely unnecessary and the job could be done without this kind of abuse. The calves could be moved by being walked instead of slammed, lifted onto the trailer instead of flipped. And just little things like that would reduce the cruelty that these calves endure significantly. So, really, at every stage of their life, what I documented was cruelty, from when they're taken from their mothers all the way up until they're transported and taken off the facility, so the amount of suffering that they can endure at this facility would be and can be reasonably reduced if the workers weren't acting the way that they did.

MARIANN: Can you tell us about the charges that were brought against you?

TAYLOR: Sure. We knew that -- me and my lawyer team knew that -- three men I had worked with were being charged and cited for animal abuse, so it's a Class 1 Misdemeanor. We knew that going in, and the Sheriff's Office wanted me to -- as the only witness in this case, identify myself in person and also give my statement of what occurred. And so, I actually flew to Colorado, cooperating with local authorities.

MARIANN: So, can we just back up a second? This was after Compassion over Killing handed over the video footage to the Sheriff's Office?

TAYLOR: Oh, sure. Yeah.

MARIANN: These three people were going to be charged.

TAYLOR: Yeah.

MARIANN: And so what was it then that happened to you? So, you were called to testify in that case or to provide information in that case and you flew to Colorado?

TAYLOR: Yeah, so we had been working with local authorities. I'd turned in all my evidence to Weld County Sheriff's Office. And after they reviewed it and ended up citing these workers that were shown in the video abusing these animals, they wanted me to give an in-person interview to identify myself and just give my account of the story. And so, I went ahead and did that, and at the end of the interview, they ended up completely blindsiding me with this bogus charge of animal abuse.

MARIANN: And what are you charged with specifically? What is it that they say that you should've done that you didn't do that caused abuse to animals?

TAYLOR: So, their reading of the statute, they're suggesting that I waited too long to report, so my reporting of these incidences wasn't done in a timely manner.

JASMIN: Did any other workers witness what was happening to the animals? Were they charged with failing to report it?

TAYLOR: Well, they were charged with animal abuse, which is -- or animal cruelty, which is the same thing I was charged with, even though I didn't partake in any of the abuses. And also more recently, we found out that my charges were from -- the dates of my charges were from the dates that I worked. And so it wasn't this sort of time between when I reported these incidences, and so their main motivation is just to say that even if after my second day, if I didn't report, then I would have been liable.

MARIANN: What about the supervisor? Was the supervisor charged?

TAYLOR: Yes. He was.

MARIANN: And, so, they were the only people who witnessed it, other than you.

TAYLOR: Yeah, it was my supervisor and two other workers.

MARIANN: Do you think anybody else, the owners or anything, knew what was going on here?

TAYLOR: Yeah, it's very likely. These were one of the only people that I did document abusing the animals, but it's very likely that when I wasn't there that the company was knowing about what was occurring there.

MARIANN: So, how long a time was there between when the video was shot and when it was released to the Sheriff's Office?

TAYLOR: It was about, I think, like a month and a half or two months.

MARIANN: And so, during that period of time, when was it that Compassion over Killing approached the sheriff?

TAYLOR: I shot my video, and these cases take a long time to build. There's tons, hours of video, and what you want to do is establish that what you're seeing on camera is abusive practices, and so you want to fully document it, and then once that's done, you want to take

it to the Sheriff's Office. And so, once that was done, we immediately turned it into the Sheriff's Office.

MARIANN: So, what's happened since you were charged? Have you received a lot of support from the community? What's going on with the case?

TAYLOR: Yeah. I actually had a local Colorado citizen start a change.org petition, asking that the DA drop my charges, which has been huge. I've received -- no one knew that I was doing this, and so I received a lot of email from really family and friends and other people in the animal protection movement, just being extremely supportive, saying that if I need anything, that they're willing to help, so it's really, really amazing.

MARIANN: Well, we certainly feel that way as well, Taylor. I think that your case is one of the most important things going on in the animal protection movement right now. They're really trying to squelch undercover investigations and trying to put the blame on us rather than the people who are really abusing animals. And can you suggest any ways that people can offer support for you?

TAYLOR: Yeah. So, the change.org petition is a perfect place to really help this. This is really about the animals, and so we want to make sure that this never happens to investigators, because it hasn't. And the public needs to really be aware of the abuses that are occurring on facilities like this, and so really starting with the change.org petition. Also, what's really important is sharing these investigations to the public as widely as we possibly can. These investigations are kind of a way for us to shine a light into these industries, and just, I guess personally as an investigator, knowing that all the amazing advocates that I know who share these investigations make going to work a little bit easier, I would say every day. So, yeah.

MARIANN: Well, we want to see that you get all the support that is possibly out there, 'cause I'm just so furious about this. Can you tell us how much time you're facing if you were convicted of this?

TAYLOR: I think for a Class 1, it's like up to six months in jail, so yeah, I would be facing -- I'm facing jail time for this, so...

MARIANN: Are you scared, Taylor? Are you more scared or more angry? You must be so, so completely riveted with both fear and anger?

TAYLOR: Yeah, it's really upsetting. One, the Sheriff's Office released my identity to over 100 news stations, and so my capacity for working in this sort of field is now gone. So, that's really been the hardest part, and also just, really for the animals, for them to do this to a whistleblower is -- it discourages other whistleblowers from coming forward, and it's really a shame. And I'm in school, and so I really don't want to spend my last semester in jail, so...

MARIANN: Yeah, and when you think of how many people work in facilities like this, and see animal abuse every day, and they're not reporting it. Are they all guilty of crimes? Is that the implication here? I think the industry has gotten themselves into a very sticky situation really, in implying that anybody who sees animal cruelty is committing a crime unless they go to their sheriff that day and report it, because there's an awful lot of people who are not doing that in the world. I just -- your case is just so vitally important to this movement. Do you think it's frightened other people from wanting to become an undercover investigator?

TAYLOR: I mean, I surely hope not. This has never happened before, and we're very confident that we're gonna win this. I mean, virtue is on our side, and what they're doing is a complete misreading of the statute. There's no mandatory reporting law in Colorado. And I do hope that people do continue with their interest in investigations and we can get some more people out there.

JASMIN: Well, we're confident that you're gonna win this too. And I also think that there is just gonna be a tremendous silver lining on this, both for you and for other whistleblowers and also for the animals, because I have no doubt that as this story gets more and more out there, the press will rally behind you.

MARIANN: I've seen, though, in some of the stories, this kind of implication that you were actually participating in the cruel actions. Have you experienced anybody who's accused you of that? And has that in any way been part of the charges?

TAYLOR: Yeah. I mean, my charges are not toward that, but yeah, they have -- the Sheriff's Office has in a lot of media outlets said that I partook in this abuse, and that's just not true. I absolutely love animals, and I went in to expose abuse that possibly was occurring. And it was, and I exposed it, and even through being asked to partake in the abuse, I didn't.

MARIANN: Was it hard to maintain that façade that you were okay working there, but still withholding participating in the worst of the abuse? Do you think they suspected you?

TAYLOR: Because I wasn't partaking in the abuse, I suspected that they might have had suspicions about me. But that's my number one goal, is to expose this abuse, not in any way partake. It's something that I'm trying to stop. And as an animal lover, it's just something I can't even fathom doing, so I was able to use methods that were legal where I wasn't hurting these animals at all, and was able to maintain my cover while maintaining a deep respect for these baby calves.

MARIANN: So, do you think that because you were a woman, in some ways actually helped you, that the expectations of the other workers would be that you weren't as strong or that you wouldn't want to be really abusive to the animals, but it wouldn't really necessarily raise their suspicions?

TAYLOR: Yeah, I was the only woman working in this facility. And just in general, in that type of industry, it's pretty rare for a woman to be working. And so, yeah I did think that it played into me not having to do much of the lifting and different things like that, just their perceptions of women, essentially.

MARIANN: So, the jobs you were given were ones in which you really could totally avoid being abusive?

TAYLOR: Yeah, even put in the circumstance of them expecting abuse out of me, I absolutely didn't and wouldn't partake in any of that. But much of my duties didn't include any of the moving of the animals or anything like that. I mean, I didn't receive any sort of animal handling guide or -- I mean, this facility didn't prepare me at all for any of my tasks that I was doing.

MARIANN: Well, it's certainly a reason for more and more women to think about going into this line of work, because your job has been -- the job you've done for the movement and

for the animals has been so spectacular. And once we get all of this legal craziness resolved, I think that your experience really will encourage more and more women, more and more people, to want to go into this, and to expose these abuses.

JASMIN: Yeah, you're really such a hero to us, and to, I'm sure, everyone listening to this, Taylor. And we are so completely behind you, and anything you need from us or from the community at large, we're all here for you. We're here for you, Taylor, and thank you so much for really being such a hero. Like I said, I think there's gonna be quite a silver lining. And the thing that got you through all of the work you were doing, with just keeping your eye on the big picture, I think that that will come through in spades. The fact that this is going to be out there maybe even more than other investigations because of these charges, I think that this will ultimately help animals even more than it could have before. So, thank you so much, and please keep us posted and stay in touch with us. We really want to see you taken care of here.

TAYLOR: Yeah, thank you so much! Thank you for all you do for the animals and all of your listeners, thank you for really being a voice for them. Thank you.

JASMIN: Thank you, Taylor.

That was Taylor Radig.