

MICHIGAN PORK

The source for information affecting Michigan's Pork Producers

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2014 Professional Pork Producers Symposium



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On cover, pictured clockwise from upper left: Jarrod Sutton from National Pork Board; Lee Carte from Great Lakes Pork; Jerry May from Michigan State University Extension; and Joel Phelps and Randy Moore from Great Lakes Pork.

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2014 Professional Pork Producers Symposium

By: Megan Sprague, MPPA Program Director, sprague@mipork.org

“Sustainable, it’s true about us,” was the theme of the 2014 Michigan Professional Pork Producers Symposium hosted by Michigan Pork Producers Association (MPPA) in conjunction with Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) and with the help of many sponsors (*See page 34*).

Experts in their respective fields, many of the speakers gave practical advice on how Michigan pork producers can continue to become more sustainable and meet consumer demands as they look to the future of the industry.

Sustainability frequently seems vague and undefined to producers, and often is a subjective term. To clarify the confusion surrounding sustainability, Paul Thompson from Michigan State University gave a presentation on the differing definitions of sustainability. He discussed the context, historical aspects and the three pillars of sustainability: social, environmental and economic. He said that, “Although people do not agree on what sustainability is they do not think that it is meaningless.”

In an effort to become more environmentally sustainable, many farmers are currently looking at renewable energy. Tom Butler, a contract grower from Lillington, North Carolina, spoke about how his farm has utilized its manure to create renewable energy. Butler said his farm installed covers for its lagoons in 2008 and their pigs currently produce an average of 4.1 standard cubic feet each of methane bio-gas daily. Butler encouraged producers to install renewable energy systems in bulk to bring down costs and look into low interest loans and



Master Pork Producer award winner Brad Blonde (right) with his father Keith Blonde (left).

seek out incentives offered from entities like the USDA. Butler’s takeaway for the day was, “Don’t waste your

waste, turn it into an asset.”

Staying economically sustainable, in light of the Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea virus, has become challenging as new diseases not only threaten herds but also the livelihoods of producers. Tim Snider, DVM, MPH, an instructor in the Department of Veterinary Population Medicine at the University of Minnesota and the lead Health Assurance Veterinarian for TOPIGS USA, discussed focusing on the costs of biosecurity implementation and followed that up with a presentation about which plan is right for your farm. During the presentation, Snider redefined biosecurity and its main components (segregation, cleaning and disinfection). He also discussed how, “the foundation of biosecurity is



Jerry May was presented with the Distinguished Service award by MPPA President Fred Walcott.

based on the knowledge of the disease transmission and which biosecurity measures count.”

During the Awards Luncheon, five individuals were recognized for their excellence in pork production and contributions to the pork industry. MPPA’s highest honor, the Distinguished Service Award, went to Jerry May, St. Louis, Mich., for a lifetime of outstanding service to the pork industry. During the 80s, May served as a board member and president of MPPA. And, he continues to contribute with his work as a MSU Extension Educator.

Another top honor went to Brad Blonde from Precision Pork in Litchfield, Mich. who received the Master Pork Producer award. Brad was nominated for this award by his father and partner, Keith Blonde. Lee Carte, Remus, Mich., a contract grower with Great Lakes Pork, was awarded the Contract Grower Award and Randy Moore, Blanchard, Mich., also with Great Lakes Pork, was recognized with the Swine Herd Manager Award.

Outgoing board member Pete


Blauwiekel was also honored for his contributions to the pork industry and MPPA.

Keynote speaker for the Luncheon was Jarrod Sutton, Assistant Vice President of Channel Marketing for the National Pork Board (NPB). Sutton discussed his work with ‘food chain partners’ (major retailers, food-service purveyors and processors) and spoke of how he is telling the “pork story” to upper-level management in the corporate suites at these companies. He discussed how NPB and the National Pork Producers Council have worked together to establish credibility as the go-to sources for information on controversial and not easily understood production issues and how both groups work together to help key, corporate suite decision-makers understand the economic consequences of their marketing decisions. Sutton also focused on the *We CareSM* model mentioning how important shared values are in establishing a positive barn culture. He pointed-out how NPB has partnered with the U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance (USFRA) to



Pete Blauwiekel (pictured with his wife, Brenda) was recognized for his service.

reach consumers to explain modern production agriculture. Sutton showed a trailer promoting the soon to be released documentary film by James Moll titled *Farmland*. The film was developed with the support of USFRA to help educate consumers about how their food is raised.

The 2014 Pork Conference gave producers practical answers to tough questions about environmental sustainability, biosecurity and barn culture. The pork conference also allowed producers to share ideas and network with their peers in the industry. Attendees were able to complete the day with delicious appetizers at MPPA’s 24th Annual Taste of Elegance competition (See page 8). MPPA is grateful to all those who made the event a success; especially the sponsors and Extension Swine Specialist, Dr. Dale Rozeboom, and his colleagues on the MSU Swine Team, who were responsible for developing the educational program. 



Tom Butler gave a presentation on renewable energy.



By: Fred Walcott
MPPA President

“I believe positive barn culture starts with the employer.”

“We all Need to Establish a Positive Barn Culture”

As we look forward to spring, I can't help but focus on the number 100. In West Michigan, like many places in Michigan, we have had over 100 inches of snow so far this winter. On the bright side, as I write this, we are just over 100 days until the kids' summer break and, of course, the market has traded several months over \$100!

This winter, more so than in winters past, has definitely confirmed the 100 percent commitment of Michigan hog farmers. We have dealt with sub-freezing temperatures, propane shortages, roof collapses and, of course, the Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea (PED) virus. Many hog producers have struggled with these issues and in times of crisis it is very important to have employees that are 100 percent committed.

During Jarrod Sutton's presentation at the Michigan Professional Pork Producers Symposium Awards Luncheon he highlighted the *We CareSM* program and spoke about barn culture. Jarrod, who is Vice-President of Channel Marketing at the National Pork Board, frequently speaks with our food chain partners (major retailers, foodservice purveyors and processors) and explains how the *We CareSM* principles (*see page 10*) drive our actions on the farm. I believe when we implement the *We CareSM* principles on our farms, it creates a positive barn culture.

In recent years, there have been a few undercover videos released by groups that oppose raising animals for food. And, occasionally, the videos show some pretty nasty footage of employees being “bad actors.” In those

instances, it is always obvious that somebody in that barn doesn't care. By stimulating positive barn culture and hiring the right people, we can avoid the bad actor situation on our farms.

I believe positive barn culture starts with the employer. There are many ways to create positive barn culture and it starts with who you hire, how you train and what you do on a daily basis.

On our farm, all potential employees are interviewed by me and the nursery/finisher manager or the sow manager. As a team, we decide if the applicant has the traits that we desire in an employee. When there isn't consensus among us, the person who is working with the employee gets more say, but in general the opposing person has to explain why they feel uncomfortable hiring this person as a member of our team.

We look at applicants' high school transcripts for absences and work history for any signs they have abandoned jobs or shirked responsibility in the past. We also verify that what they put on their application is truthful.

Most importantly, I feel, is hiring people who feel comfortable working for a hog farmer. I value applicants that come to us with the desire to be involved in pork production, not as a last resort because it was the only job they could find.

Everyone who is hired in our operation starts as a part-time employee, working odd hours or weekends, this allows us to gauge how likely they are to be successful as a full time em-

(continued on page 10)

“HSUS Shows Its True Colors”



By: Sam Hines
MPPA Executive Vice President
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“ Quoting Dr. Richard Raymond, ‘HSUS, you really crossed the line big time on this issue.’ ”

If you had any doubts about the true colors of the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), they should have been effectively dispelled on February 20. HSUS called a press conference on the 20th to announce the release of an undercover video. And, no, this wasn't the typical video purporting to show animal abuse, although the video did show sows in gestation stalls. Obviously, HSUS didn't want to miss an opportunity to also spin its message that keeping sows in gestations stalls is inhumane. However, the overriding message in the video was a desire to capitalize on, as some have described it, the “ick” factor by showing intestines of piglets that had died from the Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea (PED) virus being ground-up to be fed back to sows. As those of us in the industry know, this kind of natural exposure has been used under the recommendation of veterinarians for decades to build immunity; particularly when no vaccine is available. I remember being advised to use “feedback” in my own operation many, many years ago to mitigate the effects of a TGE outbreak and it certainly helped cut down the losses. Interestingly, I have learned this practice is not uncommon in human medicine either. Dr. Richard Raymond, former Undersecretary of Agriculture for Food Safety and also a former family practice physician, had an interesting article in “Meating-place” explaining that “corprophagy,” the scientific term for consumption of fecal material, is used in human medicine also. Dr. Raymond said the practice, which physicians describe as “fecal transplantation,” is used in patients seriously infected with a

pathogenic bacterium called *Clostridium difficile* (C. diff) that, interestingly, also causes diarrhea, dehydration and death similar to PED. He goes on to clarify that, “C. diff is an overgrowth of pathogenic bacteria brought about by the killing of normal gut bacteria from the use of potent antibiotics to treat another infection.” Treatment involves introducing fecal material from another person, as Dr. Raymond explains, “to repopulate the intestinal tract with normal bacteria that can counter the C. diff.” Admittedly, I was not aware of this practice being used in human medicine, but I think the fact that feedback is a routine practice in both animal and human medicine and yet HSUS chose to use it as the basis for a message it hoped would turn people away from eating meat speaks volumes about how low this group will go to promote their agenda.

I often read Dr. Raymond's articles and it's unfortunate they aren't more frequently picked-up by the mainstream media. He certainly has credibility and is very adept at calling out those whose mission appears to be vilifying animal agriculture, and particularly modern animal production methods, at every turn. I would be hard pressed to say it any better than Dr. Raymond did in the concluding remarks in his article and so I will reproduce his comments verbatim:

“HSUS, you really crossed the line big time on this issue. Your undercover person said he saw 980 baby pigs die in 2 days. If you are truly about animal welfare, how can you condemn a practice that is trying to ease suffering and prevent deaths?” As I indicated, I

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The 24th Annual Taste of Elegance

By: Megan Sprague, MPPA Program Director, sprague@mipork.org

What do you get when you put ten amazing Michigan chefs in a room with pork and tell them to concoct a new dish? The intensely competitive 24th Annual Taste of Elegance that took place on February 20th directly after the Michigan Professional Pork Producers Symposium. It was a delectable feast not only for the taste buds but also the eyes. From torches to dry ice the competitors kicked it up a notch with stunning centerpieces and beautiful dishes.

This year's contest was judged by Kevin Cronin from Dusty's Cellar; Sarah Coker from Dine Michigan and Gordon Wenk from the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. Each table also had a guest judge, like Senators Mike Green and Rick Jones who couldn't resist joining in on the fun and the food!

With dishes like *Michigan Cherry Stuffed Loin*, from Zach Mastin of Tanglewood Restaurant, Owosso, and *Wood Fired Braised Pork Shank*, from Joe Coudron of Bravo Restaurant, East Lansing, the judges had their



Executive Chef Jim Morse prepares his samples for the audience.

work cut out for them and went home full.

Ultimately Executive Chef Jim Morse (*pictured above*) from the Boathouse Restaurant in Traverse City came out on top with his *Heritage Pork Trio*. His dish was composed of three cuts of pork: roasted tenderloin, confit belly and braised cheeks. It was

aesthetically pleasing with a pairing of glazed baby carrots, and sweet and sour cabbage with apples all of which was resting in a bed of green peppercorn sauce and potato celeriac purée. The simple elegance of his dish and table won over the judges who chose him to be this year's Chef Par Excellence, winner of Taste of Elegance. In addition to the title, he also won a \$1000 dollars and a trip to the National Taste of Elegance Educational Summit at the Culinary Institute of America's Greystone Campus in St. Helena, California, compliments of National Pork Board.

In second place, receiving the title of Superior Chef was the 2012 Taste of Elegance winner Executive Chef Ian Ramirez of Creative Dining Services, Grand Rapids. His dish, *Up in Smoke*, was a whole hog experience, that included pork nose, tongue, cheek and tail, stunningly served on a torched piece of wood on a table featuring a whole hog hindquarter (*pictured left*).

Receiving the title of Premium Chef, in third place, was Executive Chef Paul Adams of Hawkshead



Executive Chef Ian Ramirez's creative table centerpiece.

Restaurant, South Haven. The dish *Orchard Smoke Jowl* was guest judged by the immediate past president of Michigan Pork Producers Association (MPPA), Ed Reed who said the dish, “had the most unique flavor, with the lean roast pork garnished with shredded pears and caviar.”

The competition audience included not only the general public but also Michigan State University (MSU) faculty, Michigan Legislators and the family members of participants. Andrew Max Batten, age nine, there supporting his dad Eric Batten from the Gallery at MSU, a returning competitor, told us that he “hopes his dad gets 1st place, so he can judge next year.” Andrew’s dad Eric, originally from Iowa, enjoys cooking pork because he believes pork is becoming more versatile as the public is starting to accept variety cuts, which makes it a lot of fun to work with.

The audience also was an active participant in the contest as they selected the winner of the People’s Choice award. Each dish, in its final



form was set out for the public to see and vote on the dish that looked the most appealing. This year the audience chose Jimmy Lee Hill of Saffron Café in Coldwater, with his *Pan Seared Magalitzza Pork Chop* to bestow the honor. His dish included a delectable Maple Reduction Sauce, wild rice dressing and a Bone-in, center cut pork chop.

During the evening, MPPA presented the Food Bank Council of Michigan, represented by Executive Director Kareemah El-Ammin, with a \$2500 dollar donation and a grocery bag full of pork items. She remarked how grateful they were for the on-go-

ing support of Michigan pig farmers to help further the Food Bank’s cause of alleviating and preventing hunger among Michigan people.

Other participating Chefs included David Daniot, C.E.C., from Grosse Pointe Yacht Club in Grosse Pointe Shores; Kurt Kwiatkowski from MSU Culinary Services in East Lansing; and Kevin Rochefort from the Lansing Center in Lansing. 🐷



Senator Mike Green enjoys Eric Batten’s dish as the guest judge.



MPPA President Fred Walcott presents Executive Director Kareemah El-Ammin of the Food Bank Council of Michigan with a bag of pork items.

President's Page

(continued from page 6)

employee. Starting with tasks like power washing they work their way through the system and can see the process of farrowing from start to finish. During the training process, we implement *We Care*SM by helping the employee to fully understand the consequences of their decisions and how everyday tasks fulfill the six *We Care*SM principles. Instead of just telling them to put the sharps in the container, we tell them why it would cause harm to the community they live in to neglect that task. I am convinced that explaining the consequences increases buy-in.


As important as it is, particularly today with heightened concerns about PED, biosecurity seems to be an area where employees may occasionally feel it is easy to cut corners. They may see the requirements as tedious or unnecessary. We try to convey that following biosecurity procedures not

only protects the animals and environment, it also protects their livelihoods. Generally, we will take employees through the procedures for drawing blood and analyzing results to help them better understand disease concerns and how all of this applies to biosecurity. We also rely on veteran employees at each sow location. Veteran employees are already knowledgeable about the *We Care*SM principles and we rely on them to help convey why it's important to follow biosecurity procedures to keep the farm profitable and everyone employed.

I also think it's important that employee training continues throughout their time on the farm. In addition to Pork Quality Assurance Plus, we have incorporated the *We Care*SM principles into our Standard Operating Procedures book and have ongoing training with all employees as the need arises.

We also like to encourage our employees to get out of the barn and attend events like the Statewide Meetings coming up at the end of the month. It's important for them to see that the efforts they make in the barn pay off and how the industry is doing.

Helping employees understand how they are invested in the community also helps positive barn culture flourish on our farm. I am convinced our employees want to do the job correctly, not solely because they don't want to lose their job, I believe they also don't want to jeopardize the industry and give pork a bad reputation. They shop in the same grocery stores and live in the same communities in which they work and are justifiably proud of what they do. They enjoy being involved in the creation of quality pork products and we try to constantly make them aware of how important their job is to that process. When they see a nice Easter ham or pork chop on the grill, we hope they understand the intricate system behind that product and feel good that they are helping to feed people in their community, and, I honestly believe our employees feel that way.

During this harsh winter, we had employees snowed-in and, even so, they called wanting to come to work. We arranged to pick them up and bring them to work. I'm proud that we have such a dedicated group of people and I think that dedication is, at least to some extent, fostered by what we do on the farm on an everyday basis. It's particularly sad that the Humane Society of the United States and other anti-agriculture organizations speak ill about pork production and modern agriculture at every turn. In doing so, I believe they do a huge disservice to the 1000s of dedicated and committed hog farm employees across the country that do their job at a level without equal in the world. 



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ETHICAL PRINCIPLES FOR U.S. PORK PRODUCERS

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PROVIDE A WORK ENVIRONMENT
THAT IS SAFE

CONTRIBUTE TO A BETTER QUALITY
OF LIFE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

As I See It

(continued from page 7)


couldn't have said it better and I doubt few of us would disagree with Dr. Raymond's assessment.

The past two years I have recurrently received email messages from Josh Balk who identifies himself as the Director of Food Policy at HSUS. I have been tempted to block him, but it is interesting to see what he spews on a regular basis. Recently, most of his messages have been going into my junk mail file anyway, but I did retrieve one he sent following the February 20 HSUS press conference. Basically, in this email, he referenced the article written by New York Times Op-Ed Columnist, Nicholas Kristof, entitled "Is That Sausage Worth This?" Clearly, HSUS had its fingerprints all over this article and it appeared it was published to coincide with the February 20 press conference. The article was rife with inaccuracies and full of condemnation for gestation stalls and modern agriculture in general as evidenced by these two excerpts: "*They (sows) live out their adult lives without meaningful social contact or interaction; it's like a life sentence of solitary confinement in a coffin, punctuated by artificial insemination and birth.*" And, later in the article Kristof opines: "*While forcing hogs to be solitary and immobile in gestation crates for their entire lives is soul-crushing, popular disgust is leading to a revolution in industrial farming practices.*"

The HSUS video also suggested that diseases like PED are more prevalent on large 'factory farms' where hogs are kept inside; assertions that are truly without validity and were refuted by Dr. Lisa Tokach who is a practicing swine veterinarian in Kansas. Dr. Tokach is a member of the Center for Food Integrity's (CFI) Animal Care Review Panel. CFI created the panel to have recognized and credible animal care specialists evaluate videos alleging animal abuse

and make their findings available to interested audiences such as the pork industry, food retailers, foodservice purveyors and the media. "Claims that the (PED) infection rate is greater on so-called 'factory farms' than on other farms and that smaller farms don't use practices like 'feedback' are just wrong," said Tokach. "I work with all sizes of farms and they are all dealing with the same issues. It's just more dramatic when you have 5,000 sows instead of 5 sows." Once again, HSUS is caught playing loose with the facts to make its case.

To be honest, I wasn't surprised that HSUS played loose with the facts and tried to capitalize on the PED issue to support their anti-meat eating agenda. In recent days, the Waterkeeper Alliance and other environmental interest groups have also gotten in the fray in North Carolina by alleging the burial of large numbers of hogs lost to PED in that state could pose a threat to

groundwater. If I remember correctly, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., who founded the Waterkeeper Alliance, once stated that 'industrial' hog farms pose a greater threat to the country than terrorists. Truly an off-the-wall claim, but it should come as no surprise to those of us who have observed these groups over the years. Both will use tactics they hope will shock people enough to get them to rally behind their causes. However, what does surprise me is that HSUS has been able to convince livestock farmers in six states to join them as members of, what HSUS calls, its State Agricultural Councils. HSUS says on its website that, "*we're forming a system of state agriculture councils, consisting of dedicated farmers who share our principles.*" Perhaps those 'dedicated farmers' would do well to clarify what those principles really are before they so willingly 'drink the HSUS Kool-Aid.' 

Slow is Fast - Swine Handling

By: Dr. Madonna Benjamin, MSUE Pork Team

In November of last year, the Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) Swine Team invited Nancy Lidster of DNL Farms, Saskatchewan, Canada, to share her expertise in Swine Handling (SH). The work Lidster presented was based on Stockmanship Handling created by Bud Williams, a well known cattle handler, and while he has passed away, his legacy and teachings lives through students, like Nancy Lidster.

Lidster provided a swine handling workshop on a Michigan hog farm and a seminar to Michigan State University students and faculty. She also trained the MSUE Swine Team so that in the future, the team could incorporate SH into their educational programs. The ultimate goal is to align SH with the Trucker Quality Assur-

ance program and enhance instruction on pig handling.

The premise of SH is that competent handling requires a comprehensive low stress approach to moving livestock. Handlers must understand the animals' motives and behavioral cues if they want a positive response. Pigs, like other livestock, are prey animals and we as predators (hunters) tend to want to circle the pig which will induce fear in the animal.

The pig has a prominent blind spot and, even within a large group, the pig will change it's body or head position to seek out the handler's movements and location. We call this locating behavior. Pigs will also use smells and sounds to keep track of the handler. The pig's locating behavior can be

(continued on page 21)

What's new in Social Media?

Excerpts from Dairy Carrie:

What is a "selfie?"

"In 2013, Oxford Dictionaries' word of the year was 'selfie.' Their official definition was 'A photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smart phone or webcam and uploaded to a social media website.'"

What is a "felfie?"

"It's time to meet the "felfie" or "farmer selfie." According to market research, more than half of farmers today are rocking (using) smart phones. Those phones have cameras, and if we have learned anything from Hollywood, a camera means you must take photos of yourself. A camera with an Internet connection means you must take selfies. While the felfie seems to have started in the UK, (farmingselfie.com) it's becoming a popular trend in America and beyond. The felfie provides what many urban people are searching for: a view of where their food starts. My own felfie below (bottom right) comes from a night last week in our freestall dairy barn when it was a nippy -35F in our part of Wisconsin. There are good conversations going on in the comments underneath photos or on Twitter with people getting answers to their food and farm questions straight from the source."

Find Dairy Carrie at:

<https://www.facebook.com/DairyCarrie>
and <http://dairycarrie.com/>



This could be you!



You can easily be a part of the "felfie" movement. If you would like to snap some felfies around the farm I will be posting them on our social media during National Ag Week, March 23-29, with a short tag line about who you are. You can email them to sprague@mipork.org or send them to our Facebook via message.

Remember if you post them on your personal Facebook or Twitter to write #felfie. When you "#" something it allows other people to see all the posts with the same "#," which helps more people see your felfie! Look for more social media tips in upcoming issues of *Michigan Pork*.

2014, Another Successful Year for the Green and White Hog Show

On January 24-25 youth from across the state of Michigan fought the elements in order to participate in the Michigan Pork Producers Association (MPPA) sponsored, Green and White Hog show in East Lansing, Mich.

The show was a combination of educational contests, a hog show and the MPPA Scholarship contest.


Friday night began with a field trip to Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health to listen to presentations by representatives from the Michigan Department of Ag and Rural Development and Michigan State University. They taught the 70 participants, which included not only exhibitors but also their parents, about biosecurity and disease transmission.

The field trip was followed by a showmanship demonstration, with 200 people in attendance, by Dale Ricker, a Program Specialist for Swine at the



Ohio State University (*pictured above*) who judged the following day.

Saturday began with educational contests. There were 28 participants in the essay contest, 115 in the skillathon, 48 in the power point contest and

there were 4 junior teams and 16 senior teams that participated in the quiz bowl portion. The afternoon concluded with the hog show in which a total of 192 hogs were exhibited, 141 in showmanship. 

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Communication: A Major Weapon Against PEDV

Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea (PED) virus has spread to more than 20 states so far on its way across the country. However, efforts to track and contain the disease are definitely helped by producers talking with their veterinarians and their farm neighbors about any change in PED status and efforts to prevent the virus' spread.

While many of the details surrounding the virus are still unfolding, what is known is that it transfers via swine feces and survives in manure for extended periods of time. That means anything that manure and the virus contacts can be a source of infection. Winter slush and muck are particularly helpful in keeping the virus on the move.

Whether or not your herd has encountered PED, there are several actions to consider.

While a positive diagnosis can be a touchy message to pass on, it's the responsible thing to do. Start with a commitment to communicate with farm personnel as well as neighboring producers, service providers and veterinarians.

"I consider it my ethical responsibility to alert others if I have PED," says Dale Norton, who operates a 1,500-sow farm in southern Michigan, serves a vice president of the National Pork Board and is a member of the MPPA board. "It's important to know where infection is and isn't, so you don't take PED-positive pigs into an area."

Norton sells two-thirds of his weaned pigs to two producers, located 20 miles away from his home farm, and finishes out the remaining hogs at three contract sites, 30 miles away. Recently he brought in a long-time swine nutritionist to serve as a facilitator to help write up procedures in the event Norton's herd breaks with PED. "I want protocols in place ahead of time so that our buyers and contractors

understand what and why we need to do certain things," Norton says. All parties will then sit down and discuss the strategies in detail.

Because PED is not a reportable disease, tracking and containment can be a particular challenge. In Indiana, the state Swine Health Advisory Committee agreed to map PED cases by county in order to stay informed.

"We have worked to desensitize a positive (PED) diagnosis, so that producers are comfortable notifying neighbors," says Bret Marsh, DVM, Indiana state veterinarian. "The point is to keep the conversation going within communities." This allows producers throughout the state to monitor developments and increase biosecurity or take additional precautions to keep the virus out.

Indiana's map is updated at least weekly—more often during the winter months. To date, 23 of Indiana's 92 counties have reported PED cases, Marsh notes.

It's that kind of local, state and national collaboration that is helping distribute much-needed information in the months since the virus has been identified in the United States. "There has been unprecedented cooperation; it is remarkable how the industry has stepped up to address this disease," Marsh says.

Beyond the standard biosecurity practices already in place, Norton took some additional measures to protect his herd. "First, we're trying to stay away from other pigs," he says. The

operation's isolated southern Michigan location helps.

Norton changed sow markets as his previous packer's load-out procedures presented some biosecurity risks, such as entering the chute and dock areas. He has committed one employee solely to loading sows and pigs and requires designated coveralls and a double-set of plastic boots. Trailers are cleaned at a car wash, then disinfected and dried.

Weaned pigs are shipped in a school bus with an access hole in the back and a 10-inch tube used to move pigs into the building. "We ask the producers to disinfect the loading chutes before we arrive," Norton says. The driver never gets out of the bus and she cleans it out once the transaction is complete.

Replacement gilts are isolated off site for 30 days. "Now that there's a test, we use a rope to test them for PED," Norton says.

Pelleted feed is transferred to a plastic garbage can in order to keep the bags out of the buildings. Similar efforts are made for all incoming supplies and packaging. He's also made sure his delivery service doesn't have other pig sites on the route.

"We're just trying to be vigilant," Norton says. "But I'm not sure we can avoid it."

To get more information on PED strategies, Marsh and Norton point to the Pork Checkoff research reports (updated regularly), fact sheets and resources available at pork.org/pedv.



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Practical Time and Temperature Options to Curb PED Virus

In a perfect world, all truck and trailers transporting hogs would be washed, disinfected and dried after every load. But since that's not the case, what are the workable alternatives as we face PED? Pork Checkoff funded research at Iowa State University address this critical issue.

"We were looking for alternatives between the full-blown-- washing, disinfecting and drying trailers—and doing nothing," says Derald Holtkamp, DVM, Iowa State University. "We didn't have any alternatives in the middle that would work to at least reduce the risk of PED exposure, if not eliminate it entirely."

Having a practical alternative is particularly important for vehicles transporting market hogs and cull sows. A field study headed by Jim Lowe, DVM, University of Illinois, in the early days of the PED outbreak found that trucks/trailers hauling pigs to market were a source of cross contamination. At the time, 17.3% of the trailers tested positive for PED at market. The study showed that each PED-contaminated trailer arriving at a plant contaminated between 0.20 to 2.30 additional trailers.


"That's as close to a smoking gun as you can get," Holtkamp says. "It tells us we are moving this virus all around." So, Iowa State researchers looked at options for trucks/trailers that had been scraped and swept of organic matter, but not washed. They focused on finding time and temperature combinations that would inactivate the virus. In the end, they discovered that only two options worked—heating the trailer to 160 F for 10 minutes or leaving it sit at 68 F for seven days. For the high-end temperatures, researchers concentrated on 145 F and 160 F for 10 minutes. "Heating a trailer to 160 is expensive—it takes a lot of propane or gas," Holtkamp says. "It would be good to see if other time and tempera-

ture combinations between 145 F and 160 F would work." However, he adds that given the virulence of PED, he would not be surprised if 160 F was the minimum temperature.

Housing a truck/trailer at 68 F for 7 days is not feasible for many operations, but for producers who haul one load of pigs a week it offers a solution. "If you're storing the trailer in an unheated machine shed—get it into a heated building if you can," Holtkamp advises.

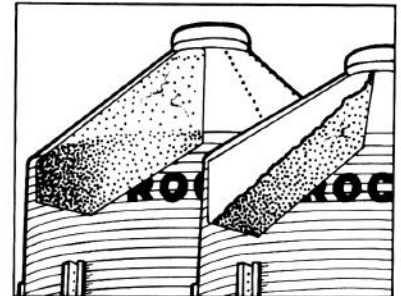
He offers producers these other take-home points:

- Washing, disinfecting and drying trucks/trailers between loads of pigs is still the gold standard. "If you're doing that today, we're not suggesting that you stop," Holtkamp points out. "But when you can't get that done, the times and temperatures designated in our study provide an alternative."
- The first priority is to scrape and sweep the trailer to get out as much organic matter as possible; then apply heat.
- Heating trailers to 145 F was not effective in killing PED; heating to 160 F for 10 minutes was effective. "If you have the ability to bake the trailer, we think that's a good way to reduce your risk of PED," Holtkamp notes.
- For producers who have the ability, allowing a trailer to sit idle for seven days at 68 F also is effective at mitigating PED exposure.

"Trucks and transport vehicles have to be part of our PED biosecurity efforts," Holtkamp says. "We now know, if a producer faces constraints that keep him from washing and disinfecting trailers, there are alternatives to reduce the risk of transmitting PED between groups of pigs." 

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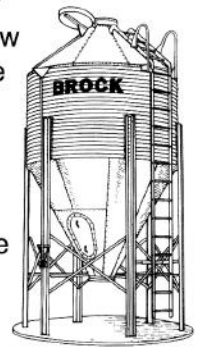


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Utilizing Warm Season Grasses as a Vegetative Buffer

USDA-NRCS and MSU Extension demonstrate the functionality of tall warm season grasses as vegetative buffers when planted next to livestock facilities.

By: Gerald May and Beth Ferry, MSUE, John Leif, Rose Lake PMC Manager and Riley Collins, MSUE Student Intern

Livestock odors are an ongoing concern for both the livestock producer and the farm's rural neighbors. In 2008 Larry Jacobson from the University of Minnesota Dept. of Biosystems and Agriculture Engineering, reported that over 50 percent of ammonia, hydrogen sulfide and odor from mechanically ventilated swine barns were concentrated in the air exhausted via the building's pit fans. Odor control strategies that focus on the ventilated air from pit fans may significantly reduce odor and other air emissions from the farm as a whole.

Odor control technologies are available but to be widely accepted and implemented on farms, odor reducing practices should meet three criteria:

- The technology should be research-based with the effectiveness of the practice well documented.
- Once installed the odor technology should require minimal daily maintenance.
- The installation and daily maintenance should be cost-effective and have a nominal effect on the cost of production.

Vegetative environmental buffers (VEBs) are strategic plantings of trees,

bushes and grasses intended to reduce odors and other air emissions from livestock facilities. A 2007 review of current research on VEBs determined VEBs serve five primary functions including:

- Mixing and dispersion of odorous air.
- Physically capturing of dust and odorous particles on the leaf surfaces.
- Acting as a biological sink and absorbing the constituents of the captured odorous particles.
- As air speed within the VEB slows down dust particles will settle to the land surface.
- VEBs improve the overall esthetic view of the farmstead.

Because they are relatively inexpensive to plant and almost maintenance free once established, vegetative buffers utilizing trees and bushes are being used by livestock farmers as landscape enhancements and for their potential odor mitigation. This past summer Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) partnered with the Natural Resources and Conservation Service's (USDA-NRCS) Rose Lake Plant Materials Center and H & H Farms of Vicksburg, Mich. to dem-


onstrate the use of tall warm season grasses as vegetative buffers to filter dust and odors contained in the ventilated air from swine barn pit fans.

The practice of using tall warm season grasses as vegetative buffers near livestock facilities, if proven successful in reducing air emissions, offers unique opportunities. Grasses can be grown close to buildings without concern that roots may damage underground services or the manure pit integrity. Though they must regrow each spring, grasses will reach their mature height relatively fast when compared to slower growing trees or bushes.

The intent of the first year of the demonstration was to determine if warm season grasses could be established and continue to thrive near the discharge of swine barn pit fans given the constant exposure to dust, ammonia, hydrogen sulfide and other air emissions.

Four species of grass were incorporated in the demonstration plots; Giant Miscanthus, Indiangrass, Switch Grass and Coastal Panic Grass. Weeds were controlled at the planting sites and the vegetative buffers were watered weekly throughout the summer.

Two of the species survived the transplanting, Giant Miscanthus and Switch Grass, and had substantial growth in 2013. The other two species, Indiangrass and Coastal Panic Grass, either died or had very little vegetative growth.

Future plans for these vegetative buffers include observing next year's regrowth of Giant Miscanthus and Switch Grass (2014), reestablishing the Indiangrass and Coastal Panic Grass (2014), and monitoring the warm season grasses as an odor control practice (2015). 



New Restrictions for Antimicrobial use in Animal Agriculture

By: Phil Durst, MSUE and Dan Grooms, DVM, PhD at MSU College of Veterinary Medicine

Concerns about antimicrobial resistant pathogens impacting humans have resulted in new “guidance” for antimicrobial use in animal agriculture. Over the past several years, there has been increasing concern worldwide that bacteria (or other microbes) that cause disease in people may become resistant to available antimicrobials because of overuse both in humans and animals.

Resistance by bacterial populations is a natural phenomenon. Concerns about diseases that are untreatable with common antimicrobials, and therefore result in higher costs and increased mortality, have led to many pointing a finger at antimicrobial use in agriculture even though no link has been found between that use and resistant zoonotic bacteria (bacteria that can infect both humans and animals).

On Dec. 11, 2013, the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued Guidance Document 213.

In essence, the guidance document asks that pharmaceutical companies remove the label indications for non-therapeutic use of medically important antimicrobials that are administered in feed or water. There will be a three year phase in of these new guidelines.

Though it is not a law or a regulation, this issuance bears the weight of a legal requirement for producers and for veterinarians. They are asking for the drug companies to agree to comply and to indicate whether they will do so by March 2014. Already, two major companies, Zoetis and Eli Lilly & Co. have indicated that they will comply.

For animal agriculture, it means that targeted therapeutic use of antimicrobials for treatment, control and prevention of diseases is maintained while eliminating non-therapeutic antimicrobial use. The intent is to restrict the use of antimicrobials so that the threat of antimicrobial resistance is

reduced. William Flynn, DVM, FDA deputy director for science policy said, “antimicrobial resistance may not be completely preventable, but we need to do what we can to slow it down.”

The new restrictions will hit certain segments of agriculture harder than others. Many poultry, pork and cattle producers have commonly fed low levels of antimicrobials to improve health and performance. So it will mean that producers and their veterinarians will need to adjust.


MSUE specialists and field staff recommend that all producers take the following action steps:

- All drug use on farms should be recorded and evaluated regularly with your veterinarian. Antimicrobials should only be used when there is a good potential for effective therapy.
- Unless directed to do so by a veterinarian, label directions of all pharmaceutical products must be followed. This includes the intended animal, intended disease indication, dosage, route of administration, duration of use and withdrawal periods. You are

legally responsible to assure the safety of meat and milk by following the label.

- Producers should work closely with their veterinarian to have a plan for herd or flock health that includes strategies for prevention, monitoring and treatment of disease. Health is critical for production efficiency and financial success. Having your veterinarian regularly walk through the farm with you to evaluate practices and conditions that may impact health and working together to develop better systems for health is a step for the future of your operation.

For more information on developing drug protocols with your veterinarian, see the MSU Extension News story “Work with your veterinarian on drug protocols” at <http://msue.anr.msu.edu/> website.

Antimicrobial resistance should be a concern to all producers as well as consumers. The social contract that producers have with consumers is that the production of food products will result in better health, rather than threaten health. 




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Hawkins Earns Industry Honor

David Hawkins, a retired professor in the Department of Animal Science, was inducted into the Saddle & Sirloin Portrait Gallery during a banquet attended by agricultural leaders from across America earlier this month.

The Saddle & Sirloin Portrait Gallery is the livestock industry's Hall of Fame. Being inducted into the Portrait Gallery is the highest honor earned in the livestock industry. For more than a century, inductees have been chosen based on their service to agriculture, and their subsequent impact on the livestock industry.

Hawkins started his teaching career at Michigan State University (MSU) after earning his doctorate in 1969. In 1973 he was named the faculty coordinator of the MSU Beef Cattle Teaching Center. During his more than 40-year career at MSU, he has been a teacher, livestock judging team coach, student mentor, purebred livestock show judge and National Collegiate Livestock Judging Contest Superintendent. Hawkins has received numerous awards, including Distinguished Teacher, Animal Industry Service and Fellow Awards from the American Society of Animal Science.

Currently, Hawkins and his wife, Kathleen, reside in Mason, Michigan where they raise Angus cattle. 

(Top Right) Hawkins, standing in front of his portrait that was made part of the prestigious Saddle & Sirloin Portrait Collection.



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MPPA Awards Four Scholarships

On January 25th at the 2014 Green and White Hog Show, Michigan Pork Producer's Association awarded three Pork Industry Scholarships and an Institute of Ag Tech (IAT) Swine Management Program Scholarship.

Bryant Chapman - 1st Place

Bryant attends Michigan State University (MSU) and is enrolled in the Animal Science's Production Animal Scholars Concentration. His long range career goals are to become a large animal veterinarian and work with both large domestic and exotic animals.

Shelby Sopocy - 2nd Place

Shelby is working on her bachelors degree in Animal Science at MSU. After graduation she plans on pursuing a career within the commercial pork industry preferably in North Carolina or the Midwest, she is particularly interested in the breed to wean aspect of pork production and more specifically farrowing.




Scholarship applicants from left to right. Skye Whitcomb, Gaines; Shelby Sopocy, St. Johns; Bryant Chapman, South Rockwood; and Emily Webster, Lansing.

Emily Webster 3rd Place

After graduating from MSU Emily hopes to pursue a career in sales or marketing, with an emphasis in the animal agriculture industry. She plans to work for a meat processing company, with the goal of eventually acquiring a government relations position within the company or industry. Her

long term career goal is to eventually work for an agriculture interest group such as the National Pork Producers Council or American Farm Bureau, to be proactive in the legislature on policies that greatly impact producers and the industry as a whole.

Skye Whitcomb - IAT Swine Management

When Skye finishes the swine tech program she plans to further her education at MSU and receive her bachelors degree in Animal Science, with a specialization in swine. She is interested in farrowing and swine nutrition and see herself eventually working with nutrition for show pigs. 



First place scholarship winner Bryant Chapman gives a presentation on gestation stalls to the judges and audience at Green and White.





Agricultural Leaders OF MICHIGAN

Ag Leaders Applaud Gov. Snyder’s Proposal to Invest in Michigan Roads

The Agricultural Leaders of Michigan applauded Governor Rick Snyder for including common-sense investments to maintain and repair Michigan roads and bridges as part of his Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 budget proposal.

“Agriculture is growing in Michigan, and our farmers and agribusinesses depend on reliable roads every day to transport food and agricultural commodities,” said Val Vail-Shirey, executive director

of Michigan Allied Poultry Industries, Inc. “Properly maintained roads and bridges along with strong rail and water transportation are critical for Michigan’s agriculture sector. Governor Snyder’s forward thinking and commitment to a strong transportation infrastructure in Michigan sets the stage for even more growth for agriculture in the years to come.”

The Governor’s FY 2015 proposal includes \$254 million for road and bridge improvements statewide.

In addition, it proposes \$33 million in investment to improve Michigan’s capacity to maintain road infrastructure. This includes \$28 million in funding to replace aging computer systems and an additional \$5 million for state facilities – ultimately improving Michigan’s capacity to proactively maintain roads and prevent future repair costs from being passed on to taxpayers.

Michigan Ag Leaders Highlight Economic Momentum, Growing Ag Exports in Remarks to State Legislative Staff

On February 10, the Michigan Pork Producers Association sponsored an educational forum for legislative staff hosted by the Agricultural Leaders of Michigan (ALM). Dave Armstrong, President and CEO of Greenstone Farm Credit Services, and Sam Hines, Executive Vice President of the Michigan Pork Producers Association, discussed the economic opportunities for Michigan’s agriculture sector in the coming year.

Armstrong discussed the overall financial health of Michigan’s agriculture sector, including a quote from Governor Rick Snyder’s State of the State address earlier this year in which he said: “Another

industry that’s critical to Michigan is our agriculture industry, and we’re having great growth there. In 2010, it was a \$91 billion industry. In 2013, it’s grown to a \$96 billion industry. It’s on a path to being a hundred billion dollar industry in Michigan, and one of the key reasons in this last twelve-month period, agricultural exports from Michigan to other countries grew by sixteen percent. Ag is on a roll.”

Armstrong noted that while row crop producers are expected to have somewhat lower profits in 2014, the livestock sector will see higher profits due to lower feed costs.

Hines echoed these comments in his presentation, saying that Michigan’s pork producers are on track

to have their best year in nearly a decade. Profits for pork producers are projected to average around \$30 per head in 2014 which, if realized, would make 2014 the most profitable year since 2005. The U.S. is the third largest pork producing country and the largest exporter of pork worldwide. Demand for pork both domestically and internationally is expected to remain high through 2014.

This event was part of a series of monthly forums sponsored by ALM aimed at educating legislative staff on issues important to Michigan’s agricultural industry.



Slow is Fast - Swine Handling

(continued from page 11)

misconstrued by handlers as they attempt to run back to their original location.

As handlers, it is important to be able to recognize when a pig is displaying signs of fear, such as ears up and forward - when pigs are moving forward, and heads up and turned - when pigs are trying to see the handler. In large groups, fearful pigs tend to jump on one another and pile, which can be detrimental to the fearful animal and other pigs. When handlers start to elicit fear responses from pigs they should take a second to counter the pig's natural response of keeping sight of the handler by "releasing the pressure." When the pig starts to turn towards you, instead of pushing forward, step back and allow the pig to see you and circle if necessary. This will calm the pig and he will return to the group that you are moving.


Often handlers think it will save time when moving pigs to goad the last and most "reachable" pig. In fact, by doing so, we are encouraging it's attention back to us, rather than forward towards the flow of the group. In large groups the pigs in the front will naturally pull the other pigs forward, as a part of a pig's natural desire to be with the group. If the handler pressures the "reachable" pigs at the back of the group, it draws the attention away from the flow and back to the handler. The pigs become fearful, stop and/or circle back in an effort to observe the handler's behavior. Alternatively, moving slowly, reading the pigs' cues and "releasing the pressure" will result in a shorter load time.

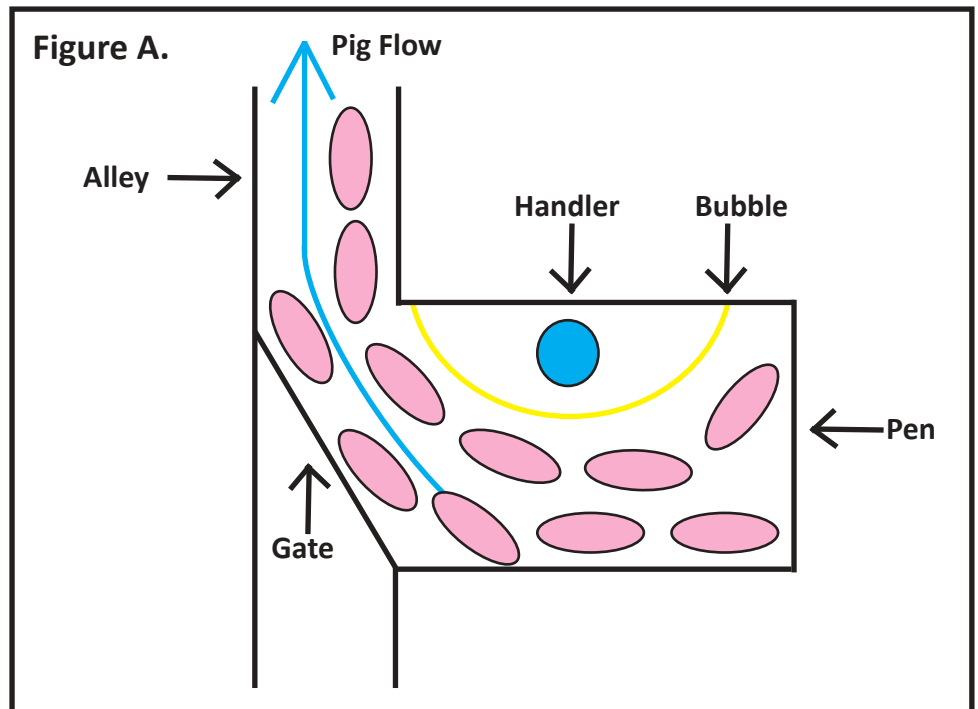
Often we "create what we anticipate." When handling livestock, people behave in anticipation of past negative experiences. We initiate the handling by banging feeders or using electric prods because in previous handling experiences during specific circumstances, such as cold days or

in sunlight, the handling was difficult. The more we pressure, the more likely the pig will be to focus on the handler instead of the direction of movement. For example, you are on a highway driving at a speed just under the limit. Directly and close behind you is "Mr. Road Rage" and he wants you to drive faster. He is honking on the horn and raising his fist. The angry driver has your attention and likely, you will slow down while you consider your options such as not speed up or taking an early exit to avoid him.


An important tenant of SH is that as a handler, we create a group flight zone flow, called the "bubble." The bubble is a space that allows the pigs to watch the handler while moving forward in a group. (See Figure A.) Positioning of the handler, creates either a negative or positive flow. An example of negative flow would be to enter a pen from the back and try to press the pigs out the front gate. Some pigs will move out the gate, but most will continue to circle the handler near the back of the pen and not notice their exit. A positive method of using

the bubble is to enter the pen from the gate where you want the pigs to leave. Moving along the wall closest to the gate opening, step 5 to 10 feet inside the pen, this will draw their attention to the handler and cause a flow of pigs to move along the edge of the bubble to arc toward the gate opening.


The handler bubble allows the handler to create a controlled flow of pigs, an arc movement, based solely on a pig's natural response to follow the herd. The MSUE Pork Team will share footage and photographs of the bubble during the "Slow is Fast" presentation at the Statewide Meetings (See insert) and we hope you can join us for this time-wise and tested method of moving livestock. It has been said that we use the tool that is given. It is our hope that through this article and your attendance at the Statewide Meetings, we can give you another tool for moving pigs. This will increase your understanding of cues from swine, reduce the number of workers and time required to load or unload pigs and reduce the stress on animals and handlers. 



Provision Detrimental to Pork Producers Dropped From Tax Reform Proposal

In a major victory for many pork producers, draft tax reform legislation does not include a provision that could have been detrimental to their operations. The tax proposal from House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dave Camp, R-Mich., would have made significant changes to the tax code, including condensing the current seven income brackets into two and decreasing tax rates for families and job creators by abolishing the Alternative Minimum Tax for individuals, pass-through businesses and corporations. An earlier discussion draft included a provision that would have required farmers who have gross receipts of \$10 million or more to switch from using cash accounting to accrual accounting; current law requires this of operations of \$25 million or more. For many pork producers, the accrual method would result in, for example, the taxation in one tax year on pigs (inventory) that go to market in the next tax year. The switch also would have subjected pork producers to new compliance regulations – which are hundreds of pages – on inventory capitalization rules. NPPC in January signed onto a letter to Senate Finance Committee objecting this proposal. NPPC in May 2013 also signed onto a joint agriculture letter expressing concerns about the proposal’s elimination of “special exceptions” for farming businesses. In addition, NPPC staff and several producers, bankers, and accounting firms came to Washington in May to meet with key Ways and Means Committee staff to articulate pork industry concerns. Responding to the agricultural industry, Camp dropped the provision from the draft legislation. 

WTO Hears Canada and Mexico ‘COOL’ Case Against U.S.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) held a public hearing in Geneva, Switzerland, to hear Canada’s and Mexico’s cases against the revised U.S. Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) rule. The WTO in 2012 ruled that the COOL law violated U.S. obligations under the WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade, and it gave the United States until May 23, 2013, to make its meat-labeling law compliant with WTO rules. The U.S. Department of Agriculture issued a new COOL law intended to come into compliance with WTO guidelines, but the revised rule is considered by the Canadian and Mexican governments to be more discriminatory than the previous labeling scheme, and they requested a WTO compliance panel to review the rule. A ruling from the panel is expected this year. If the WTO finds that the U.S. rule is discriminatory, it will then start a retaliation proceeding. Canada and Mexico could be given authority to retaliate against U.S. products through very high tariffs that will restrict U.S. exports and kill U.S. jobs. Canada, the second largest export market for U.S. agricultural products valued at \$21.3 billion, already has issued a draft retaliation list that includes fresh pork and beef, bakery goods, rice, apples, wine, maple syrup and furniture. Mexico, which is the third largest export market for U.S. agriculture totaling \$18.0 billion in 2013, is threatening to suspend preferential tariffs for a variety of produce items, meat, dairy products and other commodities. Such retaliation would be similar to the tariffs applied on pork and many other products by Mexico a few years ago during the NAFTA trucking dispute. Mexico and Canada were the second and fourth largest export markets by value for U.S. pork in 2013, with exports totaling \$1.22 billion and \$844 million, respectively. 

Public Notice by Michigan Pork Producers Association and the National Pork Board

The election of pork producer delegate candidates for the 2014 National Pork Producers (Pork Act) Delegate Body will take place at 10:30 a.m., Wednesday, June 18, 2014 in conjunction with the Annual Meeting of Michigan Pork Producers Association in the GreenStone Farm Credit Services Building at 3515 West Road, East Lansing, MI 48823. All Michigan pork producers are invited to attend.

Any producer, age 18 or older, who is a resident of the state and has paid all assessments due may be considered as a delegate candidate and/or participate in the election. All eligible producers are encouraged to bring with them a sales receipt proving that hogs were sold in their name and the checkoff deducted. For more information, contact Michigan Pork Producers Association, 3515 West Road, Suite B, East Lansing, MI 48823, 517/853-3782.

Farm Bill Signed into Law

On the Michigan State University campus, President Obama signed into law the 2014 Farm Bill on February 7, which the Senate approved, following House passage. The \$956 billion measure, among other things, replaces direct crop payments with an insurance program that would kick in when farmers suffer losses.

For the U.S. pork industry, the five-year Farm Bill includes trichinae surveillance and feral swine control programs, a provision requiring the Secretary of Agriculture to establish an Undersecretary for Trade and

one requesting the U.S. Department of Agriculture to study setting up a catastrophic disease event insurance program and reauthorization of export promotion programs.

Dropped from a final bill were provisions strongly backed by National Pork Producers Council (NPPC), including ones that would have prohibited USDA from doing further work on the so-called GIPSA Rule related to livestock contracts, fixed the Country-of-Origin Labeling law for meat to make it compliant with U.S. international trade obligations

and prohibited states from dictating production practices for agricultural goods sold within their borders but produced in other states. NPPC kept out of the legislation the so-called Egg Bill, which sought to codify an agreement between the Humane Society of the United States and the egg industry on cage sizes for egg-laying hens. NPPC argued that allowing the federal government to dictate farm production practices for the egg industry would have set a dangerous precedent. 🐷

NPPC, Vilsack Take Issue with the EU Stand on Agriculture Trade

The United States and the European Union (EU) exchanged tariff offers in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) talks. While the EU is willing to eliminate tariffs on nearly all goods, it announced publicly it was unwilling to eliminate tariffs on beef, poultry and pork.

Further, EU Trade Minister Karl De Gucht stated that the EU will not change its legislation regarding beef hormones and the feed additive rac-

topamine, which is used in beef and pork production. NPPC's position is that tariffs should be eliminated on all products, including pork.

"We will not accept anything other than the elimination of all tariffs on our products, and we are going to hold you to the WTO principle of equivalence," said Nick Giordano, NPPC's vice president and counsel for International Affairs in response to De Gucht's comments.

The elimination of EU tariffs and non-tariff measures are reasonable requests and are consistent with previous U.S. free trade agreements. U.S. Secretary Tom Vilsack signaled his unhappiness with the EU by stating there will be no trade agreement with the Europeans unless Brussels agrees to engage on difficult issues such as technology-based production. He said he has told this privately to his European counterparts and to U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman. "Now," Secretary Vilsack announced at the U.S. Department of Agriculture outlook conference, "I am saying it publicly."

The EU is the second largest market in the world for pork consumption and represents a tremendous market opportunity for U.S. pork exports. Removal of all EU barriers would significantly increase U.S. pork exports to the EU, creating more than 17,000 U.S. jobs, according to Iowa State University economist Dermot Hayes. 🐷



All activities reported under this heading are financed by non-check-off funds.

USDA FSIS RELEASES SALMONELLA ACTION PLAN

USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) released its Salmonella Action Plan, outlining how to address lowering Salmonella contamination rates in meat and poultry. While prevalence of Salmonella on pork products has fallen dramatically over the years, there are some points in this strategy that are pork-specific.

The FSIS Administrator established the Strategic Performance Working Group (SPWG) to implement performance reviews and to improve agency performance. The SPWG hosted a series of teleconferences to identify potential actions to be taken to decrease Salmonellosis.

The proposed actions include: exploring developing a Salmonella sampling program for pork products, including generating a performance standard; publishing a directive with instructions to FSIS inspection personnel on the verification activities related to sanitary dressing procedures in hog slaughter operations; developing standards and, if needed, sampling programs for hog carcasses and pork products; and collecting samples of beef and pork tissue containing specific lymph nodes from establishments where warranted. FSIS ceased sampling pork carcasses due

to the percent of pork carcass samples positive for Salmonella being consistently very low. Pork products are not currently sampled for Salmonella testing. National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) will be working with FSIS as they advance this strategy.

FDA ANNOUNCES ANTIBIOTIC GUIDELINES AND PROPOSES NEW RULE

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced the final Guidance 213 and proposed rule changes to the Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) (*See page 17*). Guidance 213 asks veterinary drug companies to voluntarily remove growth promotion labels from antibiotics important to human medicine and to increase veterinary oversight of therapeutic uses of those same antibiotics.

The VFD rule modifications are focused on the process of expanding and demonstrating veterinary oversight of antibiotics added to animal feed. NPPC has been working with FDA on the issues to ensure the new regulations are workable on farms and will be providing comments on the proposed VFD rule

COLOMBIA REMOVES ITS TRICHINAE BARRIER TO U.S. PORK EXPORTS

Colombia issued its decision to remove all trichinae risk-mitigation requirements on U.S. pork, which include testing and freezing of U.S.

pork and pork products. NPPC worked closely with the U.S. government and Colombian officials to reach an agreement on removal of all mitigation requirements.

Colombia now will recognize the United States as “negligible risk” for trichinae and require that all pigs whose meat is intended for export be part of the Pork Quality Assurance Plus (PQA Plus) program. This concept is consistent with forthcoming international standards on determination of negligible risk for trichinae.

The removal of the trichinae mitigation requirement and the ability to ship fresh/chilled pork will boost U.S. pork exports. Through October of 2013 U.S. exports of pork and pork products to Colombia have reached more than 26,000 metric tons, an increase of 77 percent compared with the same time in 2012, making Colombia the ninth largest export destination for U.S. pork and the largest export market in South America.

NPPC will continue its efforts to remove trichinae mitigation requirements in Chile, Peru and Singapore, in connection with the Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations, as well as in other markets that maintain this barrier.

HOUSE, SENATE APPROVE OMNIBUS SPENDING BILL

The House and Senate approved a \$1.1 trillion omnibus spending bill to fund the federal government for the rest of fiscal 2014. The bill provides \$20.9 billion – an increase of \$350 million from fiscal 2013 – for discretionary funding for USDA, the Food

and Drug Administration (FDA), the Commodity Futures Trading Commission and the Farm Credit Administration.

USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service would receive more than \$1 billion, \$19 million less than fiscal 2013. Also included are \$20 million for feral swine eradication and \$404 million for construction of the National Bio- and Agro-Defense Facility in Manhattan, Kan., to replace Plum Island in New York.

In addition to funding agencies and programs, the bill continues the prohibition on the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) from implementing regulations related to the 2010 proposed GIPSA rule that dealt with contracts in the livestock and poultry industries.

The omnibus package also includes language addressing mandatory country-of-origin labeling (COOL), expressing that the May 23 rule from USDA on meat labeling does not meet U.S. trade obligations under the World Trade Organization and should be changed. While the COOL language is helpful and puts USDA on notice that Congress is not satisfied with its approach, it is non-binding and does not force USDA to take action.

The bill marks the first comprehensive spending proposal for the federal government since the 2012 omnibus spending bill. The federal government has since been running on piecemeal funding bills.

PRELIMINARY AGRICULTURE CENSUS NUMBERS SHOW FARM NUMBERS DOWN

The 2012 Census of Agriculture preliminary numbers were recently made available, showing farm numbers declining from 2007 – the year the last Agriculture Census was published. The number of small and large farms remained fixed, while mid-size farm numbers declined. The number of farms is 2.1 million, down more than 4 percent from 2007.

For the second time in history, crop sales of \$212.4 billion surpassed livestock sales of \$182.2 billion. As previous censuses have demonstrated, principal farm operators continue to become older, by 1.2 years, and more diverse as minorities are entering agriculture professions. The final report will be made public in May.

PORK CARES WEBSITE GETS A RESEARCH-BASED MAKEOVER

The pork industry website Pork Cares (porkcares.org) rolled out a fresh look with new images and messaging based on consumer research. Jointly-funded by NPPC and the National Pork Board, the new Pork Cares site offers more in-depth explanations about how pigs are raised and answers many questions consumers have. The site also highlights the continuous improvements made in U.S. pork production.

AGRICULTURE, VETERINARY GROUPS ASK FOR ANIMAL HEALTH LAB NETWORK FUNDING

More than 80 national and state agriculture groups, including NPPC, sent a letter to the Senate and House Appropriations Committees seeking fiscal 2015 funding of \$15 million for the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN), which was authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill.

The NAHLN was developed in response to the Public Health Security and Bio-Terrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002 and the Homeland Security Presidential Directive – 9 (HSPD-9) of 2004 to “develop nationwide laboratory networks for food, veterinary, plant health and water quality that integrate existing Federal and State laboratory resources, are interconnected, and utilize standardized diagnostic protocols and procedures.”

During the past 12 years, the NAHLN – composed of federal, university and state veterinary diagnostic laboratories – has established the framework of a surveillance and emergency response system that provides critical and ongoing resources for laboratory testing, surveillance, information management, quality assurance and the development and validation of new tests.

The NAHLN allows laboratories to test for economically devastating diseases such as mad cow disease, foot-and-mouth disease, avian and

swine influenza and classical swine fever.

U.S. AND CANADA HARMONIZE NAMES OF MEAT CUTS TO FACILITATE TRADE

The United States and Canada launched a pilot program harmonizing the names of 22 meat and poultry wholesale cuts. The U.S. Institutional Meat Purchase Specifications (IMPS) will be adopted by both countries as the standard nomenclature system.

The program will have little effect on consumers since it only encompasses wholesale cuts, but it benefits industry by reducing the costs of maintaining separate inventories, further facilitating efficient trade between the countries.

Started in 2011, the U.S.-Canada Regulatory Cooperation Committee (RCC) was established to create a more effective and efficient trade system and benefits consumers and industry by lowering costs.

Working closely with the RCC, NPPC played an active role in successfully moving the nomenclature harmonization forward over the past three years.

The program will significantly reduce regulatory barriers and facilitate trade for the meat industries in both countries. Canada is among the top five foreign export markets for U.S. pork, exporting more than 227,000 metric tons, valued at over \$844 million in 2013.

FERC ORDERS EMERGENCY OPERATIONS TO ADDRESS PROPANE CRISIS

Seeking to quickly address the rapidly expanding emergency caused by bitter arctic weather and insufficient supplies of propane, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for the first time in history used its emergency authority to order the operator of the major Midwestern propane pipeline to allocate sufficient "available capacity" to address supply concerns.

This action, which is the culmination of an effort NPPC jump started in a series of emails and phone calls to FERC staff on Jan. 24, came after increasing public and political concerns over the crisis.

Following an initial letter to President Obama from the Minnesota Congressional delegation, 73 additional members of Congress led by Reps. Collin Peterson, D-Minn., and Adrian Smith, R-Neb., sent a letter to the president encouraging him to take immediate action to address the shortage.

2013 U.S. PORK EXPORTS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture released full-year export data, showing the U.S. pork industry shipped \$6.1 billion, or about 2.14 million metric tons, of pork in 2013.

Exports decreased by 4.3 percent in value and 5.2 percent in quantity compared with 2012 exports. Japan again was the No. 1 export market for

U.S. pork, valued at \$1.89 billion. Exports to NAFTA partner Mexico increased by more than 8.3 percent in value last year, totaling \$1.2 billion in pork export sales.

The Dominican Republic-Central American Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) continues to be a great success for U.S. pork exports as tariff phase-outs continue. U.S. pork exports rose by 14.7 percent in value to participating DR-CAFTA partners last year and are expected to continue to increase. Two DR-CAFTA partners, the Dominican Republic and Honduras, saw significant growth in 2013, with value exports growing by 20.7 percent and 13.4 percent, respectively. Both markets account for nearly \$100 million in annual U.S. pork exports.

Separate free trade agreements with Colombia and Panama were implemented in 2012, and the value of pork exports to those countries in 2013 increased by 204.5 percent and 57 percent, respectively.

Exports to China/Hong Kong grew 2.1 percent in volume on sales of nearly \$1 billion. In the coming year, NPPC will continue to press the Obama administration to keep export markets open to U.S. pork and will advocate for the acceptance of new free trade agreements to expand U.S. pork exports abroad.



Senators Call For Japan To Eliminate Tariffs

Senate lawmakers are calling on Japan to eliminate tariff and non-tariff trade barriers for U.S. agricultural products as part of the ongoing Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade talks.

The TPP is a regional negotiation that includes the United States, Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam, which account for nearly 40 percent of global GDP. Lead negotiators are met in Singapore to discuss outstanding issues, including Japan's recalcitrance on market access.

In a letter sent to U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman, 18 senators, led by Michael Bennett, D-Colo., and Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, asked for assurances that the TPP negotiations will not be concluded until Japan agrees to eliminate tariff and non-tariff trade barriers for agricultural products. In addition to Bennett and Grassley, signing the letter were Sens. Roy Blunt, R-Mo.; Richard Burr, R-N.C.; John Cornyn, R-Texas; Joe Donnelly, D-Ind.; Deb Fischer, R-Neb.; Kay Hagan, D-N.C.; Jim Inhofe, R-Okla.; Mike Johanns, R-Neb.; Mark Kirk, R-Ill.; Jerry Moran, R-Kan.; Rob Portman, R-Ohio; Mark Pryor, D-Ark.; Pat Roberts, R-Kan.; John Thune, R-S.D.; and Mark Udall, D-Colo.

Japan is demanding special treatment for its agricultural sector, including exclusion from the agreement of certain "sensitive" products. The United States never has agreed to allow a trading partner to exempt as many tariff lines as Japan is requesting. It wants exemptions for 586 tariff lines, or 11 percent of its tariff schedule. (In the 17 free trade agreements the United States has concluded this century, a total of 233 tariff lines have been exempted from having their tariffs go to zero.)

The Asian nation is an important market for U.S. agriculture – the fourth largest – which shipped \$12.1

billion of food and agricultural products to the island nation in 2013.

The senators pointed out in their letter that, if Japan is allowed to claim exceptions for sensitive products, other TPP countries inevitably will demand the right to do the same. That, they said, would cost U.S. jobs and billions of dollars in future U.S. agricultural exports and would undermine the TPP and future trade talks, including the ongoing Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations between the United States and the European Union.

A number of U.S. agricultural organizations resounded the points in the Senate letter.

"What is achieved in TPP with Japan will set the standard for future TPP partners such as China and the Philippines and for TTIP negotiations," said NPPC President Randy Spronk, a hog farmer from Edgerton, Minn., who pointed out that the EU already has indicated it will seek to protect pork and other agricultural products. "Japan's market access offer, if accepted, would be a radical departure from past U.S. trade policy, exempting nearly three times more tariff lines than were exempted in all 17 previous U.S. free trade agreements combined. All U.S. sectors are at risk if the precedent of allowing widespread product tariff exemptions is established."

Those sentiments were echoed by Bob McCan, president of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and a cow-calf producer from Victoria, Texas. "It is fundamentally important that all TPP members, including Japan, abide by the same terms of TPP as the other members. Excluding products for purely political reasons sets a dangerous precedent that will result in other TPP countries seeking similar treatment. This will undermine all efforts to make TPP a true 21st century agreement based on market principles

and sound science," said McCan.


"It is vital that TPP be done in a comprehensive manner so that all of America's farmers and ranchers can realize the benefits of a more open regional marketplace," said American Farm Bureau Federation President Bob Stallman. "The Trans-Pacific region is an economically dynamic slice of the world, and to be meaningful, these talks need to enhance opportunities for all sectors, rather than picking winners and losers based on one nation's perceptions."

Added James H. Hodges, president and CEO of the American Meat Institute, "The TPP is a 21st century trade agreement that must be ambitious and comprehensive. To live up to the high standards of the TPP partners, Japan must be willing to negotiate all products."

"As a major wheat importer, it is in Japan's interest to free its grain trade and ensure the future competitiveness of its large milling and wheat foods industries under TPP," said U.S. Wheat Associates Chairman Dan Hughes.

"We are open to a reasonable but limited amount of time for Japan to transition to a zero tariff for wheat," said National Association of Wheat Growers President Bing Von Bergen, "but we must see that outcome if Japan is to earn our support for its TPP membership."

The latest round of negotiations for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) came to an end, with trade ministers from the 12 participating nations failing to reach a final deal.

In a joint statement, the participants indicated that they "agreed on the majority of the landing zones" and have a framework for moving forward. The next round of negotiations has not yet been scheduled. 

Economists Reveal Top Trends Likely to Impact the Pork Checkoff

Analysis is part of the National Pork Board's strategic planning initiative.

As the National Pork Board (NPB) sets its course for 2015 through 2020, the organization's strategic planning task force was recently presented an analysis of top trends in the economic and food production environment that are most likely to impact the Pork Checkoff program. The analysis is part of the NPB's strategic planning initiative. The task force met for the first time in December of 2013.

"Our overarching objective is to assess the role the Pork Checkoff plays in an ever-changing world and to identify strategic opportunities for us to help move the pork industry forward," said Chris Novak, chief executive officer of the NPB. "This may mean developing programs that increase consumer trust and comfort in purchasing pork.

"Consumer needs regarding food safety and transparency, and producer needs to protect the environment and provide the best possible animal care will be front and center," Novak said.

Dr. Daniel Sumner, the University of California at Davis, and Dr. Steve Meyer, Paragon Economics, identified the following trends as critical to address:

- There is a marked increase in U.S. consumption of pork, which is outpacing sales of all meat products. U.S. pork consumption is at a 10-year high and only expected to increase.
- While the domestic pork market is the biggest by far for U.S. producers with 75 percent of U.S. pork production consumed domestically, Asia presents a growth market with 30-year projections of income growth and a rising middle class that demands more protein and produce.
- Productivity of the average pig farmer has increased, with pigs per litter and average market hog weights both increasing. This

creates an immediate 2.6 percent increase in the amount of pork entering the market today.

- Food safety and farm practice issues will modify demand in rich countries and increasingly in middle-income countries with retailers - including foodservice firms - showing a strong interest in understanding farm practices and encouraging farmers to meet the demands of opinion leaders.

"Real per capita expenditures are very strong, with individual pork demand at its highest levels since 2004," said Meyer, who noted that the percentage growth in pork sales in the past year is the highest among all meat products, including pork, beef, poultry and lamb.

"Domestically, people are spending more on meat even while per capita income fails to grow. Following a year where animal activism increased its pressure through the release of undercover videos and the use of social media, people not only continued to buy meat, but in fact, bought more meat and paid significantly more for it," Meyer said.

Sumner said global income and population growth continue to drive pork demand.

"On a global basis, the need for increased pork production over the next decade is very real," Sumner said. "The U.S. pork industry must keep up, and even outperform past history, in order to meet increasing demand in both wealthy countries and those developing countries with rapidly growing per capita incomes."


For members of the task force, the strategic planning process will be centered on asking a simple, yet aspirational question: "What if?" The question is designed to push the imagination about what the industry could be.

"In 2009, we set a vision for an

industry that was responsible, sustainable, professional and profitable. We set goals to protect a farmer's freedom to operate, to reposition fresh pork with consumers and to make U.S. pork producers more competitive in the global marketplace," Novak said. "Today, we must also focus on the issues important to society. That's what this planning process will uncover."

Novak added that among the most important topics of interest today are food safety, the environment and animal welfare.

"Our Pork Checkoff was founded by family farmers who recognized the need to invest in the development and promotion of their industry. We remain, today, a farmer-led organization that is focused on providing a return to producers for their Checkoff investments," Novak said. "At the same time, we need to acknowledge that the issues and challenges facing producers are no longer only producer issues, but rather affect the entire pork chain. Recognizing this new reality, and finding a way to align our interests with retailers, foodservice companies and packers will be critical to our long-term success. Progress is good and momentum important, but a vision to challenge the status quo is most critical."

Throughout 2014, the Pork Checkoff and the food industry leaders comprising its strategic planning task force will review research, market data and the opinions of agriculture's top economists and other experts in an effort to set a strategic vision to carry the organization from 2015 through 2020. 

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Why 2014 Just Got Better

There are some good reasons why 2014 looks like the best year in the pork industry since 1990, says a leading economist.

“Our cost models are showing \$27 to \$28 profits per head this year, so it looks like the best year in a long time,” said Steve Meyer, president of Paragon Economics, a consultant who works with the Pork Checkoff.

That’s not just wishful thinking, he added. “Producers can take advantage of corn, soybean meal and hog prices right now to lock in those kinds of profits.”

Corn is significantly lower priced today than it has been in recent history. If there’s a good crop this year, corn prices could drop even more, Meyer said.

On the soybean side, worldwide demand remains strong, driven by China. It will take a lot more soybean acres in 2014 to bring soybean meal costs down substantially. Still, when you look at the big picture, feed costs are much lower than they were a year ago, Meyer says.

“Today, it costs about \$30 a head less to raise a pig. With the kinds of market prices we’re looking at on the hog side, that’s really positive.”

What about PED?

There are some questions about how much Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea (PED) virus will impact pork supplies in 2014. It hasn’t had a major impact yet, because the first of the big PED losses happened last summer, and those pigs wouldn’t have come to market until December.

“I think the impact will get pretty large, however, as we go through the year and get to the summer, given the number of sow farms that were involved in PED breaks in October and November,” Meyer said.

The futures market is incorporating these factors. “We’ve already



seen contract live highs on summer contracts, and it probably won’t be the last,” Meyer said.

While no producer wants to lose pigs, the financial impact of PED may be mitigated, Meyer added. “As the disease spreads, the financial impact on any one person gets smaller.”


Demand remains strong.

Beyond PED, demand for pork at home and abroad remains a bright spot. Meyer’s calculations show that real per-capita expenditures increased virtually every month of 2013, up more than 5 percent for the year.

Pork remains in a good position relative to beef, which recently set records on its cutout values, Meyer noted. “The Pork Checkoff’s renaming of pork cuts with new nomencla-

ture in 2013, the ‘Grill it like a Steak’ message and promotion of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s 145-degree cooking temperature range with a three-minute rest all play into great positioning for pork against high-priced beef cuts as we go through 2014.”

Good things continue to happen for U.S. pork in the export market, as well. Japan and Mexico remain major markets, and demand from China continues to trend upward.

“Also consider that there are other countries that are not our major markets, but you put them all together and they become a top-three destination for U.S. pork,” Meyer said. “That adds diversification to our export portfolio.” 



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Pork Checkoff

Reports on checkoff-funded promotion, research and consumer information programs.

Pork Producers can Renew PQA Plus Certification Online

Pork Quality Assurance (PQA) Plus is a program developed by the National Pork Board that focuses on food safety and animal well-being. Updated in June of 2013, this program's roots are the original PQA Plus Level III program and the Swine Welfare Assurance Program which have been merged into the current PQA Plus program.

PQA Plus has two components. First producers/employees/caretakers complete an educational course taught by an advisor to gain PQA Plus certification.

Next they have the opportunity to follow up with an on-farm educational assessment that evaluates the care and well-being of the animals and ensures the farm managers and animal caretakers are following the 10 GPPs of the PQA Plus program. The PQA Plus site assessment focuses on evaluating the care given to the animals, facilities provided for the animals and helps operations benchmark their performance. Program advisors and trained producers conduct the on-farm assessment, reviewing and benchmarking the activities that take place on the farm.

New with the release of the 2013 addition of the PQA Plus program is the opportunity for producers to re-certify online for the educational or "classroom" portion of PQA Plus. If producers have a current PQA Plus certification, they may

request access to the online system by contacting their local PQA Plus advisor.

It is important to note that once an individual's PQA Plus certification has expired they are no longer eligible for renewal via the online system and will be required to complete a face-to-face session with an advisor.

Producers seeking PQA Plus certification for the first time, renewal or site assessment verification can contact a member of the pork team with Michigan State University Extension. Face-to-Face sessions have been scheduled and are listed on the MSU Extension pork page <http://pork.msue.msu.edu/>.

U.S. Pork Center of Excellence Launches Web-Based National Swine Reproduction Guide

The U.S. Pork Center of Excellence (USPCE) has launched the new National Swine Reproduction Guide, a web-based application designed to help troubleshoot swine reproductive problems. This innovative, user-friendly management guide contains extensive information and support for pork producers, including more than 1,000 fact sheets and references.

"This guide is designed to help producers identify the source of reproductive problems in their herds and, through research-based fields, provide information directly related to problems," said Chris Hostetler, animal science director for the Pork Checkoff.

The National Swine Reproduction Guide is available as a web application and is easily accessed through personal computers, smart phones and

tablets. Its portability makes the guide readily convenient for use anywhere.

The guide uses a reproductive decision tree specifically designed in an easy-to-use format with simple navigation. The decision tree begins with three categories: gilts, sows and boars (semen). After selecting a category, producers can choose from a list of potential issues, such as "low farrowing rate" or "too small of a gilt pool." The decision tree then narrows the search on the issue through a series of available questions. After choosing the question that best fits the original problem, an answer is provided in the form of a fact sheet with viewable references.

The National Swine Reproduction Guide can be purchased at the USPCE's Pork Store. The price is \$75 annually for producers in the U.S. and Canada, \$500 annually for foreign licenses and free for professors for classroom use.

Unique Tracking Study Provides Insight into Marketing Pork

Results from a recent eye-tracking study show that retailers have just seconds to grab shoppers' attention at the meat case. The upside? The Pork Checkoff has pinpointed what consumers look at and for how long, and which images and messages resonate the most and inspire shoppers to purchase pork.

"Major consumer companies, such as Procter & Gamble, routinely use eye-tracking studies to better market their products," said Patrick Fleming, director of retail marketing for the Pork Checkoff. "The Pork Checkoff, though, is the first meat industry organization to use this type of research."

Eye-tracking studies provide more useful information than shop-along studies, where a researcher accompanies consumers through the grocery store. Shoppers are more comfortable with the eye-tracking technology because they don't feel like their actions are being judged, Fleming said.

Small Window to Win Sales

The Pork Checkoff teamed with GFK User Centric to study shoppers at an upscale food market and at a conventional supermarket. Participants wore glasses with video recording devices to record what they viewed and how long they looked at items. A laptop computer in the child seat of each shopper's grocery cart remotely captured the results.

"The findings showed that consumers gaze only two-tenths of a second at point-of-sale materials at the meat case," Fleming said.

To find more about what grabs shoppers' attention, researchers studied people's responses to specific point-of-sale materials. Participants looked at pork meat case signs interspersed with signs advertising non-meat products. Their recorded eye movements offer the following tips to better engage consumers:

- Mouth-watering photos work. One large shot featuring a delicious pork dish catches consumers' attention better than multiple images, Fleming noted.
- Simple is best. An uncluttered layout with one key point is more effective than a complex design with multiple messages.
- Food trumps other images. People prefer to see finished dishes rather than photos that explain various raw cuts of pork.
- Choose words carefully. Shoppers are in a buying mode rather

than a learning mode, so call-to-action messages, such as "Dinner Tonight" or "Great on the Grill," are more effective.

These insights are helping the Pork Checkoff develop targeted point-of-sales materials. "Making smarter decisions and staying on point with our messages are helping inspire consumers' to put pork in their carts," Fleming said.

QR Codes Showcase *We Care*SM Videos

Consumers are more interested than ever in knowing where their food comes from. To bring the farm to consumers, the Pork Checkoff is creating new connections through quick-response (QR) codes printed on pork labels.

QR codes are small boxes containing an array of black or white squares. When scanned with a smart phone or computer tablet, QR codes direct the mobile device to display a video, text or other information. In this case, the QR codes on pork labels in participating grocery stores are highlighting the pork industry's *We Care*SM principles.

"We wanted to find the best way to share this information with consumers," said Angela Anderson, food chain outreach manager for the Pork Checkoff. "We decided that short videos were the quickest, most effective way to catch people's attention and articulate the *We Care*SM principles."

The Checkoff developed a mobile website with four short *We Care*SM-related videos focusing on animal nutrition, animal well-being, feed additives and antibiotics. After scanning the QR codes, consumers can watch the videos to learn how pork produc-

ers provide safe, nutritious food.

Putting Messages to the Test

Before the QR codes and videos were implemented, the Pork Checkoff developed a test round of pork labels. These were distributed on the West Coast through a large retail chain to gauge consumers' response.

"The results showed that we needed to give consumers an incentive to scan the QR codes and watch the videos," said Jarrod Sutton, assistant vice president of channel marketing for the Checkoff. After adding the chance to win a \$500 gift card from select retailers, the Pork Checkoff redistributed the labels in grocery stores across the country. This has increased the number of scans by consumers.

Moving in the Right Direction

Retailers who have used the QR codes have been impressed with the results. "The program was outstanding, and I was encouraged by how many customers at Hannaford supermarkets participated," said Rick Wilson, pork category manager for Delhaize America Shared Services Group, LLC. "I look forward to partnering with the Pork Checkoff on other consumer education opportunities."

The Pork Checkoff plans to survey select consumers who participated in the QR code promotion. The feedback will help fine-tune the content of future promotions with QR codes.

"We have so many ideas on how to develop the program further," Sutton said. "The pork industry is headed in the right direction by being transparent and helping consumers learn more about the farm-to-fork connection."

Food and Ag Leaders Remain Confident about the Future

Michigan farmers and food processors remain optimistic about the future of their industry, and they aren't afraid to show it. That's what economists from the Michigan State University (MSU) Product Center learned when they conducted the second Michigan Agriculture and Food Index (MAFI), released during the annual ANR Week Luncheon on March 4.

The index, which was based on a survey conducted in December 2013, gauges the current business climate of the state's food and agriculture system. A rating of 100 on the index is considered neutral; ratings above 100 signal increasingly positive confidence, and below 100, increasingly negative confidence.

Respondents gave the overall state of food and agriculture a rating of 146, down only one point from the April 2013 survey. In contrast, they rate Michigan's overall economic outlook at a healthy 120, up five points from April.

"This is a good sign," explained Chris Peterson, director of the MSU Product Center and lead investigator on the project. "It tells us that not only are industry leaders extremely bullish on the future of Michigan's food and agriculture business, they are gaining confidence in the state's ability to handle their growth."



The MSU Product Center conducted the first survey in April 2013 to solicit the opinions of members of a newly convened Food and Ag Leaders Roundtable—more than 100 movers and shakers representing all facets of Michigan agriculture and food processing, including farmers, ag and food processors, and other industry professionals.

The MAFI scores three aspects of the food and ag system in Michigan. The current sales outlook was stable with a rating of 131 in December, and 133 in April; the job outlook scored 126, slightly down from its 132 score in April. Investment opportunities dropped from 133 in April to 107 in December. The drop in investments seemed troubling to economists until they compared notes with a small group of industry leaders during a Feb. 26 meeting.

"They told us that the December number was justified because it looked at short-term growth opportunities. The industry had a wait-and-see attitude," Peterson said. "They wanted

to make sure the good times were going to continue before they invested further. However, they remain optimistic that additional investments will be made over the next three years."

The survey also offered respondents a chance to highlight their concerns. Bill Knudson, an MSU Product Center marketing economist, said immigration reform remains a top concern for food and ag leaders and was especially problematic for respondents in the fruit and vegetable sectors.

"When we asked people what kept them up at night, many answered, 'labor and government regulations,'" he said. "They worry about finding good seasonal and full-time labor, as well as finding ways to encourage young people to enter the food and agriculture system."

The survey will be repeated every six months to track ag leaders' perceptions of the business climate and its positive or negative effects on the food and agriculture system. The next survey will be sent out in April and the results released in July 2014. 🐷



George Swartzendruber

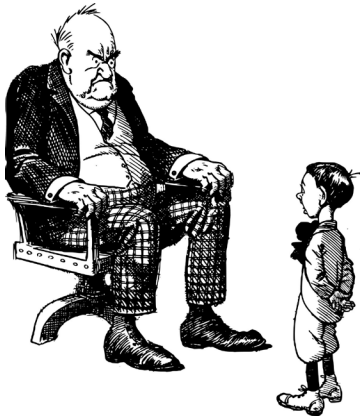
George Swartzendruber, 88 of Pigeon, passed away Friday, February 28, 2014 at Scheurer Hospital Long Term Care.

He was born in Bay Port on March 15, 1925 to Daniel and Mary (Maust) Swartzendruber, and graduated from the Snell School. On November 22, 1946 he was united in marriage to Jewel Dutcher at the Pigeon River Mennonite Church. They had been married 59 years when she passed away on July 11, 2006.

For most of his lifetime, George was a farmer. He was a member of the Farm Bureau, and was Huron County president from 1978-1979.

He was also a member of the original board of the Michigan Pork Producers when it was established, and served as its president. George was an avid reader and gardener. He was a faithful member of the Pigeon River Mennonite Church.

From the Archives



Editor's Note: "From the Archives," a new segment beginning this issue, will highlight historical events, old photos and industry happenings from the past. We hope you will find this new feature interesting, entertaining, educational and, for some, maybe a little nostalgic as you reminisce old times.



Rather than opening with a traditional ribbon cutting ceremony, Lansing Mayor, Terry McKane, opened the 1989 Michigan Pork Congress with a sausage cutting ceremony.

Nearly 3,000 people attended the 1989 Michigan Pork Congress and walked through the "sold out" trade show.



A table of "high-rollers" tested their luck at the Millionaire's Party, which used to be held during the Pork Congress.



Jim McClure, left, from Pfizer and Dave Puthoff, right, from Countrymark are shown with Pork Congress Speaker, Baxter Black.



Pork All-American, Bob Dykhuis, addressed the crowd after receiving his award.

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Michigan Farm Bureau is the state's largest farm organization, representing more than 48,000 farm families in every county.

MFB represents the wide variety of commodity sectors that make up Michigan's diverse agriculture industry. The organization's mission is to represent, protect and enhance the business, economic, social and educational interests of its farmer members - working for the betterment of all of agriculture while serving the specific needs of individual farmers. More information can be found at www.michfb.com



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The Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee is in place to manage soybean checkoff resources to increase return on investment for Michigan soybean farmers while enhancing sustainable soybean production. We are organized into seven districts across the soybean producing areas of the state and are led by the Governor-appointed farmer director in each district. As livestock, and hogs in particular, are soybean's largest customers, we will continue to support this industry.



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We are Listening

Dear MPPA:

The birthing tent at the St. Joseph Co. Fair was a success again this year. We strive to have an educational tent and your contribution added to our success. It is a very popular place to be all fair week. I would like to express my gratitude for the material you sent and was available for the public all week which added to our success.

Selma Comstock
Birthing Tent Coordinator
Mendon, Mich.

Dear MPPA:

Thank you for your Tee sponsorship and two folding chairs, that were used as door prizes, for the Michigan State University College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) Alumni Association's 22nd Annual Golfing for Scholarships Outing. The day was a great success, in large part due to the support of sponsors like you.

Kathryn Reed,
ANR Alumni Association
East Lansing, Mich.

Dear MPPA:

Thank you for your generous donation to the St. Joseph County 4-H meats team. We are all excited to compete at the national 4-H meats judging contest in late October. Your donation will help off set costs of travel for our team. Thanks again for your generosity

St. Joseph County 4-H Meats Team
Bronson, Mich.

Dear MPPA:

Your contribution, along with those of 247 other area, state and national donors (plus 422 local donors), helps provide the majority of funds required to sustain the 4-H youth programs and activities for over 700 young people in the county. Every youth participating in Lapeer County 4-H benefits from the event. This year's auction was very successful, having raised approximately \$32,000 in net profit. Proceeds will go to the Lapeer County 4-H Council to be used for program expenses.

Claudia J. Ferguson
Lapeer County 4-H
Lapeer, Mich.

Dear MPPA:

We are so very pleased to again receive Michigan Pork Producers Association's annual support for Michigan 4-H Swine Programs. Thank you for your annual gift which will be allocated for full sponsorship of the Michigan State 4-H Swine Science Award and for the support of the 4-H Beef, Sheep and Swine Volunteer Training Workshop. Thank you for your continued support and advocacy of this 4-H work and the recognition of the young people who have developed a passion for swine as part of their 4-H experiences.

Cheryl Howell
Executive Director
East Lansing, Mich.

Dear MPPA:

Thank you for your generous support of my induction into the Saddle and Sirloin Portrait Gallery in Louisville, Kentucky on November 17, 2013. The banquet was a delightful event with over 200 friends and family in attendance. On December

8, 2013, we held a reception on the MSU campus for people who were unable to go to Louisville. At that time, a copy of the portrait was presented to MSU. Portions of the program at each event were videos prepared by Eric Grant, Creative Media, a division of Angus Productions, Inc. These videos were aired on November 28th as a part of the "I Am Angus" TV program of the American Angus Association. If you wish to view the videos, go to Youtube.com, select videos, search for Saddle & Sirloin and Dave Hawkins. Donations in excess of the costs of the banquet program and portrait are being used to setup an endowed scholarship at Michigan State University for students competing on future MSU Intercollegiate Livestock Judging Teams or MSU Intercollegiate Meats Judging Teams. The annual income from the endowment will be used to help cover some of the student travel expenses. Thank you for making this possible.

Dave Hawkins
East Lansing, Mich.

Dear MPPA:

Thank you for your gift to the Michigan State University College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (CANR). Your contribution, designated to the FFA Foundation, is greatly appreciated. Gifts like yours are critical to the success of our programs and our students. These dollars make it possible for scholarships, fellowships, research opportunities, technology needs and community outreach to happen – your gifts have a direct and immediate impact. On behalf of the faculty, the staff and

the students of the CANR, thank you for your continued support.

Fred Posten
Dean, MSU CANR
East Lansing, Mich.

Dear MPPA:

A most sincere thank you for your assistance with the Montcalm County Breakfast on the Farm program. Your time, talent and support helped to make this educational event a huge success. The farm hosted more than 2,200 people for breakfast and those attending came from 94 towns spread across four states. Over 265 volunteers assisted with the program and helped to make the event possible. Your support in various ways was incredible, and it was a great team effort. Thanks again for helping to educate others about agriculture.

The Jeppesen Families
Stanton, Mich.

Dear MPPA:

Thank you for your contribution to the 2013 Michigan Harvest Gathering campaign. We appreciate your support in our efforts to raise food and money for Michigan's food banks. Your generous donation will help our network of food banks to feed hungry people in our state. We're looking forward to meeting our goal for 2013 to raise \$500,000 and 350,000 pounds of food thanks to contributions such as yours. Once again, thank you for joining us in our work to feed Michigan families.

Kareemah El Amin
Food Bank Council of Michigan
Lansing, Mich.

Dear MPPA:

I simply wanted to thank you for writing a wonderful tribute on Larry See. He was a great man that provided so much for youth and the pork industry. I will miss him greatly. The story captured his life and impact very well.

Kenneth R. Geuns
Faculty Emeritus, MSU
Bath, Mich.

Dear MPPA:

On behalf of the planning committee we want to thank you for your help in educating the community about agriculture. The support and dedication from community is outstanding. We were able to reach out to 2,400 plus people on one day! Through in-kind and monetary donations we raised over \$20,000 to cover program expenses. This event was a great success and we can not thank you and the support of the community enough. Thank you for helping to make Breakfast on the Farm a modern agriculture teaching day for our communities.

The Humm Farm BOTF Planning Committee
Breckenridge, Mich



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