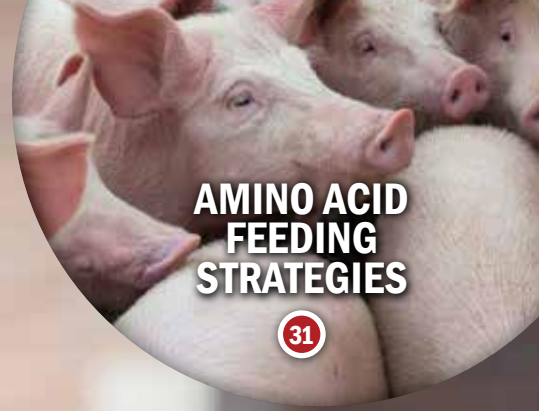


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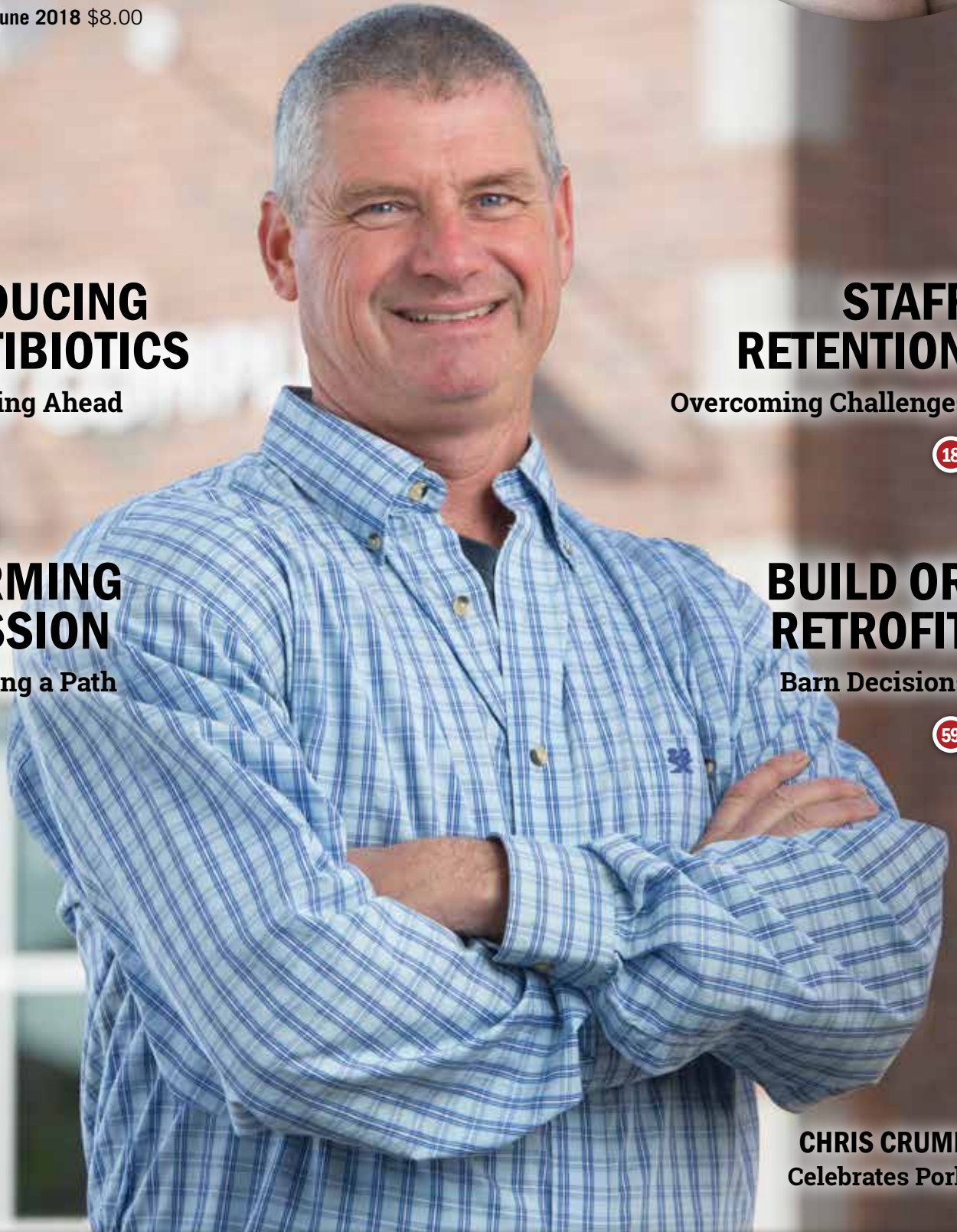
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^aCanadian Veterinary Medical Association guidance on the prudent use of antimicrobial drugs, 2014.

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DEAR READER: LETTERS FROM A FAMILY FARM
BUILDING A STRONG TEAM

One of the biggest challenges ag employers face is developing an effective team.

On the farm, we want to hire individuals who have a passion for our industry. We expect our staff to share our respect for the environment and our efforts to be good stewards of the land, so that we can preserve our country's farmland for future generations.

Employees should have compassion for animals to help the individuals remain patient when trying to load that gilt for the umpteenth time.

Workers need effective observational skills so they can spot the first signs of illness in a sow. We would like staff to possess strong attention to detail so they can complete necessary record-keeping in the barns and fields.

(I'm perhaps particularly mindful of the latter, as my sister **Jessica** and I manage our farm business books. Every year, we always seem to have an instance or two where we need to chase **Dad** and our hired hands for details on planting dates, custom work acres and seed deliveries!)

But, of course, we face hurdles in recruiting and retaining staff. After all, despite the many positive elements of our industry, our type of work also has some drawbacks.

So many of our tasks in the barns and in the fields are highly time-sensitive, and simply can't wait until the next day. The commute can be another hurdle. (In my case, for example, it's an hour back to the farm after I leave our *Better Pork* office.)

This month, staff writer **Kaitlynn Anderson** explores ways in which ag employers can decrease staff turnover and maintain a good workplace culture. We hope you find the article to be helpful and we welcome you to get in touch to share your stories. **BP**

Andrea

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Dana Hafford photo

This month, staff writer Kate Ayers chatted with Dana Hafford and Sébastien Paré, pork producers in Quebec, to learn about their path to pork production. See "Expanding the farming family tree" on page 26.

narvikk/Stock/Getty Images Plus photo



THERE'S A NEW TARIFF IN TOWN

Tariffs are rarely welcomed with open arms and that's certainly the case for a recent raise in Chinese import duties.

The country has imposed tariffs on a list of items coming from the United States, including pork. The move came in response to a U.S. tariff hike on steel and aluminum, sparking an escalating dispute between Beijing and Washington over trade and industrial policy.

The fundamental question for Canadian pork producers: What does this development mean for us?

"A tariff war is not what we need for the Canadian pork industry right now," said **Gary Stordy**, director of government and corporate affairs with the **Canadian Pork Council**.

"Any uncertainty brought on by trade disruption is a negative, especially in the context of the fully integrated North American pork market that currently exists."

With C\$567 million in annual sales, China is Canada's third most valuable market for pork exports. So, the tariff announcement was unsettling for many producers.

"We saw futures prices drop when this first happened, which impacts producers trying to manage their businesses and forecast what they will earn for their animals," Stordy said.

Ultimately, the hope is that any tariff war will be short and relatively painless.

"The global pork community relies on consistency and stability. There are no winners in this fight," he said. **BP**

PORK INDUSTRY LENDS A 'HELPING HOOF'

Ontario Pork's Friends of the Food Bank volunteers are working diligently to meet their ambitious goal of raising \$100,000 in donations this year.

The program raises funds through the **Ontario Association of Food Banks** (OAFB), with the support of hog industry partners, to supply fresh pork to food banks across the province. Ontario Pork matches these funds. The organization's contributions enable the purchase of more products and make this program truly a swine industry initiative, said **Steve Thomas**, a sales representative for **Elanco Animal Health Canada** and supporter of Friends of the Food Bank.

"The hogs are raised in Ontario, they are processed in Ontario and then that meat is feeding families in Ontario," said Thomas.

Ontario Pork's Friends of the Food Bank program provides families with ground pork, which can be used in many meals, and is easy to cook and handle. OAFB sends recipes and nutritional advice with each delivery of pork products and each pack carries the Ontario Pork logo, he said.

The group reached a milestone last year, donating its one-millionth serving of fresh Ontario pork since its inception in 2013. To

support the organization, visit oafb.ca. **BP**



Alinakho/Stock/Getty Images Plus photo

COMPARING NITROGEN SOURCES

Crops may respond better to swine manure than some commercial fertilizers, researchers at the **University of Saskatchewan** found.

Annual crops and forages fertilized with liquid swine manure occasionally outperformed crops fertilized with conventional commercial products like urea, said **Dr. Jeff Schoenau**, a professor of soil fertility at the university.

Department of soil science researchers conducted a combination of studies to reach these results.

The scientists varied product application rates so that each fertilizer provided each field with the same rate of nitrogen (N).

The plants fertilized with manure

likely had higher yields than those fertilized with urea "because of the benefits from the other nutrients contained in the manure," Schoenau told *Better Pork*.

For example, manure contains phosphorus, potassium and sulfur, "as well as other micronutrients that may be in short supply," he explained.

In addition, throughout the year of application, N availability was about 75 per cent higher in manure than in

most commercial nitrogen fertilizers, Schoenau said.

Manure also contains organic matter, which can improve crop yields "through its ability to improve soil structure, water relations and biological activity," he said. **BP**



Husky Farm Equipment Ltd. photo



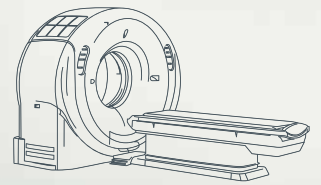
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MAINTAINING HERD HEALTH WITH FEWER ANTIBIOTICS



Canadian swine producers will likely need to adjust their operations to conform to the new regulations.

Industry reps offer advice to help you reduce the use of antibiotics in your swine operations.

by KATE AYERS

National Pork Board and the Pork Checkoff, Des Moines, Iowa photo



The Canadian government has enacted new regulations to decrease the use of antibiotics in livestock production.

Beginning Dec. 1, 2018, Canadian farmers will need prescriptions from a veterinarian to purchase prescription drugs and prescription medicated feed for livestock.

In this article, which follows a story that appeared in April's *Better Pork*, swine industry experts highlight management practices that producers can implement to help maintain herd health during and after this transition to the new regulations.

"Across the world, the swine industry is cutting back on antibiotic use quite successfully, and we will probably be able to continue that trend long into the future. ... The industry continues to move in the right direction," says Dr. Tim Blackwell, the lead veterinarian for disease prevention in swine with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

"The need to use antibiotics is becoming less and less necessary."

Reducing antibiotic use

In light of the upcoming regulatory changes, producers can take the time now to review their standard operating procedures – such as those regarding feeding strategies, housing procedures, ventilation and hygiene – to see whether there are opportunities for improvement.

Informed management decisions and antibiotic alternatives can help producers maintain healthy pigs throughout the year.

Producers should perhaps shift their mindsets slightly to "focus on preventative health as opposed to reactive health," says Dr. Jessica Law, a veterinarian with Prairie Swine Health Services in Red Deer, Alta.

Producers can work alongside their veterinarians to examine "where they are using antibiotics and what problems have been experienced in the past," she says. This evaluation should involve a thorough examination of the herd's health status.

Then, producers and veterinarians can collaborate to determine whether

IMPROVING HERD HEALTH

antibiotics can be replaced with alternative preventative measures. They can also review the cost-benefit analyses.

In addition, producers and staff can observe opportunities to “minimize pathogen exposure and spread whether it’s throughout farrowing, fostering, processing, castration, weaning or treatment,” Law says.

Vaccination protocols

In the absence of antibiotics, vaccines could become an even more important disease prevention tool.

We are coming to a point when most antibiotic use will move toward treating sick pigs. Most prevention will be done with vaccines and management, says Blackwell.

Although vaccines play a crucial role, a single vaccination program will not work for every farm. Each operation must adjust its protocol depending on the diseases present in the herd and the correct timing of these vaccinations, he adds.

Law agrees.

Some vaccines do not offer “cross protectivity for different strains. You have to tailor a vaccination program to your farm and figure out what diseases you have. It is not a one-size-fits-all solution,” she says.

In addition, more producers are turning to autogenous vaccinations to prevent herd infection.



National Pork Board and the Pork Checkoff, Des Moines, Iowa photo

Most commercial pig feeds include the nutrients and minerals required to foster animals’ immunity and performance.

“You culture and isolate for a pathogen, which you believe is actively causing disease, in your herd. ... You can send a sample off to a lab and create a vaccine,” says Law. It can help to provide pigs with immunity and protect the herd from a potential disease outbreak.

For example, autogenous vaccines have “been used to vaccinate against *Streptococcus suis*, which is an on-going issue throughout the industry,” Law adds.

Producers can also use commercial vaccinations to protect against such common diseases as porcine circo-

virus 2 (PCV2), porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS) virus and *Mycoplasma hyopneumoniae*, Law says. For gastrointestinal diseases, producers often vaccinate against *Lawsonia intracellularis*, *Salmonella choleraesuis*, and *Salmonella typhimurium*. Vaccinations can also help to prevent scours in piglets caused by *Clostridium perfringens* type C, *Escherichia coli* (E. coli), and certain serotypes of Rotavirus A.

And, of course, all treatment programs should follow the recommended practices outlined by herd veterinarians.

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EXAMINING THE USE OF SPRAY-DRIED PLASMA

Spray-dried plasma is a highly digestible protein that is harvested from abattoir blood collected from healthy swine or cattle. The plasma is then spray-dried to preserve its biological activity.

This protein provides benefits for pig health, including enhanced post-weaning growth, feed intake and feed efficiency, studies show. These benefits are particularly evident in pigs fed diets without growth-promoting antibiotics.

In 2014, feed testing conducted by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs identified one particular lot of American spray-dried plasma as a potential source of porcine epidemic diarrhea (PED) virus in pig feed. As a result, some industry reps worried about the use of this product. Other producers and researchers continued using spray-dried plasma in their feed formulations.

“On our research farms at the University of Illinois, we use plasma in all of our piglet diets, and we have done so for many, many years,” says Dr. Hans Stein, a professor in the department of animal sciences.

“We did not stop feeding plasma when the PED outbreak came, and we have never had PED on our farms,” he says.

This blood protein is one of the most efficient feed



National Pork Board and the Pork Checkoff. Des Moines, Iowa photo

“I think (bovine plasma) is a fantastic feed ingredient,” says Dr. Hans Stein.

ingredients available to protect the intestinal health of pigs, especially in antibiotic-free production, he adds.

But producers need to choose their plasma products carefully.

Producers should buy plasma from a reputable company that has good quality control, Stein says. He also recommends that producers buy bovine plasma, not porcine plasma. Avoiding the latter type of plasma helps to ensure that the PED virus is not in the supply.

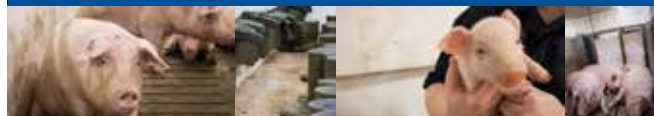
“We are very comfortable using bovine plasma in our pig herd,” says Stein. “We have not had PED and ... I think it is a fantastic feed ingredient.” **BP**



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Optimizing nutrition

A well-balanced feed ration can help prevent pigs from getting sick by supporting healthy gut flora, says Dr. Chengbo Yang, an assistant professor of livestock nutrition at the University of Manitoba.

Commercial pig feeds include the nutrients and minerals required to foster the animals' immunity and performance.

“Most pig rations are well formulated. ... I don't think we really need to change what is in the ration very much. But sometimes we need to make sure the pigs have access, especially at weaning when they can be a little reluctant to start on feed,” says Blackwell.

If the pigs get the best ration but do not consume it in an equitable manner and cannot eat when and how much they want, then that problem can be bigger than the actual formulation, he adds.

Nonetheless, producers should ensure that their rations suit the needs of their herds.

Nutritionists “need to carefully select dietary ingredients that should be highly digestible and have consistent quality,” says Yang.

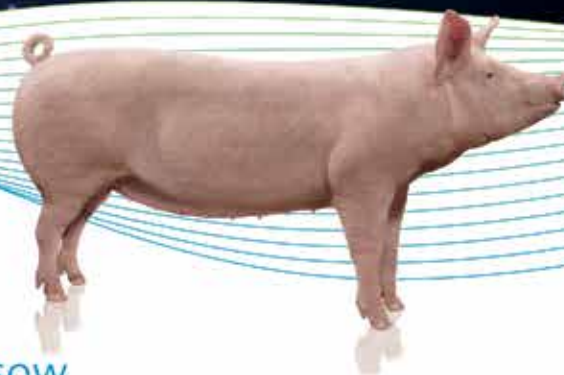
The proper balance of sodium, potassium and chloride is also essential for optimal growth, bone development and amino acid utilization, he adds.

In addition, producers should be aware of the buffering (or acid-binding) capacity of their piglets' feed. The buffering capacity of feed refers to the ration's resistance to a low pH in the pig's stomach. The capacity is related to raw feed ingredients and has a significant impact on digestibility,

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IMPROVING HERD HEALTH

Yang says to *Better Pork*.

“A high buffering capacity can lead to lower digestibility of dry matter and crude protein and, therefore, adversely affect the growth performance of piglets,” he adds.

“Moreover, a high buffering capacity can increase amine and ammonia release. These compounds are toxic and could lead to diarrhea and poor growth, eventually increasing the need for antibiotics.”

Producers can also work with swine nutritionists to modify their feed programs to include ingredients that benefit pig health.

For example, reducing crude protein and adding crystalline amino acids into the diet can decrease the incidence of diarrhea, studies show.

“If you have high crude protein in the diet, some of that crude protein will go into the hindgut of the pigs. It will increase fermentation there and can result in diarrhea,” says Dr. Hans Stein, a professor in the department of animal sciences at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.



National Pork Board and the Pork Checkoff, Des Moines, Iowa photo

If the pigs get the best ration but do not consume it in an equitable manner and can't eat when and how much they want, then that problem can be bigger than the actual formulation, says Dr. Tim Blackwell.

In an experiment, “we saw that, if antibiotics were included in the diet, we could reduce diarrhea. When we reduced crude protein and had no antibiotics, we also had reduced diarrhea.”

Although lower crude protein

consumption may result in slowed pig growth in the first few weeks after weaning, the animals will catch up when they are a bit older, Stein says.

In his study, the pigs in the nursery had the same weights regardless of whether researchers fed the animals

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To ensure adequate levels of amino acids in lower protein diets, “producers should consider not only all 10 essential amino acids but also the non-essential amino acids (e.g., glutamine) to support gut function, repair and integrity,” says Yang.

Adding barley and oats to piglet diets can also improve animal health, a University of Illinois study reports. “If we add barley or oats to the diet right after weaning, we see a reduction in diarrhea and a reduction in intestinal problems in those pigs,” Stein says.

“We don’t know for sure, but it may have something to do with the specific fibres in barley and oats.”

The beta-glucans present in barley and oats (but not in wheat or corn) may also be part of the explanation.



National Pork Board and the Pork Checkoff, Des Moines, Iowa photo

Beta-glucans are naturally occurring sugars found in the cell walls of bacteria, algae and select cereals.

Natural products or supplements

Producers can also support the

overall health of pigs by using natural products and supplements. Last year’s amendments to Canada’s Food and Drug Regulations have made the process easier for producers to access these products.

The changes have introduced an alternative, less burdensome pathway for manufacturers to legally import and sell certain low-risk veterinary drugs, known as veterinary health products (VHPs), says the Government of Canada website.

VHPs can assist in keeping food-producing animals healthy. These products, however, cannot be used to treat, prevent or cure disease.

Producers can choose from such VHPs as acidifiers, phytobiotic products, enzymes and probiotics. “Acidifiers help maintain a low pH in the



Hans Stein

stomach. If pigs have a low pH, it prevents pathogen growth, which results in a healthier intestinal tract,” says Stein.

“Instead of using an antibiotic to control microbes, you can add the acidifier and the low pH controls the microbes,” he explains.

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NEVER STOP IMPROVING

Phytobiotics or phytochemicals have antimicrobial properties, similar to antibiotics, but they are natural plant extracts. Phytobiotics can reduce the concentration of bad bacteria and pathogens in the intestinal tract, says Stein.

These products have antioxidant properties, and they stimulate appetite and enzyme secretion, Yang adds.

Probiotics, also known as direct-

fed microbials, “increase the concentration of beneficial bacteria. If you have a high concentration of beneficial bacteria, they can out-compete the bad bacteria in the intestinal tract,” says Stein.

Many factors affect the selection of proper probiotics for a herd, says Yang. The product should

- be non-pathogenic
- have a high recovery rate after high-temperature feed processes

- tolerate long storage times at room temperature
- successfully bypass low pH in the stomach
- resist enzyme digestion
- proliferate quickly in the gut

“Organisms commonly used in commercial probiotics include *Lactobacillus sp.*, *Enterococcus sp.*, *Bifidobacterium sp.*, spore-forming bacillus species, and the yeast *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*,” Yang adds.

In addition, the inclusion of betaine – which is found in sugar beets, spinach, wheat and seafood – in feed can lead to less diarrhea in piglets.



Chengbo Yang

“The recommended inclusion rate for betaine in reduced antibiotic or antibiotic-free diets should be

1 to 2 kilograms/tonne,” says Yang.

The cost-effectiveness of substituting alternatives for medicated feed remains a challenge, though.

“There has been no ‘silver bullet’ so far that can replace in-feed antibiotics,” says Yang.

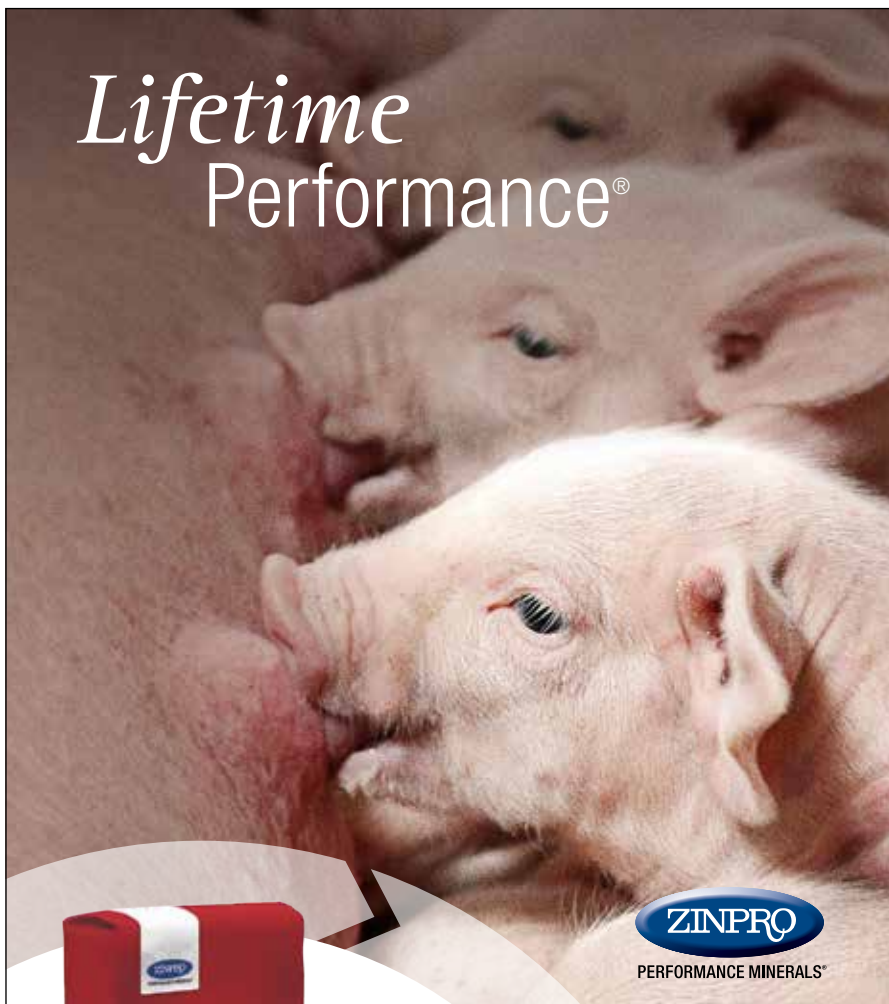
Looking ahead

Canadian swine producers will likely need to adjust their operations to conform to the new antibiotic regulations. Ultimately, producers can use a combination of management practices and new products to help ease these changes.

“It has become very clear from Europe’s experience that husbandry is key to decreasing antimicrobial usage. Improving ventilation, ensuring adequate numbers of good quality and well-maintained feeders and waterers, and improving the general environment of the pigs” are possible operation adjustments, says Law.

“These are things producers can do themselves.

“There is a lot of information out there, and their veterinarians and other industry partners can assist producers in the transition.” **BP**



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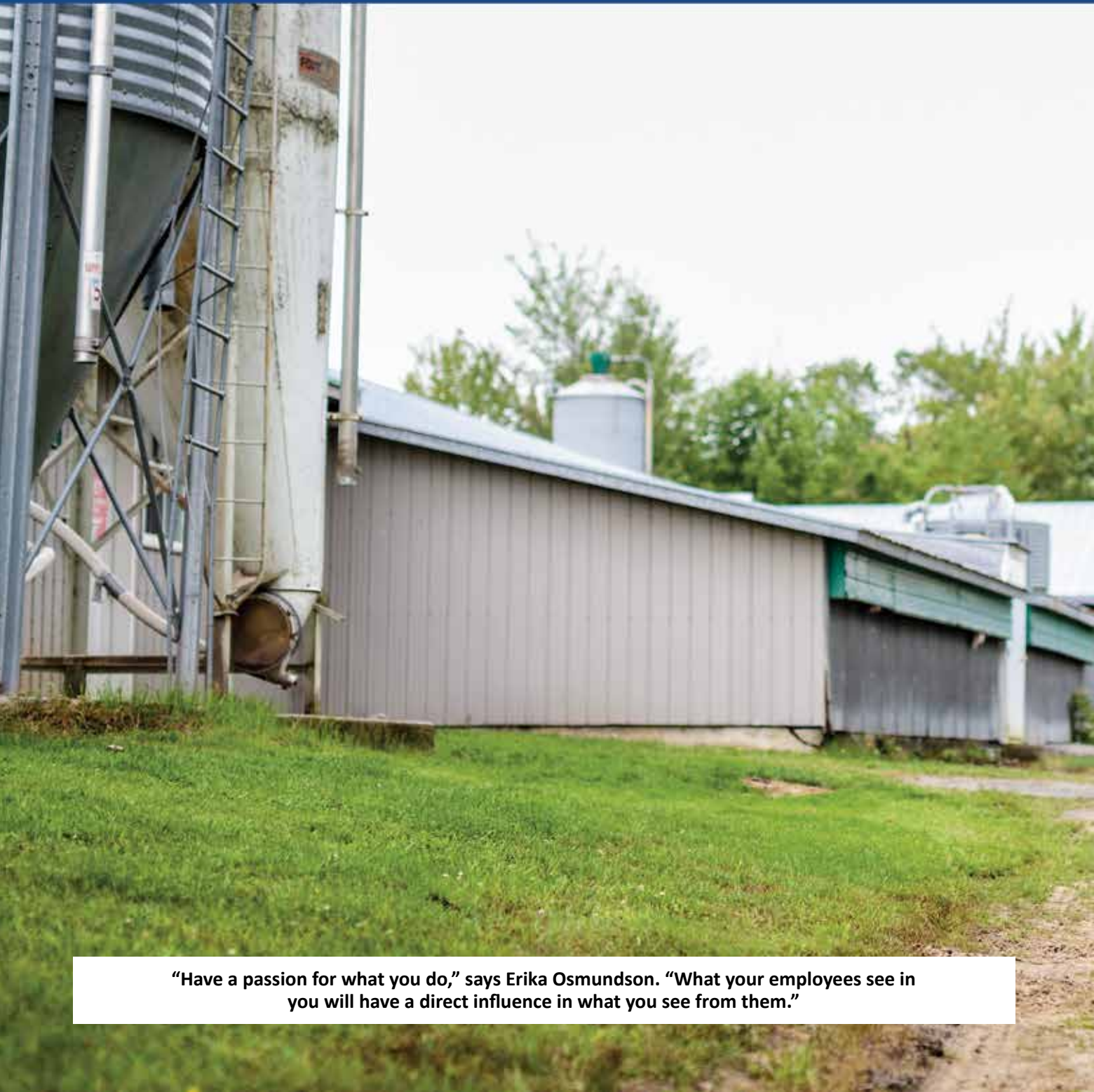
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TACKLING TURNOVER: WHY EMPLOYEES LEAVE THEIR JOBS



“Have a passion for what you do,” says Erika Osmundson. “What your employees see in you will have a direct influence in what you see from them.”

Experts speak about the steps employers in the pork industry can take to retain workers.

by KAITLYNN ANDERSON

Les Éleveurs de porcs du Québec photo



RECRUITING AND RETENTION

Across Canada, the swine industry employs a range of staff. Fast Genetics, a swine genetics company headquartered in Saskatoon with production facilities near Spiritwood, Sask., is one of these employers.

In addition to filling traditional industry roles, including swine production technicians, geneticists and livestock drivers, Fast Genetics employs other professionals, such as flow cytometry laboratory personnel, molecular biologists and reproductive physiologists.

To grow its team, this business uses various hiring methods, including national and local job boards, career fairs and scholarship programs, says Lucinda Smolinski, human resource manager at Fast Genetics. The company also coordinates internships with local universities, she notes.

The employer strives to continuously improve staff morale by offering work flexibility, team-building activities, production awards, and career growth and coaching opportunities. The company also promotes a collaborative workplace. For example, workers can complete DiSC profiles and surveys, which analyze individuals' personalities and behaviours.

While Fast Genetics works hard to create a positive workplace, it still faces staffing hurdles.

As it is based in a rural area, the company competes with other industries to recruit and retain a large enough employee base to staff the barns, Smolinski says.

Over time, this difficulty could grow. The swine sector will require 15,400 employees by 2025, a labour market forecast by the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council says.

Struggling to retain employees

Beyond competition with other employers, the swine industry faces several hurdles to recruit and retain employees.

For example, members of the workforce may avoid the swine industry because of the stereotypes of low pay and long hours, says Erika Osmundson, director of marketing

RECRUITING AND RETENTION

communications for AgCareers.com. (AgCareers.com is part of the Farms.com group of companies, as is *Better Pork*.) In many cases, these misconceptions are simply untrue.

Indeed, companies may struggle to retain newly hired employees if they “don’t have a very strong sense of what agricultural production looks like,” says Kristen Cumming, principal consultant with Cantos Performance Management in Alberta. Through Cantos, Cumming helps companies develop and carry out training programs.

New employees may be overwhelmed when they arrive in the workplace if they do not understand the scope of their duties.

Staff may also be reluctant to stay in unfamiliar workplaces.

“Workers may understand the scope of their work but, at the same time, they may not feel a sense of connection with their colleagues,” Cumming says.

This situation is especially true for individuals whose “culture or background isn’t commonly represented in their workplace,” she says.

In addition, employees may leave a company for more attractive opportunities, such as another job with a higher wage or salary. They may also leave because of dissatisfaction with the employer, Osmundson says.

In other cases, an individual’s reason for leaving may be out of the employer’s control. For instance, employees may need to relocate for personal reasons.

Reducing turnover

To address these retention challenges, companies in the pork industry can take preventative steps throughout staff members’ periods of employment.

To ensure potential hires are strong matches for the roles, employers can thoroughly screen candidates and provide them with some job exposure during their interviews, Cumming says.

During the interview, managers should clearly define the responsibilities of each position, as well as “how those objectives relate to the overall goals of the business,” Osmundson says. Employers should also determine how they will measure the candidate’s success.

By completing these steps before hiring, employers can “eliminate many of the future frustrations that can lead to an employee being dissatisfied,” she says.

The new hire’s initial learning curve is also important to ensure employee retention, Osmundson says.

During this process, employers can ensure that individuals have “all of the tools necessary to do their job,”



Kristen Cumming



Erika Osmundson



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Fast Genetics photo

To grow its team, Fast Genetics uses various hiring methods, including national and local job boards, career fairs and scholarship programs, says Lucinda Smolinski.

she says. They can offer staff training in areas requiring development as well.

Once workers join the team, managers should clearly and regularly outline expectations.

“We should keep that communication alive throughout the employee’s experience within our organization,” Cumming says.

To make sure that staff can successfully fulfill job responsibilities, employers should provide timely feedback about work performance.

New employees can use this advice to adjust their working style, Cumming says.

Individuals who have worked with the organization for a longer time require this support too.

“Employers often forget about their mature, seasoned employees,” Cumming says. “We believe that these people are doing OK and don’t need help from us. But giving them appreciative feedback from time to time is crucial.”

By positively engaging with staff, employers can improve workplace morale.

“Helping employees grow professionally is a great way to show value to your staff and appreciation for their efforts,” Osmundson says.

Supervisors should also be open to receiving comments and concerns from their workers.

“Let them share their frustrations. Then, engage in dialogue to acknowledge that feedback,” she says. Through these conversations, employers have “the opportunity to give



Les Éleveurs de porcs du Québec photo

“Workers may understand the scope of their work but, at the same time, they may not feel a sense of connection with their colleagues,” says Kristen Cumming.

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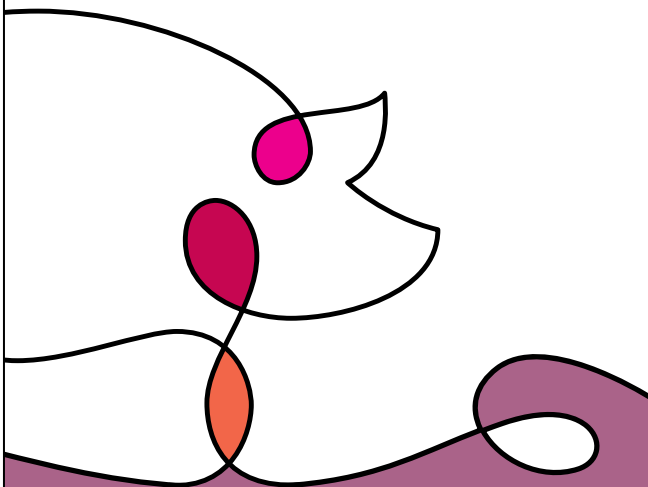
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RECRUITING AND RETENTION

explanations and discuss how smaller changes could be made.”

These talks allow managers and business owners to identify and take steps to resolve any difficulties in the workplace, Cumming adds.

Employers should also avoid making any assumptions on the events and interactions that occur within the workplace. Rather, they should collect as much information about these occurrences as possible before taking action, she says.

Managers can gather this data in various ways.

For instance, they can talk to new hires who are coming on board, Cumming says. Employers can ask existing employees why they work for the organization. Business owners may also want to ask exiting workers why they are leaving the company. This information can help managers make improvements for current and future staff.

Allowing employees to be more engaged in decision making may also help to improve worker satisfaction and boost retention.

“Provide staff with room to make decisions that are within their responsibilities,” Cumming says. Encourage people “to take ownership of projects and activities in a way that makes them proud of their work.”

Finally, employers may decide to recruit temporary foreign workers to fill positions.

Fast Genetics and many other pork producers employ individuals from other countries.

In fact, many farmers use FERME Québec, a non-profit organization which specializes in helping producers hire temporary foreign workers, to recruit staff, says Merlin

Continued on page 24



Les Éleveurs de porcs du Québec photo

Supervisors should be open to receiving comments and concerns from their workers.

CAHRC IDENTIFIES LABOUR SHORTAGES

Earlier this year, the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC) began a project that could provide Canadians with a greater understanding of our agricultural labour markets.

The work will build upon CAHRC's Labour Market Information project, which was based on 2014 data, to expand its market forecast from 2025 to 2029.

Over the next two years, researchers will examine the labour needs of multiple sectors, including swine, to create updated demand and supply models for the workforce, the council's March release says.

Specifically, CAHRC will focus on

"projected employment growth, seasonality of labour demand and labour supply inflows and outflows," the release says.

In addition, the council will analyze the participation of certain groups, such as women and indigenous people, in these labour markets.

"The labour gap needs to be filled," Debra Hauer, manager of the CAHRC's AgriLMI program, says in the release. "To achieve this, we will examine groups that are currently under-represented in the agricultural workforce ... (and) continue to encourage new Canadians to make a career in agriculture." **BP**

Dana Harford photo



Overall, employers need to be willing to continually improve their operations.



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Continued from page 22

Trottier-Picard, senior public affairs adviser for Les Éleveurs de porcs du Québec.

Continuing commitment to staff

The experts have advice for employers who want to improve worker retention within their companies.

First, supervisors and business owners can lead by example.

“Have a passion for what you do,”

Osmundson says. “What your employees see in you will have a direct influence in what you see from them.”

Managers should try to build strong relationships with their employees.

“Make sure to spend time with your A players and take interest in them as individuals,” she says.

Employers can also build a culture of engagement in the workplace by

helping “team members to interact in fun ways,” Osmundson says.

Employers can celebrate workplace diversity, for example, by “having staff from different ethnic backgrounds provide lunch – paid for by the employer, of course – to give others a taste of their cultures.”

Organizations can also hold staff meetings and other festive events to develop a sense of belonging among their staff, says Trottier-Picard.

Employers may also want to

consider offering “increased flexibility for balancing family life and work” to build upon this workplace culture, he says.



Merlin Trottier-Picard

These initiatives could help producers who struggle, because of “fluctuations in the pork market,” to offer attractive employment packages when competing for workers in other industries, says Trottier-Picard.

Producers could also offer creative benefits, such as hunting ground rights, housing options and meal plans, Osmundson explains.

“Some of these unique offers can hold a lot of weight in the eyes of employees,” she says.

And employers can access various resources to learn about worker retention.

“Talk to industry associations and attend conferences,” Cumming says to *Better Pork*. “Get out there and talk with other producers about what is going on.”

Managers may need to look beyond the swine industry to obtain information.

“It’s possible that other agricultural producers are facing similar issues, even if they’re not in pork,” she says.

Overall, employers need to be willing to continually improve their operations.

“Keep your eyes open for learning and development opportunities around any kind of staff management,” Cumming says. **BP**

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by
**KATE
AYERS**

EXPANDING THE FARMING FAMILY TREE

A passion for farming and raising livestock runs deep in this Quebec family.

Dana Hafford and Sébastien Paré faced a hurdle when they made the decision to farm full time.

Both of their families were active in the industry but, by the time the Quebec couple was ready to enter primary production, their parents had already started their respective succession plans.

Hafford's parents had transitioned the hog farm to her brother Jonathan. On Paré's side, his brother Alexandre had bought the family dairy operation.

Fortunately, Jonathan helped Dana and Sébastien buy their own farm.

In 2006, they purchased a 240-sow farrow-to-finish operation in Compton, Que., marking the beginning of Ferme Porcine HP Inc.

The couple has since transitioned to a 175-sow herd because of the market demand for heavier pigs.

Now, they finish around 3,000 hogs each year.

In total, the farm is 200 acres. About 100 acres are wooded while the rest of the land is workable and used to grow grain for feed.

Hafford and Paré prepare their feed rations on-farm in a mix mill. They also raise their hogs without the use of antibiotics.

The couple's three children, Loïc, 12, Maelie, 9, and Naomie, 6, all enjoy the farm.

"We love when they follow us out to the barn to help. I think it's a great gift to them and they learn a lot," says Hafford.

Hafford and Paré are interested in transitioning to a Certified Humane operation, so the pair are looking into possible barn renovations to achieve this designation.

The family hopes to continue farming for generations to come. For now, they strive to make their operation as efficient and sustainable as possible.



Dana Hafford photo

Dana Hafford and her husband Sébastien Paré run a 175-sow operation in Compton, Que.

When did you start farming?

Hafford: In 2006.

I previously worked in a bank, but I realized I didn't like working in an office all day.

What contributed to your decision to become a pork producer?

I wanted to have my own business and be my own boss.

Describe your role on your farm operation?

I do all of the accounting and paperwork.

In the barn, I mostly work in the gestation barn with the sows. I care for all of the piglets.

My husband is responsible for making the feed and farm maintenance. He also works in the finishing barn.

Hours you spend in the barn per week?

I don't really count my hours, but I would say about six hours per day. So, about 45 hours per week.

Hours you spend in the office per week?

About six to eight hours per week.

How many emails do you receive per day?

On average, for the farm, I would say about two or three.

Hours a day on a cellphone?

For the farm, about a half-hour to an hour each day.

Email or text?

They both have their advantages but I use email more than I text.

Any favourite apps?

In Quebec we have an app called Grainwiz.

It allows farmers to see the market prices of grain and pork. I follow that



Maelie Paré helps her parents during chore time by feeding the sows.

very closely.

I also have the CME Group Mobile app which I am on a lot. I use it to book the hogs and grain.

Hours a day on the Internet?

Per day? I would say an hour to look up information for the farm.

How often do you travel?

It depends on the year but we usually go on holidays for two to three weeks a year.

Where did you last travel to?

We went to St. Croix Island last year. We also make trips to Quebec City



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What do you like best about farming?

That is a good question!

I like having my own business, being my own boss and working with my husband.

What do you like least?

We cannot just leave the farm and

go. The hogs cannot just be left for two weeks until we get back. We have to find someone who can come in and cover for us when we want to go on vacation.

What is the most important lesson you've learned?

Perseverance.

Even when things get hard, you have to keep going.

After that, good things happen.



Dana Hafford photo

Hafford's youngest daughter, Naomie Paré, is small but mighty. She helps Dana during feeding time and enjoys being around the pigs.

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What's your guiding management principle?

Everything is recorded and accounted for.

Every time we make a decision, my husband and I consult to make sure it is the right one. We never do things "out of the blue."

What's your top tip about farm transition planning?

My kids are young but my philosophy on transition planning is that there is no pressure.

All of the decisions that we make are for my husband and me. I think that, if you do it for your kids and they don't take over the farm, you will be disappointed.

I think that approach is good for the kids, too, because they won't feel pressured to take over the farm just because their parents want them to.

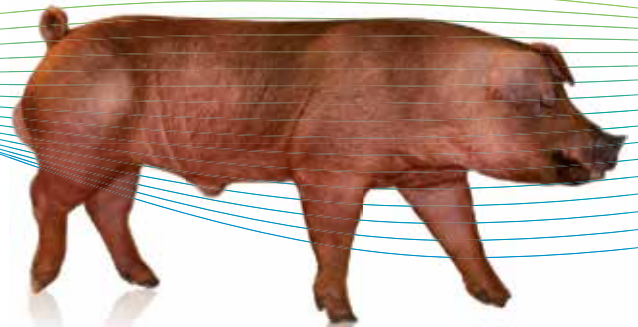
Are you involved in any committees, boards, associations or volunteer efforts?

I am on the finishing committee for Les Éleveurs de porcs du Québec and I represent my region, Estrie.

I am also on the committee for swine health and research.

I like to stay up to date.

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Dana Hafford photo



Loïc Paré helps with feeding but he also likes taking care of the piglets.

What are your hobbies or recreational activities?

We like to play sports.

I like to just be with my family and do activities with them.

What does your family think of farming?

Both my parents and my husband's parents are farmers. So,

we are pretty much all immersed in the farming business. My kids like farming, too.

What's your top goal?

To be happy and always enjoy what I do.

How do you define success?

We are able to live well from working on our farm.

If our kids want to farm one day, that would be a bonus.

Is your farm vehicle messy or neat?

I think it is pretty neat.

What are three items that are on top of your desk?

Bills, the newspaper and my phone.

What's the best time of day?

I like when I can go to sleep and I am proud of my day.

When everything is done, I am happy and can sleep soundly.

What was your most memorable production year?

Two years ago, one of my sows birthed 21 piglets. It was very impressive.

I had to give some piglets to another sow to help her out.

What do you see as current or future challenges for the industry?

A short-term challenge is to make all the right decisions to plan and renovate our barns to be in compliance with the group housing standards by 2024.

As always, another big challenge for the industry is to have a decent hog price that is higher than the production cost. If we can get a good price, we will be able to operate more efficiently with new investments and technologies. **BP**

by
**MOHSEN
 POURABEDIN,
 PHD**



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Pork producers cannot avoid market volatility. Constantly fluctuating market prices and feed costs bring uncertainty to pork producers' overall profitability.

In particular, finisher diets can account for up to 70 per cent of total feed cost, with protein being the second most expensive component. Amino acids are building blocks for proteins and key nutrients for muscle growth and daily weight gain. The dietary supply of amino acids to meet animals' requirements directly impacts producers' profits.

Nutritionists should be looking at precise amino acid ratios to design finisher diets for better performance and better financial return in every changing market situation.

When market prices are high, producers and their nutritionists can adjust amino acid ratios for the optimal gain to bring hogs to market sooner.

If hog prices are down, producers and their nutritionists can optimize amino acids for efficiency to ensure they meet their performance targets.

Amino acid requirements are mostly expressed as dietary concentrations and, in some cases, as an amount per animal per day. The most advanced system to express amino acids is standardized ileal digestibility (SID). The system represents the bioavailable amino acid supply for the pig, as it accounts

for basal endogenous amino acid loss from the animal (Stein et al., 2007).

Lysine (Lys) is the first limiting amino acid in pig production. The amount of lysine consumed, on a daily basis, has a direct influence on animal growth and performance. The ideal protein is represented by a profile in which the supply of each essential amino acid is expressed as a percentage of the dietary lysine content.

The lysine requirement is often expressed as a ratio to energy. As the energy density of the diet increases, either feed intake decreases and/or growth rate increases. When feed intake decreases in energy-dense diets, pigs require a higher dietary lysine percentage to maintain a similar lysine intake in grams per day.

If energy density results in increased growth rate while feed intake remains constant, pigs require more lysine for their increased growth. Both scenarios require higher absolute dietary lysine levels but the amount of lysine needed per calorie of energy remains constant (Smith et al., 1999).

In corn- and soybean meal-based diets, tryptophan (Trp) is typically the second limiting amino acid. So a better understanding of the tryptophan to lysine ratio is important.

The estimated SID Trp : Lys

for grow-finish pigs ranges from a minimum of 16.9 per cent for minimum feed conversion ratio (FCR) to 23.5 per cent for maximum average daily gain (ADG), a recent study at the Kansas State University shows (Gonçalves et al. 2017).

The optimum ratio of amino acids

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depends on the production parameter of interest, whether it is highest lean growth rate or lowest cost/kg of gain (Figure 1).

In a constantly changing market, producers need flexibility to react in a real time. They need methods to curb spending and bring more control to their production.

Producers and their nutritionists should track finishing performance and diets, and look at different amino acid scenarios for the best feeding strategy. They should adjust amino acid ratios to meet the producers' target performance and evaluate alternative scenarios with synthetic amino acids.

The results will be better control and more confidence in the producers' finishing performance and profits. **BP**

Mohsen Pourabedin is the monogastric nutritionist for Cargill Animal Nutrition, Canada. He received his B.Sc. and M.Sc. degrees in Animal Nutrition from the University of Tehran, fol-

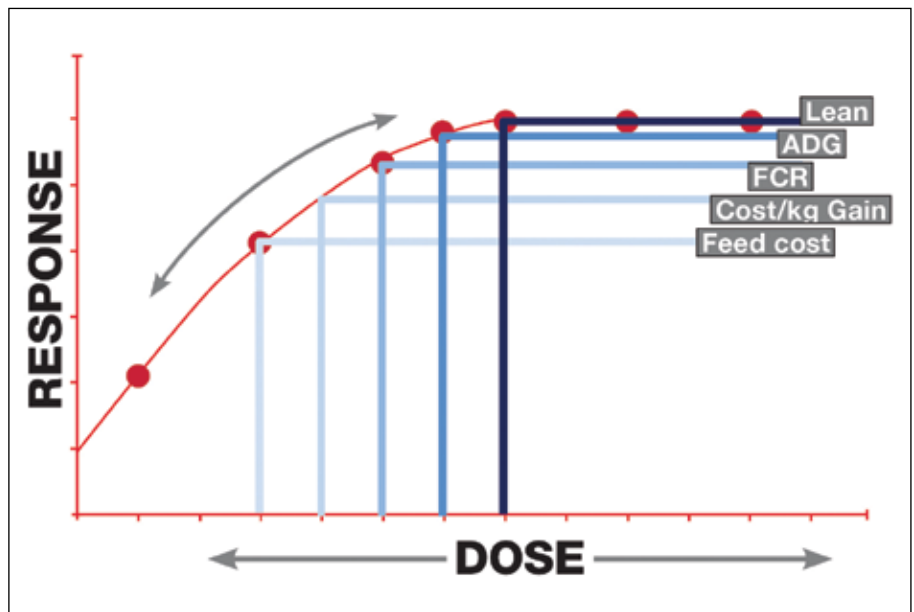


Figure 1: The optimum ratio of amino acids depends on the parameter of interest.

lowed by a PhD in gut microbiology at McGill University. In his current role, Mohsen is responsible for the design and development of new products for pigs and poultry.

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Ontario Pork Congress photo

Welcome to the Ontario Pork Congress (OPC)!

I am proud and lucky to be the 45th president of the largest volunteer-led trade show in Canada. We like to think of the event as an opportunity for social recreation and education for the pork industry.

I believe that focus is what sets our industry apart: “Celebrate Pork” is our motto and we live it.

Allow me to walk you through a few of the highlights at OPC for 2018. Our exhibitors have experienced first-hand the new online systems that have streamlined registration and payment. These systems have resulted in a dozen new exhibitors.

The OPC and Ontario Pork have invested in a Fields to Forks vignette for the pork industry and its consumers. This vignette is to air in the month leading up to the congress – the theme is 45 years of OPC and celebrate pork!

We are thrilled to have over 60 kids entered into the Bacon Maker Classic live show, education and carcass competition.

Taste the Best is back with new restaurants and pairings. Our chef demonstration is featured during the Past Presidents’ Lunch and will highlight the Black Dog Village Pub & Bistro from Bayfield.

Pig Art has returned to OPC and features local artists. There is still time to enter the competition. (I won the people’s choice prize for sculpture a few years ago.)

We again are proud to host the OPIC Hog Jog. This year, we are running for the Local Community Food Centre in Stratford. The organization promotes healthy food, budgeting and gardening programs.

You are invited to two exciting days, June 20 and 21, in Stratford to Celebrate Pork!

Chris Crump
2018 OPC President



Martin Schwalbe photo

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OPC TURNS 45 IN 2018

While OPC has evolved to include new events, the show remains a central meeting place for the pork industry.

by DIEGO FLAMMINI

Ontario Pork Congress photo



Forty-five years ago, a group of Ontario pork producers and industry reps met in an Ontario Hydro building in London to discuss the idea of starting a pork show.

They had attended barrow shows

at London's Western Fair but felt an opportunity existed to expand the show and include exhibitors.

That idea evolved into what is now the Ontario Pork Congress (OPC).

But the show almost received a different name.

"One of the big debates among organizers was if it was going to be an Ontario pork congress or a Canadian pork congress," Richard Smelski, an original OPC organizer and 1993-94 president of the Congress, told *Better Pork*. "The purebred breeders wanted to keep it focused on Ontario."

The group held the first show in Stratford in 1973 – and the organizers had to pay for renovations to the Stratford Fairgrounds.

"We had to put a door between two buildings and the fairgrounds wouldn't pay for it," Smelski said.

"I remember the chairperson of the exhibits committee said, 'We'll do it.'"

The goal was to "put on the best hog show in Canada or hire a bus to go to one," he added.

Smelski estimates upwards of 4,000 people attended the first Ontario Pork Congress, which featured exhibitors and educational programs. The event relied on volunteers to run.

Organizers of the first show, however, faced some hurdles.

"The first year was a financial disaster," Smelski said. "The provincial government and (William Atcheson Stewart, then Minister of Agriculture and Food), provided a little bit of money but wouldn't fund the whole thing. (Stewart) said it would make a stronger show if we made up the business plan and survived on our own."

Despite the early challenges, OPC's organizers eventually created one of the marquee shows in the industry.

The group pursued many initiatives to make this happen, including providing swine producers with unique marketing opportunities.

For the first 15 years, the show connected purebred breeders with interested international buyers. The OPC helped local hog producers gain access to a South American market through an export mission.

"Showmanship and exports were huge markets at the time," Smelski said. "A group of members from the OPC went to Brazil to try selling some breeding stock."

"Then they had the group from Brazil come back to Ontario. Anybody who wanted to see and buy purebred stock could do it at the Ontario Pork Congress."

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Education also played a pivotal role in the early years of the OPC.

The Junior Barrow Competition, known today as the Bacon Maker Classic, offered young farmers a chance to show their parents' pigs. After the competition, packers and suppliers bid on the animals during an auction.

Similar events take place at other shows, but "nothing like you saw at the Congress," Smelski said.

Around 20 years after the creation of the OPC, Smelski began noticing shifts in the way information was delivered at the show.

Education sessions from exhibitors replaced presentations from guest speakers, for example.

"I think there's a real good turnout of exhibitors because they'll often launch new products at the show," he said.

"We used to have speakers coming to talk about vaccines and other products. Now there might be one or two speakers with a very specific focus."

Another shift centred on biosecurity at the show.

Though it was always an important part of the swine industry, biosecurity didn't become a focal point of many conversations until the 1990s, Smelski said.

"We used to do a lot of live pig shows and I can remember one back room was built for bringing in and judging weaner pigs," he said. "Biosecurity measures have certainly changed – to the point where the OPC was cancelled in 2001" as a precaution.

The OPC's current lineup includes community and youth engagement initiatives, while also helping producers network and develop relationships with exhibitors.

And Chris Crump, president of the 2018 Ontario Pork Congress, is honoured to be at the helm for these special events.

"This is a big deal for us," especially when you consider it's led by volunteers, Crump said. "We do this because we love the

industry and that's why this show has been running for 45 years."

The Bacon Maker Classic allows kids nine years and older to show hogs. This year's registration is at an all-time high, Crump said.

"We have 69 kids (registered so far) in the live show this year," he told *Better Pork*. "That means young people are more interested in the swine industry, which is always a good thing."

Another event showcases pork's versatility in meals, as local chefs pair beer or wine with pork dishes during Taste the Best.

The industry also comes together to support local causes through the Ontario Pork Industry Council's Pork for a Cause Hog Jog, which is held during the OPC.

This year, the Hog Jog is partnering with the Local Community Food Centre. The organization invites the community to share, cook, access and advocate for local food.

The Local will use the proceeds from the Hog Jog to upgrade its facilities, including renovations to the main dining area and updates to the lighting systems.

Finally, the OPC provides an opportunity for international visitors to learn about the needs of Ontario's pork industry.

The International Workers Training and Tour brings in guests from different countries and teaches them how they can work with Ontario's pork producers.

"A lot of the workers ask for training in the barn," said Francisco Trejo, chair of the International Workers committee.

"That's a good thing because we need a lot of workers to support the pork industry."

The temporary foreign worker program approval process can take several months to complete. Reducing that time would be ideal for everyone involved, Trejo said.

"Farmers don't have time to fill out lots of paperwork," he said. "We need to come up with an easier solution for farmers to bring in the help they need." **BP**

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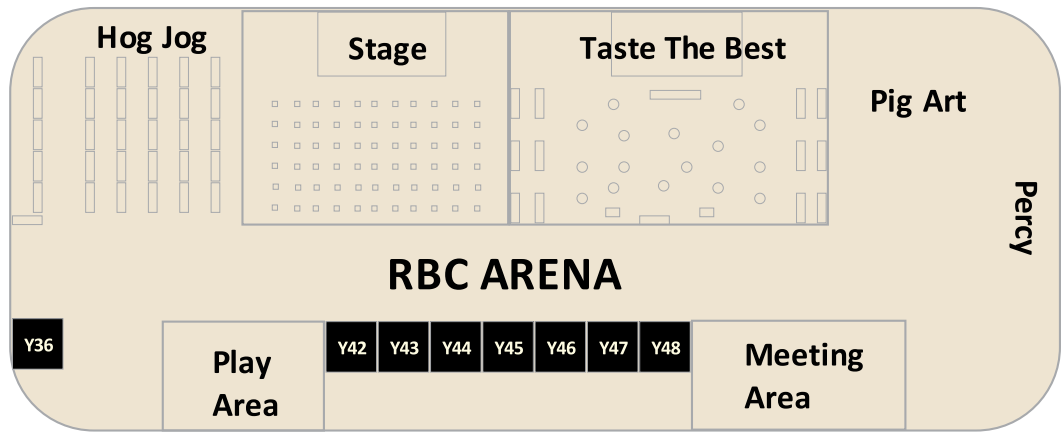
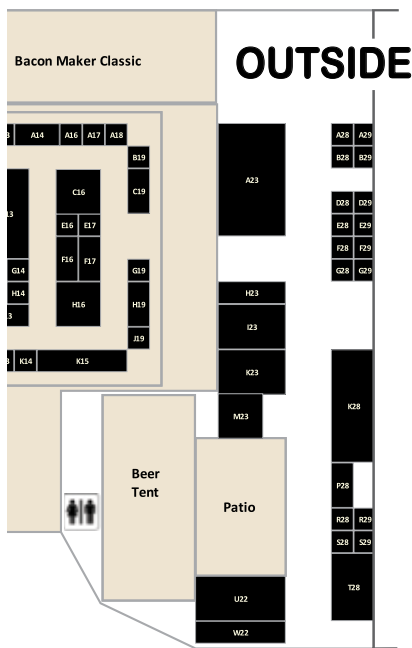
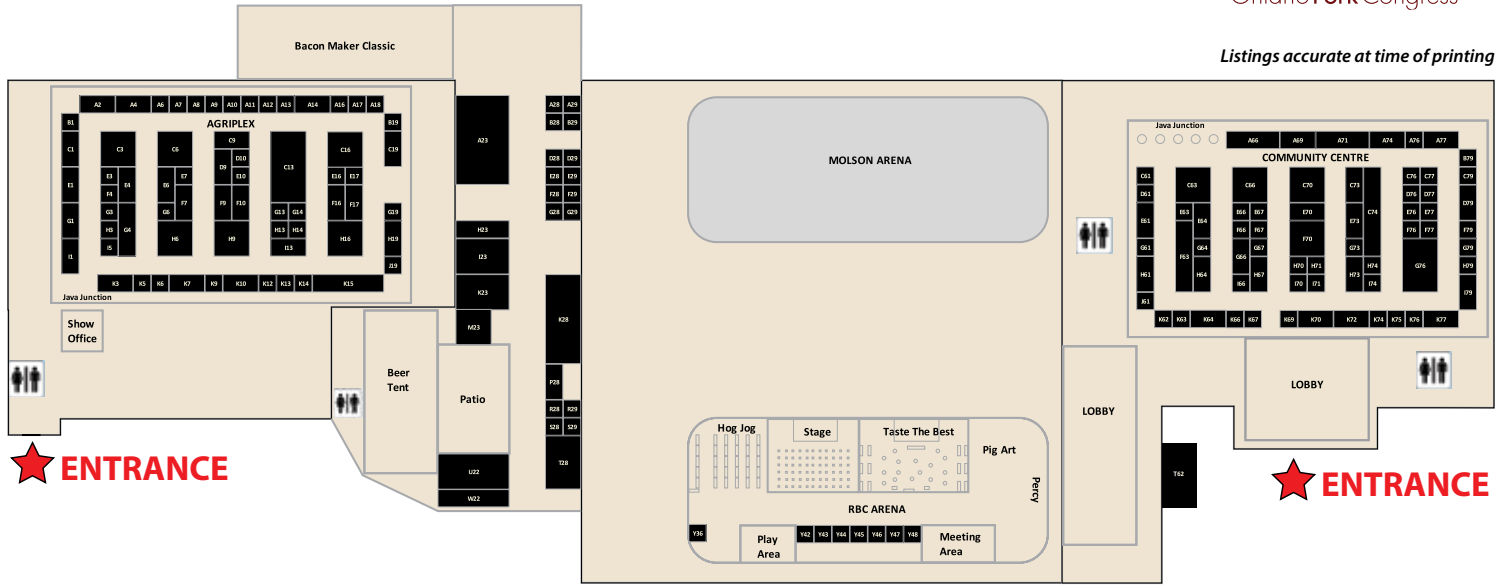
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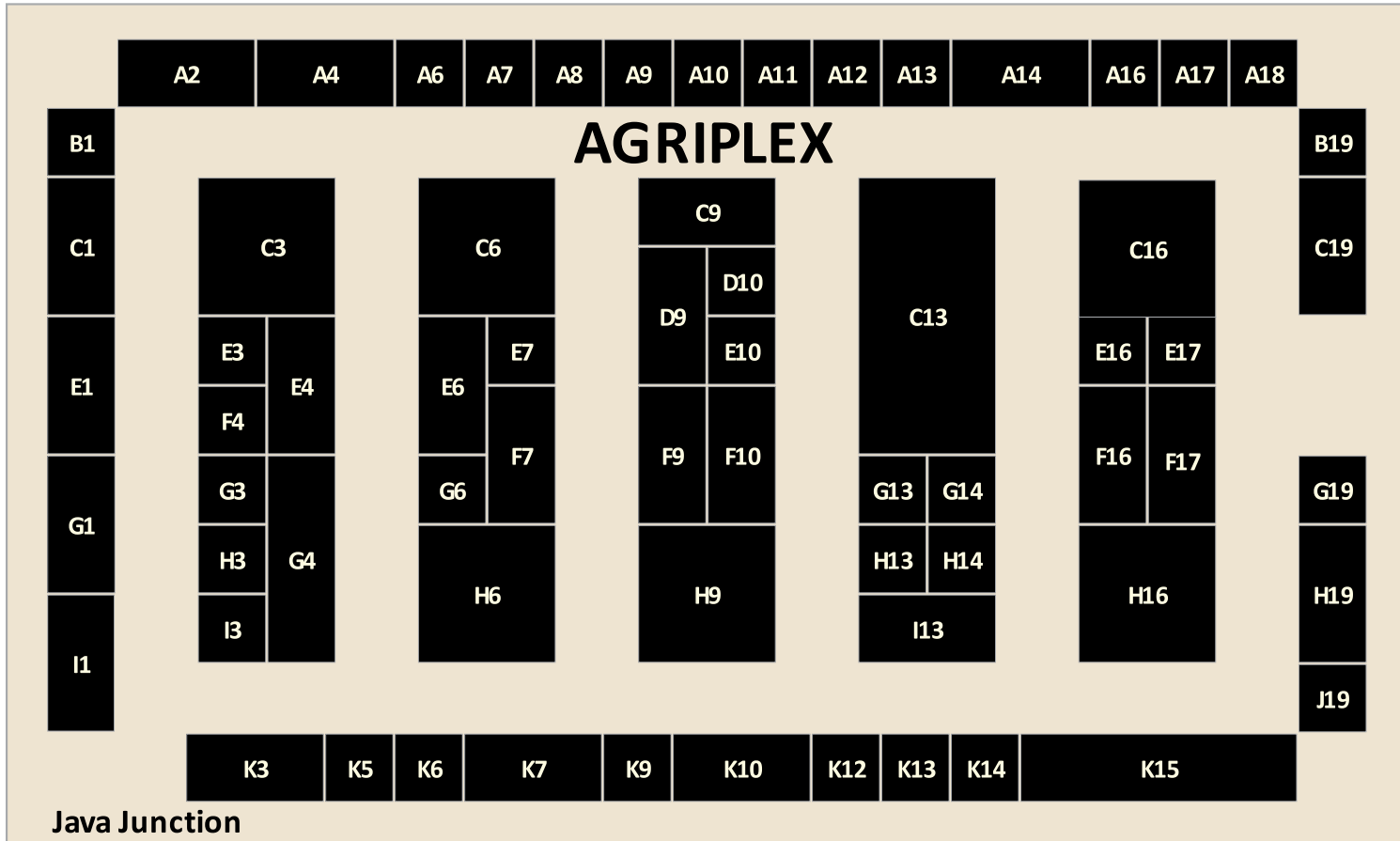
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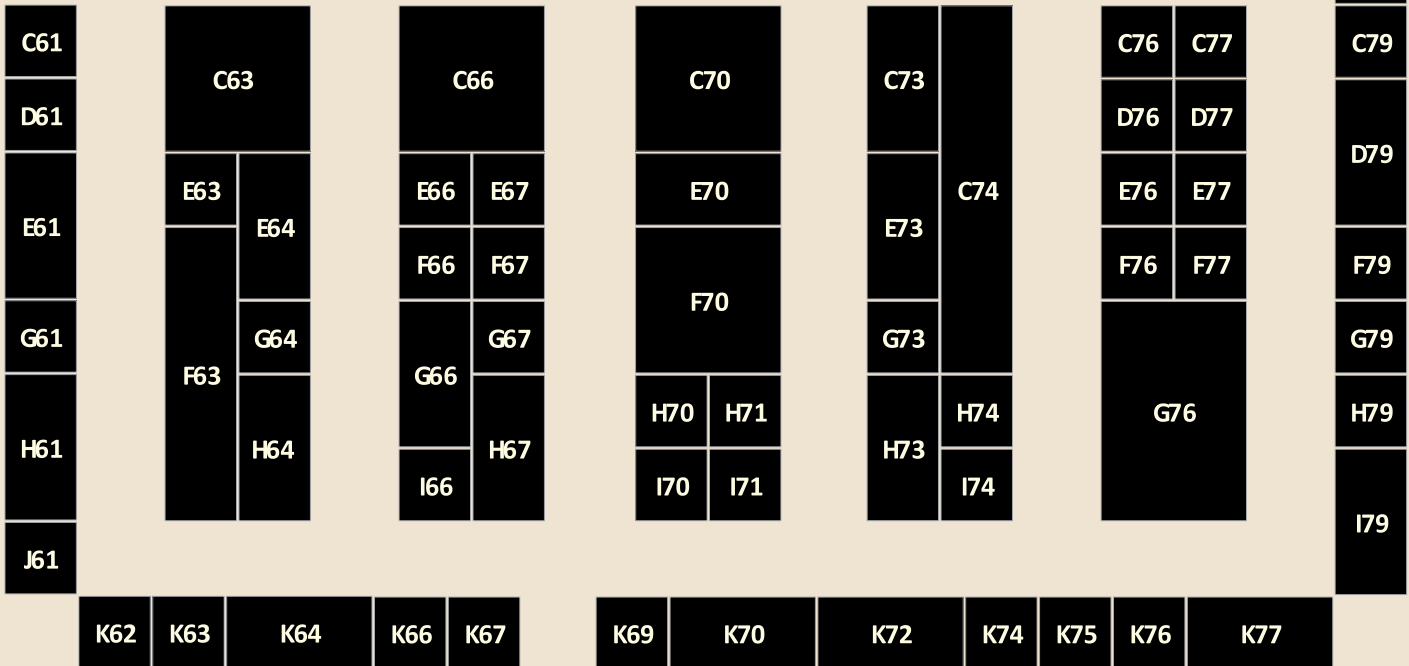
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Ontario Pork Congress

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Don McLean

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Lloyd Smit

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Doug McLeod

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Richard Stein

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Johanne Groenestege

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Linda Weitzel

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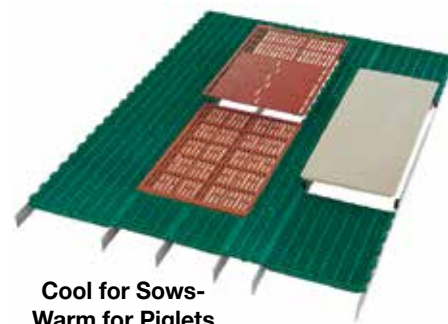
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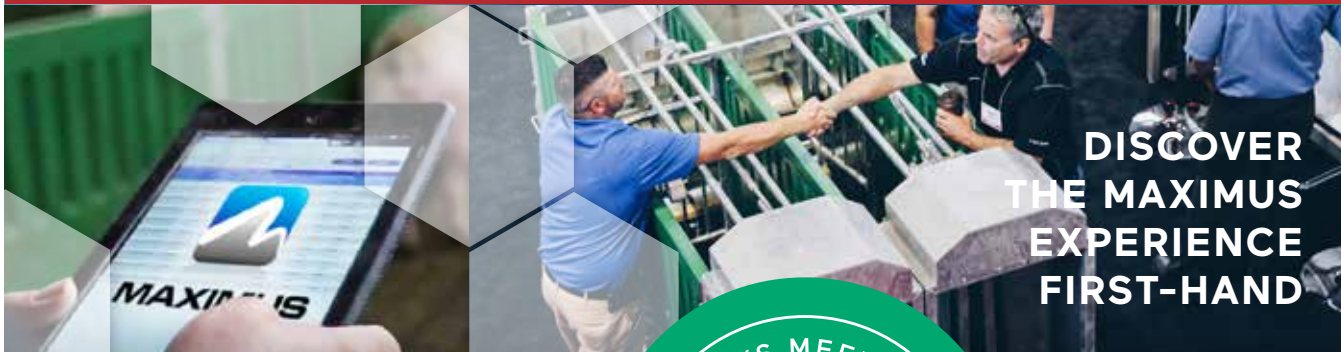
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Nedap ESF boosts return on investment in remodeled barn



Dave Denys

David Denys accomplished a lot in four days. Specifically, he gained sow productivity and cut his sow feed use by 20% on the 250-sow

farrow-to-finish operation near Parkhill, Ontario, Canada that Denys runs with his father and brother-in-law.

"Remodeling our barn was an easy and inexpensive route to take," says Denys. "It was an easy choice to go with Caris Welding and Nedap Livestock Management. They are an excellent support team."

“There were no start-up problems, nothing. Everything worked really great. Steve Caris helped me with the planning ahead of time, and it all worked out great.”



To free up space for construction, Denys moved some sows into an old gestation barn and shipped market hogs light for a short time. He tore out stalls and did minor concrete work in half of the barn while sows remained in stalls in the other half. Then he moved his sows to the renovated side and pulled the rest of the stalls. Once the work was complete, he repopulated the barn with his herd. The gestation barn now consists of one pen for a group of about 216 sows.

“There were no start-up problems, nothing,” Denys says. “Everything worked really great. Steve Caris helped me with the planning ahead of time, and it all worked out great.”

NUMBERS DON'T LIE

Denys knew he was using too much feed in his old stalled system, but he was surprised to find out how much. He is feeding about 20% less feed than before the remodel.

Precise feeding with the Nedap ESF system improves the herd's sow body condition and leads to more weaned pigs entering the nursery.

“We are getting more live pigs born and are on track to wean 28 pigs per sow per year because the sows are in better condition. That's two more pigs per sow per year than before” says Denys.

CORRECT PEN DESIGN KEEPS SOWS RELAXED

Denys loves the change in his herd's behavior since the installation of the Nedap ESF.

“My pigs aren't aggressively fighting. They mingle calmly with each other,” says Denys. “There is no fighting around the feeder entrance, either.”

Denys attributes the calm atmosphere to the Nedap ESF forward-exit only design, which prevents fed sows from interacting with unfed sows waiting to eat.

“When a sow leaves the feed unit, she has to walk down the full length of the barn and back again. Most of the time on her walk back, she decides to lay down and sleep,” says Denys. “With other styles of feeding systems, sows want to get back into the feeder, which creates aggression and puts more wear and tear on equipment.”



SIMPLE SYSTEM SAVES TIME

Denys appreciates how his new Nedap sow management system saves him time.

“Our sow barn needs less maintenance now because we aren’t spending time fixing loose stalls,” says Denys. “We also save time by not having to find sows to move them to farrow and because our sows are easier to handle.”

The system also helps identify changes in sow behavior that could indicate something is wrong.

“When the system alerts us that a sow isn’t eating, we go into the pen to see what’s wrong,” says Denys. “In individual gestation stalls, you don’t have that level of observation. You don’t know if a sow isn’t eating or how much of her feed the sow next to her ate. Now we know exactly how much each sow is eating.”



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In an age where FaceTime is an app and the only smiles you see are emojis, making personal connections can be difficult. For organizers of the 44th Alberta Pork Congress, however, it's well worth the effort.

"With technology taking over our lives both personally and professionally, face-to-face meetings are more important than ever," said Kate Cheney, the sole principal of ConventionALL Management Inc.

"Some people attend Pork Congress to do business and generate sales but, for many of our exhibitors, it's a chance to get that one-on-one time that's increasingly rare. Personal connection is still vital in a virtual reality world."

A virtual sell-out

That personal touch may help explain why Alberta Pork Congress — running June 13 and 14 at Westerner Park in Red Deer, Alta. — is the largest pork industry show in Western Canada. With booths 90 per cent sold as of mid-April, including 13 overflow booths added last year, another sell-out is expected.

"We get strong support every year because the event is known for being well run and professional," said Cheney. "Even though the industry has shrunk over the years, Pork Congress attracts quality buyers and key decision makers."

"It's gratifying to see the relationships that are built over time, where people bring their babies to the show and eventually the babies grow up and attend. It's like seeing family whenever I'm here."

Something old, something new

After 44 years, people know what to expect when the curtain rises, but Cheney and the board of directors always tweak things to keep the event fresh.

For 2018, they've moved the

Wednesday night banquet from Westerner Park to the Holiday Inn on Gasoline Alley.

Organizers also added to the lineup of awards presented at the banquet. Apart from the regular recognition for industry ambassador, lifetime achievement and farm team, a new rising star award will be featured. Sponsored by Real Solutions Plus and Standard Nutrition Company, the honour goes to an up-and-coming person who is new to the pork sector but shows promise for a long career in the industry.

Repeat business

Still, it's the fundamental nature of the event that keeps people coming back for more.

"Alberta Pork Congress is a chance for people to gather and talk about the industry," said Nick Korver, president of the Alberta Pork Congress and business development manager with Fortified Nutrition Ltd./Grand Valley Fortifiers.

"Vendors get to see the latest developments, display their wares, and talk about new and exciting products. It's unusual to have producers, suppliers, vendors, veterinarians and other experts in the same place at the same time, so that makes Pork Congress special."

Being part of this event, and the industry itself, is something Korver doesn't take for granted.

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Alberta Pork photo



Alberta Pork was ready to welcome visitors to the 2017 event with banners highlighting the Porkapalooza BBQ competition and the importance of biosecurity.

product in a unique way that is widely respected and it's neat to be a part of that," he said.

The event may also be benefiting from the relatively good conditions in the industry right now, which is one of many things that Korver finds gratifying.

"We rode a pretty good wave the last half-year or so, and I think most people are fairly optimistic. We're thankful for their continued support of the Alberta Pork Congress and for Kate Cheney's work in making things run smoothly," he said.

"Those two days in June are an

opportunity to celebrate our history, the good things happening in our industry and the good people who make it happen. I think we are on the cusp of some exciting developments and Pork Congress will continue to play a prominent role in that progress." **BP**

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SHOULD YOU BUILD A NEW BARN OR RETROFIT?

Consider all factors when determining what is right for your pork operation.



Rachel Lincoln photo

When deciding whether to build a new barn or retrofit an existing one, everything must be examined.

The decision to build or retrofit a pig barn involves many factors, but should ultimately be fairly straightforward, says Murray Elliott, a retired farm building consultant with FGC Ltd. based in Sebringville, Ont.

The right choice is mostly based on taking a good, hard look at the deficiencies of your current building, he says. Everything must be examined, from pits, perimeter walls, and floors to attic spaces and roofs.

“Try to start at the bottom with foundation walls and pit walls, which is difficult because they are underground or filled with manure, but (this review) needs to be done,” Elliott says.

“A crack that appears to be structural certainly has to be investigated. If your pit is in bad shape, I’d say the whole structure is done. However, things like roof trusses are a different matter in that

they are fairly easily replaced.”

In the end, the examination will either be thumbs up or thumbs down. Before you proceed on the belief that it’s worthwhile to renovate, Elliott says you must decide how much you are willing to compromise.

“A lot depends on how far you want to go with the renovation,” he explains. “Renovating existing structures is about compromises and the preferences of individual operators really matter.

“Some farmers are willing to leave poured hallways in existing structures and clean them on an ongoing basis, for example, and some don’t want to do that (work).

“Another situation that arises is, because of where a hallway is (located), you might have to have a group of 30 and a group of 40 pigs in different-sized pens. That (layout) might not be a problem in Ontario

where there are mostly independent farmers. Out West, however, it’s more common for companies to own the farms and some companies want everything uniform.”

A brand-new build, of course, involves no compromises and takes every wish of the owner into account. While the length of time for construction is similar for a new build versus a renovation, the cost of a new build tends to be higher.

Beware, however, that the costs of some renovations can be very high if they require a great deal of labour. The removal of a lot of debris, for example, can result in high labour costs. Another labour-intensive task is the pouring of a new pit floor inside an existing structure.

In general, a renovation will be 50 to 70 per cent of the cost of a new facility, Elliott says. When the renovation costs approach the 70 per

cent range, producers should exercise caution in their decisions.

“If, for example, you have to change the roof five years from now, you definitely need to factor that (work) into the renovation cost and that will, in turn, change the percentage you’re saving,” he says. “The savings margin must be carefully looked at from every angle.”

Producers should also consider their desired type of production system when making the decision. Farmers should select the production system they want before they call a company like his in for a farm visit to evaluate an existing barn, Elliott suggests.

“There are a few ways to go to group housing, such as the use of electronic sow feeders or freedom stalls, and they are very different systems and you need to know what you want ahead of time,” he says.

“These are big decisions for the owner. It’s a matter of square footage required for the system you want, and then cost per square foot from there.”



If you have a facility and it’s in good shape, “there’s certainly some value there that’s often possible to salvage, so the advantage of a renovation is reduced cost,” Murray Elliott says.

Lastly, whether you decide on a new build or the renovation of an old barn, it’s critical that the finished facility has adequate Internet accessibility, online monitoring and automation for water, feed and ventilation, including carbon dioxide monitoring.

In the end, if you have a facility and it’s in good shape, “there’s certainly

some value there that’s often possible to salvage, so the advantage of a renovation is reduced cost,” Elliott says.

“However, you need to be very clear how much life is left in the parts that won’t be renovated. A thorough investigation of the state of the current building is critical.”

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Animal Health

Looking for additional resources on converting to group sow housing? A number of sources can help you throughout the decision-making process.

National Sow Housing Conversion Project (NSHCP)

A collaborative research project, funded by Swine Innovation Porc (through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and provincial pork organizations), brings together the latest scientific, industry and government expertise on group sow housing. Learning from Canadian producers that have made the jump to group sow housing, the NSHCP project provides tools that are essential for making the conversion to group sow housing a successful one.

groupsowhousing.com/

Group sow housing meetings

The meetings, held in September (Winnipeg, Man. on Sept. 12 and Strathmore, Alta. on Sept. 13)

brought together experts in the areas of construction/renovation, technology/innovation, nutrition, science and behaviour to speak about the conversion to group sow housing.

Information from the meeting, both presentations and videos, are available.

prairieswine.com/successfully-converting-to-group-sow-housing/

The Science of Ethology

Whether you are looking at a competitive or non-competitive feeding system, building new or renovating, this publication will take you through the pros and cons of individual systems. This resource provides key information that helps individuals choose the system that is the right fit for their operations.

prairieswine.com/the-science-of-ethology/

Transitioning to group housing: everything you need to know

Producers need to take a number of factors into consideration when

undertaking a conversion. Training, choosing a feeding system, what's involved with retrofitting, and technology and innovation are all important pieces producers need to consider in order to make a successful switch to group sow housing.

cdpq.ca/specialized-reports/sows-in-group-housing.aspx

Acknowledgements

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The Prairie Swine Centre conducts near-market research that can be applied by the pork industry within a one- to seven-year time frame.



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TRACKING ANTIMICROBIAL USE ON HOG FARMS

Ontario pork producers recognize the need to limit the use of antimicrobials and are shifting their practices.

Ontario hog producers are decreasing antimicrobial use, the latest benchmarking survey says.

Concern over resistance to existing antimicrobials is behind a global movement to phase these products out of animal agriculture. That transition is what led Ontario Pork Industry Council (OPIC) to complete voluntary sample-based benchmarking studies of antimicrobial use on Ontario hog farms in 2014 and 2016.

“There’s an onus on pig producers and those of us who work with pig producers to look at what we’re doing with antimicrobial use,” Greg Wideman, a veterinarian with South West Ontario Veterinary Services and a member of OPIC’s antimicrobial use working group, said at Big Bug Day 2017.

Overall, participating producers had an 18 per cent reduction in antimicrobial use per kilogram of live pig produced in 2016 compared to 2014, the survey showed.

Phase one of the study involved 36 farms, representing 105 sites and approximately 35,000 sows. It tracked antimicrobial purchase information from 13 feed suppliers and four veterinary practices to compile the data on these operations.

The research was repeated in 2016 with 33 of the original 36 farms, representing almost 50,000 sows and over one million weaned pigs.

“The public and the regulator are interested in seeing if agriculture can take a critical look at antimicrobial use and decrease it over time,” Wideman said.

Of the three farms that didn’t return for phase two, one declined to participate, one had transitioned to antimicrobial-free production, and one had been involved in a depopulation and repopulation in 2016.

One of the returning operations chose to enrol all of its sows into phase two after only including part of



Martin Schwalbe photo

“There’s an onus on pig producers and those of us who work with pig producers to look at what we’re doing with antimicrobial use,” said Greg Wideman.

the herd in the initial survey.

Participating farms covered the full production cycle, from farrow to finish, in both single- and multi-site production. Veterinary practices and feed suppliers provided antimicrobial sales data, which OPIC used to calculate medication usage data for each stage of production.

The results of the first study had prompted producers to take action. It also brought together producers, veterinarians and feed suppliers, which helped to direct management changes and led to a decrease in use.

“Seventy per cent of participant farms in 2016 showed a decrease in antimicrobial use just by starting the conversation after the first survey,” Wideman said.

Eight of the 10 producers who had higher usage in 2016 compared to 2014 reported a change in health status, such as a Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome infection or another disease challenge.

Infectious disease exposure is a big welfare and economic risk for hog operations, and producers will resort to antimicrobial use when dealing with animals that are sick and

suffering.

“Use of Class 1 antimicrobials – those with human health significance – was found to be very low, and that’s a good news story. It means participants understand the value of Class 1 antimicrobials and they’re a vanishingly small proportion of antimicrobial use in Ontario,” Wideman said.

These studies mark the first antimicrobial use benchmarking over time in Ontario, and are an important part of ensuring responsible antimicrobial use and safe food for consumers.

“An almost 20 per cent overall decrease in antimicrobial use demonstrates that a voluntary benchmarking project is feasible and accepted by pig producers,” Wideman said. “Nowhere in the world is there a project like this that has had these accomplishments in a voluntary program.” **BP**

Swine Health Ontario is a leadership team focused on improving and coordinating the industry’s ability to prevent, prepare for and respond to serious swine health threats in Ontario.

Pigs of Instagram?

How social network analysis can be used to help understand swine health problems and disease outbreaks

When most people think about social networks, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter are what often come to mind. These social networks consist of individuals or groups, called “nodes” in the network analysis world, that are connected by links to illustrate a type of relationship that exists between them (i.e. acquaintances, long-term friends). The dynamics of social networks, such as the position of the nodes, are important for determining how much influence a certain individual or group may have on a network (i.e. friendship). The connections between these nodes can be used to understand their direct (i.e. Mary and Bob are friends on Facebook) and indirect (i.e. Bob is friends with Jane but Mary is not, and hence,

Mary is indirectly connected to Jane through Bob) connections. Social networks have been most widely used in the social sciences to understand social dynamics, but can also help us to understand animal health issues and disease transmission pathways. For instance, for the swine industry, this method can provide important information about the connections between animals, between farms, potential disease transmission routes, and how many farms might get infected if an outbreak were to occur in a network. This information can also be used to model and evaluate the potential effectiveness of control measures (i.e. biosecurity) on farm.

Social network analysis (SNA) describes patterns of connections between nodes (contact patterns) and can be used in animal populations and veterinary epidemiology to determine how infectious viruses may be transmitted between herds.

For instance, livestock are often moved on and off premises, which can pose a risk for spreading infectious viruses if unknowingly infected animals have direct or indirect contact with susceptible animals. For the swine industry, transportation vehicles that ship pigs between locations, e.g. weaned pigs from the sow barn to off-site nursery barn, may also indirectly spread infectious viruses, such as porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome virus (PRRSV). Using SNA to describe animal movements and contact patterns between herds and animal transportation vehicles can help us to understand the potential for viral transmission between herds.

To understand the porcine epidemic diarrhea virus (PEDV) outbreak that occurred in Canadian swine herds in 2014, I used SNA to examine the contact patterns between various service suppliers (i.e. feed, semen, animal movements and animal transportation) and herds that were positive (case herds) and negative (control herds) for PED. Additionally, I used computer generated models to evaluate possible ways PED may have spread during the early phase of the 2014 Canadian PED outbreak.

A questionnaire was used to collect information on herd contact patterns with service suppliers between Dec 2013-Feb 2014 from 23 Canadian swine herds (9 case herds; 14 control herds). A case herd was any swine herd with confirmed positive diagnostic test results for PEDV, with typical clinical signs at the herd level within the study period. Control herds were randomly selected and

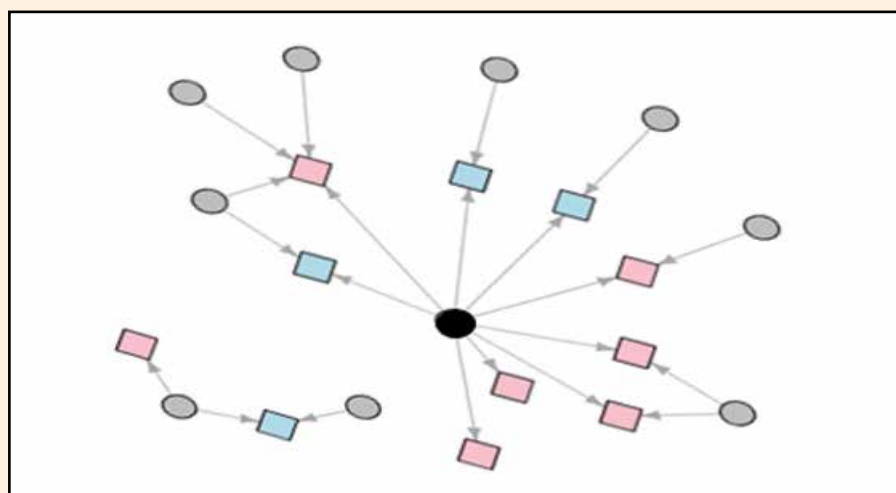


Figure 1: Feed network consisting of feed suppliers (grey circles), case herds (pink squares), and control herds (blue squares). The large black circle indicates the single feed supplier that was connected to more case herds ($n=6$) than control herds ($n=3$).

matched to case herds based on herd size, herd type, and time of PED onset in the matched case herds. Three networks were generated from this data: a full network of all herds, a separate case herd network, and a control network to document and visualize how herds were connected with feed suppliers. Randomized computer-generated networks were then used to see if the number of observed cases connected to a single service supplier was different from what we would expect based on the computer-generated networks.

The results from the SNA support that the transmission of PEDV during the early months of the 2014 outbreak was most likely due to herds being connected with a specific feed supplier. This was because an unusually high number of case herds in the network were linked to a single feed company, compared to the randomly generated networks. A single feed supplier was also identified as having the most direct and indirect connections to case herds, compared to control herds (Figure 1).

Social network analysis is an important method to not only visualize the connectivity of herds with service suppliers, but also to understand which node (herd or service provider) is most at-risk for being infected and which node poses the most threat for spreading the virus. The use of social network diagrams, along with network descriptive measures has shown how the early 2014 PEDV positive herds (cases) were directly connected, specifically through a single feed supplier. This visualization is significant for producers, veterinarians and researchers because it also helps illustrate how the infected herds were indirectly connected to each other. The illustration of the network can also be used to help target control measures and to map the spread of

an infectious agent (i.e. PEDV) over a longer period of time. Furthermore, researchers can use SNA to strategically identify the most central member (node) for removal, i.e. stop delivery of feed from the central feed supplier, which would fracture the network connection (increase fragmentation) and prevent further disease spread.

You don't have to put your pigs on Instagram to understand how your farm is connected to suppliers and other farms. Social network analysis has provided a better understanding of the connections between farms and service suppliers and an overall better understanding of how the early 2014 outbreak may have been spread. The authors would like to thank the producers who participated in this study; without producer participation, this research would not have been possible. It can be difficult to understand what contributes to an outbreak of a new infectious virus, hence producer and industry partner participation in questionnaire-based research like this helps the swine industry to learn valuable lessons about what happened, and how we can take steps to hopefully prevent the next outbreak from occurring.

About the researchers and funding:

The study described above is part of the PhD research work of Amanda Perri at the Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph. This research was supervised by Drs. Terri O'Sullivan and Zvonimir Poljak. This work was conducted with generous support by Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs, Ontario Pork, and NSERC- CRD. Please contact Amanda Perri for any questions or to learn more about the study at amperri@uoguelph.ca.

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The 56th Annual South Western Ontario Pork Conference

On February 21, 2018, producers and industry representatives gathered at University of Guelph, Ridgetown College for the 56th annual South Western Ontario Pork Conference. The longest running educational pork conference in Canada was attended by 177 delegates, and included tours of the new Ridgetown teaching barn, a trade show, a speaker program and a pork dinner.

This year's speakers provided valuable information on a wide range of topics, and left everyone with lots to take home and apply to their own practices. The program kicked off with Dr. Tim Blackwell (OMAFRA) speaking on "Reducing Piglet Mortality" (see article elsewhere in this issue of PNV). This was followed by Daniel Roelands, a Middlesex County producer sharing about his swine business. Colleen Roehrig (Conestoga Meat Packers) shared her insights on the "Value of the Market Hog". Dr. Bill Moore (South Western Ontario Veterinary Services) provided a local disease update to the crowd, and Dr. Dale Rozeboom (Michigan State University) provided "Production Tips & Perspectives from Michigan". Included in this issue of Pork News & Views is a full summary of Dr. Tim Blackwell's presentation.

Colleen Roehrig gave an excellent presentation highlighting the value of the market pig for producers, packers, industry and consumers. She highlighted how different perspectives impact the value of the carcass, and what the value is to each of the different groups. For producers, profit equals margin over inputs. The current market conditions significantly influence

profit, and there is huge value to the producer in having control over input costs, and having contracts with packers in order to have some control over payments. For the packer, profit is the margin between the cost of the carcass and the value of meat sales. The value for the packer lies with primal cuts, further processed products, niche markets and relationships with both producers and customers. Colleen also highlighted the value of the market pig to the entire swine industry. This includes farm suppliers, packer suppliers, further processing, retail, etc. The value is the margin over costs that can be charged for services to the farm, packer or related business. This allows for a motivated industry to improve the margin on farm, at the packer or further downstream, to support themselves and grow the industry. Finally, we cannot forget about the value of the market hog to the consumer. This value can vary depending on the customer in question (i.e. domestic vs international), and comes down to the perceived cost versus product value, product quality and safety. The presentation highlighted that if we are all working towards a common goal, we can all value add and improve our margins. In order to get more value for pork, we need to be able to sell pork at a greater value, and feed that profit back through the entire chain.

This year's feature speaker, Dr. Dale Rozeboom, is a swine extension specialist at Michigan State University. His presentation focused on some current research findings from MSU related to the floor space of large market hogs, creep feeding and batch farrowing, and he provided some updates on the Michigan industry. The following summarizes a large scale trial looking at the impact floor space requirements for pigs up between 27 and 138 kg body weight. This trial was

conducted at 5 different research facilities in the USA (including MSU), and looked at space allowances ranging from 0.71 to 1.07 m² per pig. Across each research station, they found no impact on animal performance, mortality, morbidity or salivary cortisol (as a representative of stress levels). Even in the 0.71 m² treatment group, pigs would not have become crowded until 95 kg body weight, and researchers found that the removal of pigs near the end of the trial diminishes any negative effects of crowding (crowding is relieved when first pull happens). The Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pigs here in Canada has a recommended value of 1.03 m² per pig at 135 kg body weight, but also allows for a short term 15% reduction (if performance is not impacted), resulting in a minimum space allowance of 0.75 m² per pig. This large scale research trial conducted in the USA supports our recommended practices here in Canada regarding space allowances, and demonstrated the value of the first pull to relieve crowding.

Overall, the 56th annual South Western Ontario Pork Conference was a hit. Producers and industry alike enjoyed the trade show and speaker program. If you have suggestions for next year's program, please contact any SWOPC committee member. And save the date! Next year's meeting will be on February 20, 2019.

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Preventing Pig Mortalities

Genetic suppliers are challenging swine producers with more (and sometimes lighter) total pigs born per litter. This has resulted in more

pigs weaned per litter, but has also resulted in herds with increases in stillbirths as well as greater pre-weaning mortality. These larger litters present opportunities that many farms are turning into profitable pigs. Saving more of these pigs improves pig welfare and provides farrowing house staff with the opportunity to demonstrate their animal husbandry skills.

Farrowing:

Although a number of infectious organisms affect suckling pigs, the vast majority of farrowing house losses are not the result of diseases. Pigs are born with limited energy reserves and a proportion of these pigs quickly succumb to chilling and starvation if not dried and assisted to suckle immediately after birth. Since approximately half of all farrowings occur outside the normal swine barn work day, it is difficult to provide all newborn pigs with the attention they require unless one is willing to increase the amount of time spent in the farrowing barn. Inducing farrowings will increase the likelihood that sows give birth during regular working hours but this practice has been associated with prolonged farrowing times and greater need for interventions at farrowing if applied too soon before the sow's actual farrowing date. Most studies show that farms with the lowest stillbirth and pre-weaning mortality rates have stockpeople attend the majority of farrowings.

Stillbirths:

Stillbirth occur when pigs are not delivered soon after their connection to the uterus is lost. The average stillborn rate on most farms is between 7 and 10%. It is as low as 2 to 3% on farms where all farrowings are attended.

Sows should give birth to a pig every 20 minutes or less if stillbirths

are to be minimized. Farrowing house attendants can mark the sow card to help track farrowing progress. For example if a sow is farrowing when the staff arrive in the morning, they might note 7:15 a.m.-5 pigs. If that sow has only 5 pigs at 7:40 a.m., she should be cleaned and examined and any pigs within reach should be delivered. If no pigs can be pulled, the sow can be given oxytocin and checked again in 5 to 10 minutes if no additional pigs are born. When all farrowings cannot be attended, farrowing room staff should focus on older sows (> 5th parity) and sows that have had large numbers of stillborns in previous pregnancies. It has been shown repeatedly that one third of sows produce two thirds of all stillborns.

Pre-weaning mortality:

The majority of losses among pigs that are born alive occur in the first 48 to 72 hours after birth. Seldom are infectious diseases involved in these losses. Nearly all pigs born on swine farms have the potential to make a market hog but some require more help than others to achieve that goal. Some farms have a low success rate raising pigs with low birth weights. Many farms equate low birth weight pigs with low viability pigs and euthanize pigs at birth that are less than a target weight (often between 600 and 800 grams). This policy is often based on reports that pigs under 800 grams suffer an 80%+ mortality rate. This is true on farms with low intervention rates. Other farms maintain an 80% survival rate in pigs as low as 600 grams at birth. A very high mortality rate for low birth weight pigs exists on farms where "survival of the fittest" is the standard management approach. If low birth weight pigs are dried at birth and assisted to nurse the majority will make a market hog. On farms where cutting needle teeth is standard practice, needle teeth should be left

in low birth weight pigs to provide a competitive advantage. These light weight pigs often do best if transferred after 24 hours to a nurse sow nursing only low birth weight pigs. The use of an energy supplement in low birth weight pigs while waiting for an opportunity to move them to a nurse sow is beneficial. Empowered farrowing room attendants will successfully raise light weight pigs in a profitable manner if given the necessary tools such as drying towels and energy supplements and permission to try. Raising low birth weight pigs provides an opportunity for husbandry people to demonstrate their pig skills and contributes to overall job satisfaction.

The most effective means by which to avoid pre-weaning mortalities due to chilling, crushing or starvation is to avoid energy deficiencies in the first 24 to 48 hours after birth. To accomplish this, pigs should be dried immediately after birth with either towels or a drying powder so they do not waste energy maintaining their body temperature. Secondly pigs should be encouraged/assisted to nurse. With the large litter sizes generated today, split suckling litters is necessary much more often than in the past. It is preferable when split suckling to hold the pigs that are waiting to suckle in the designated creep area. A plastic or rubber container (open at the bottom) that can be placed in the creep area is preferable to a box in the alley way as the former helps train pigs to the designated creep area.

If farrowing sows are not attended at the end of the regular work day, pigs born over the night time hours may need extra attention in the morning. Pigs that are found weak and cold the following day, should immediately be provided supplemental nutrition. It is preferable if they can suckle their mother. If they

are too cold and weak to suckle, they should be tubed with colostrum, a milk replacer product or given a commercial energy supplement designed for pigs and placed in the heated creep. These pigs need energy as much or more than they need warmth.

To decrease the risk of crushing, pigs should be trained to the creep, i.e. pigs lying comfortably outside the creep should be placed in the creep to re-enforce this habit. Pigs should lie in a "pig and a half pile" in the creep area 24 to 48 hours after farrowing is complete. When pigs lie tightly together it indicates that the farrowing room is at the correct temperature for the sow and that pigs will be uncomfortable lying anywhere else in the crate. Heat lamps set so that they create pig free "donut holes" below the centre of the lamp force pigs to spread out from the creep which increases the risk of crushing.

Although farms report that teeth clipping is necessary for optimal piglet and sow udder health, many farms have improved their pre-weaning mortality rate by stopping this procedure. Nevertheless it should never be performed until pigs are 24 hours old to minimize stress in the piglets' critical first 24 hours.

There are different approaches to cross-fostering. Recently research indicates that "loading up gilts" with at least 14 pigs improves gilts' milking abilities in subsequent lactations. Some farms divide the total number of pigs born alive evenly among all lactating sows with the exception of gilts as noted above. Other producers prefer to leave pigs in their original litter unless the need to cross-foster is pressing. On these farms if one sow has 10 pigs and another has 14 the litters are not disturbed as long as both sows

are feeding their pigs adequately. However if one sow has 18 liveborn and another has 6 then cross-fostering is performed according to the number of functional glands available.

Regardless of the approach to cross-fostering one key for success is to identify fall-back pigs early and move them before they become debilitated. It is beneficial to provide these pigs with an energy supplement (dextrose, milk replacer, or commercial energy boost product) before moving them as they will need extra energy to establish themselves in a new litter. If a fall back pig is identified and there is not an appropriate cross-fostering opportunity available immediately, the at-risk pig can be fed milk replacer in a dish to maintain its vigour while awaiting a suitable nurse sow.

Take Home Messages:

The larger litters produced by today's modern genetics provide economic opportunities for swine producers if basic principles of pig husbandry are consistently applied to the sow and her litter around the time of farrowing.

*Tim Blackwell, OMAFRA
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Streptococcus suis - Producer Reminder

The following is an excerpt from the Oct.-Dec. 2017 Ontario Animal Health Network Swine Producer and Industry Report. To see the full report visit www.oahn.ca/networks/swine.

Strep suis is a common pathogen present on most swine farms that

results in neurological signs with the most common clinical presentation being pigs lying on their side and exhibiting paddling behaviour with their limbs. The OAHN Swine Network wants to remind producers that although Strep suis infections are common in pigs, this pathogen has the potential to infect people. Please remember to take precautions when dealing with suspect Strep suis pigs by wearing gloves and washing your hands after handling and treating these animals. If you require more detailed information, please speak to your herd veterinarian.

Antimicrobial Access, Use, Stewardship: Review of Current & Coming Changes

Increasing antimicrobial resistance is a global concern and its effects on human and animal health have been raised by experts at local, national and international levels.

The Government of Canada is working in partnership with provinces, territories and industry to help control antimicrobial resistance and promote improved antimicrobial stewardship in both humans and animals. Health Canada has announced how it is taking action to help reduce the use of antimicrobials in animals and enhance veterinary oversight through the following regulatory changes:

- As of November 2017, importation of veterinary drugs for producers' own use in food animals is no longer permitted. National producer organizations have been consulted on products to be exempted, but no products containing medically important antimicrobials (MIAs) are eligible for exemption.
- As of November 2017, approvals and access to low-risk veterinary health products (VHPs) have

been streamlined to give producers greater access to a broader range of products for animal health. For a full list of currently notified VHPs under this program, visit: <https://health-products.canada.ca/vhp-psa/en/product-list>

- Beginning with the 2018 sales year, reporting of sales volume of MIAs by species will be mandatory for manufacturers and importers of veterinary antimicrobials.
- Beginning in May 2018, a Drug Establishment License (DEL) issued by Health Canada will be required in order to import active pharmaceutical ingredients.

Health Canada has also announced two important policy changes, with an enforcement date of 01-Dec-2018:

- Growth promotion claims will be removed from the labels of all veterinary products containing MIAs.
- All MIAs will be moved to the federal Prescription Drug List. A poster listing product names that will be affected by this change is available from the Canadian Animal Health Institute and can be found here: <https://www.cahi-icsa.ca/antimicrobial-stewardship>

Antimicrobials considered of low importance to human medicine (e.g. ionophores, coccidiostats, bambarmycin) are NOT affected by these changes.

What does this all mean to swine producers?

Since November 2017, it is illegal for a producer to buy antimicrobials from another country (either in person or over the internet) for use in pigs in Canada, even if they are your own animals. However, it should get easier to access veterinary health products. These are not drugs, and they have no specific

treatment claims, but they do not require a prescription and there are no restrictions on who sells them in Canada. Companies, pharmacies or veterinarians that produce or compound antimicrobial products from raw ingredients for use in animals will need to have a DEL. If you have questions about DELs, please email DEL_Questions_LEPPP@hc-sc.gc.ca.

As of December 1st, 2018, all animal owners will need to have a prescription from a veterinarian to purchase antimicrobials to treat their animals. In order to get a prescription, all animal owners will need to have a veterinary-client-patient relationship (VCPR) with a licensed Ontario veterinarian. The types of drugs available to veterinarians, the way they access them and their ability to prescribe and dispense them will NOT change.

In Ontario, only veterinarians and pharmacies can sell (dispense) prescription drugs to producers. Feed mills can also sell prescription drugs to producers, but only when the drug is already mixed in a feed. The non-prescription MIAs that are currently sold at Livestock Medicine Outlets (LMOs) in Ontario will no longer be available at these retailers once they become prescription as of December 1st, 2018. All MIAs (including injectable, topical, in-water and in-feed products) will then need to be prescribed AND dispensed by a veterinarian. Furthermore, veterinarians can only dispense drugs from an accredited veterinary facility. Licensed pharmacies could also dispense these drugs with a prescription, but currently most retail pharmacies do not have the space or facilities to stock them.

It is very important for a producer and veterinarian to establish a VCPR before animals are sick. This helps minimize any delays in providing

and accessing appropriate treatment. In order for the veterinarian to provide a prescription, he or she must also have recent and sufficient knowledge of the animal or group of animals in order to determine that the drug is prophylactically or therapeutically indicated. This knowledge may come from physically examining the animal(s) on the farm when they are sick, or from medically appropriate and timely visits to the premises, in addition to history and other information provided by the producer. In some cases, a producer can work with a veterinarian to establish a standard operating procedure (SOP) for which the veterinarian can provide a prescription (with an expiry date or set amount to dispense) in advance. In short, when a producer and a veterinarian have a strong VCPR, a farm visit isn't necessarily required every time and animal requires treatment with an antibiotic.

Talk to your veterinarian now about how these changes could affect you. Discuss the types of antimicrobials you typically use in your animals, and how you can work together to ensure you have timely access to these drugs when needed. It is just as important to discuss things you can do or try now to decrease the need for antimicrobial use on your operation, including use of vaccines, changes in feed, modifications to housing or ventilation, and other management tools to help keep pigs healthier overall. For more information: Agricultural Information Contact Centre 877-424-1300 or ag.info.omafra@ontario.ca.

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South Western Ontario Pork Conference Donates \$5000 to the Kees de Lange Scholarship in Swine Nutrition

Dr. Cornelis (Kees) de Lange was a truly outstanding scientist, colleague, friend and mentor. He was always thinking about the future, and how to improve the Ontario, Canadian and International swine industry through research. His legacy of excellence, originality and industry support is one that will never be forgotten.

Following his passing on August 1, 2016, the University of Guelph has been working towards creating an endowed scholarship in swine nutrition. The goal is to raise \$300,000 to support 2 annual awards of \$10,000 for graduate students studying swine nutrition. For each award, \$5,000 would come from the scholarship fund which would then be matched by the Ontario Graduate Scholarship, totalling \$10,000.

The University hopes to meet its goal by the end of 2018.

The South Western Ontario Pork Conference committee is proud to support this scholarship fund with a one-time \$5,000 donation.

If you would like to donate to this scholarship fund, details can be found at <http://uofg.convio.net/keesdelange>



Dr. Cornelis (Kees) de Lange

Farm to Farm Movements in PigTrace

For producers, reporting farm-to-farm movement of animals is mandatory under PigTrace. This allows animal health officials to efficiently locate infected sites, and enables producers to obtain reports about their sites that can enhance their operation. The article below outlines identification requirements for farm-to-farm-movements, various reporting methods and explains how reporting adds value to farm businesses.

Identification Requirements

Apart from breeding stock (sows, boars and bred gilts), pigs moved from one farm to another do not need to be identified. However, documented movement information must accompany the shipment and a movement must be reported within seven days after the movement occurs. There is no requirement to report barn-to-barn movements if the barns are on the same property.

Reporting Requirements

Reporting responsibilities belong to the operator of the site. The operator of the site has seven days to report a movement to PigTrace after it occurs.

In the movement report the operator must state the time and date of the departure, location of destination site, quantity of pigs, and trailer license plate (or other identifier if there is no license plate available).

Operators of a premise can report their farm-to-farm movements using one of the following methods:

1. Using their PigTrace credentials, an individual can log into the PigTrace Canada website and

report an event within the system <https://pigtrace.traceability.ca/login>

2. Fill out a swine movement document which is available on the Ontario Pork website under Resources for Traceability. The swine movement document is also available on the PigTrace website.
3. Once a swine movement document is filled out an individual should then e-mail, fax, or mail the swine movement document directly to PigTrace or to Ontario Pork.
4. Call PigTrace's toll-free number, 1-866-300-1825. By calling the toll-free number you can report your movement over the phone. You will need to provide all necessary movement information.

Linked Premises

Another option for producers to report their farm-to-farm movements is to apply for two sites to be a linked premises. Linked premises are required to provide a monthly summary to PigTrace by the 10th of each month with the following information:

1. Number of movements per month.
2. Total number of pigs moved.
3. Trailer license plate.
 - a. If there is no license plate on the method of conveyance, another identifier may be used.

To qualify as a linked premise two sites must have:

1. Prior to the linked premise application, there must be PigTrace reports for six months prior demonstrating a linkage between the two sites.
2. The sites have at least three movements per month.

Registering two sites as a linked

premise reduces the reporting requirements to once per month. Linked premises share the same health status in the event of a disease outbreak. Every six months the linkage must be renewed. If a summary is not provided by the 10th day of each month then the linkage is discontinued. The summary can be reported to PigTrace by the operator logging into PigTrace account and reporting the summary or they can send their summary directly to Ontario Pork or PigTrace.

AgManifest

AgManifest was developed for the pork industry to allow automated, streamlined, real time traceability. AgManifest automatically reports animal movement information to PigTrace on behalf of the participants in a user friendly format. AgManifest recently underwent new updates that have enhanced the user experience and is currently working towards attaching electronic documents (e.g. annex 4) to loads. The program is also designed to allow for custom reports to be generated to suit the needs of an individual business. For more information on AgManifest please contact Ontario Pork's Member Services team at 1-877-668-7675.

It is required for farm to farm movements to be reported to PigTrace. With minimal identification requirements and multiple reporting options available to operators, reporting can be done quickly and efficiently. This ensures Ontario pig farms are in compliance with animal health regulations and are continuing their commitment to food safety within the supply chain

*Emma Payne
Member Services Liaison,
Ontario Pork*



Swine Budget – April 2018

Compiled by Jaydee Smith, OMAFRA

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| Income (\$/pig) | Farrow to Wean | Nursery | Grow-Finish | Farrow to Finish |
|---|----------------|---------|-------------|------------------|
| Market Pig @ 101% of Base Price \$128.94/ckg, 110 index, 104.01 kg plus \$2 premium | | | | \$151.00 |

Variable Costs (\$/pig)

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Breeding Herd Feed @ 1,100 kg/sow | \$12.95 | | | \$14.20 |
| Nursery Feed @ 33.5 kg/pig | | \$16.19 | | \$17.06 |
| Grower-Finisher Feed @ 277 kg/pig | | | \$85.94 | \$85.94 |
| Net Replacement Cost for Gilts | \$1.78 | | | \$1.95 |
| Health (Vet & Supplies) | \$2.16 | \$2.10 | \$0.45 | \$5.03 |
| Breeding (A.I. & Supplies) | \$1.80 | | | \$1.98 |
| Marketing, Grading, Trucking | \$0.90 | \$1.50 | \$5.76 | \$8.33 |
| Utilities (Hydro, Gas) | \$2.35 | \$1.38 | \$2.13 | \$6.17 |
| Miscellaneous | \$1.00 | \$0.10 | \$0.20 | \$1.40 |
| Repairs & Maintenance | \$1.26 | \$0.61 | \$2.15 | \$4.19 |
| Labour | \$6.27 | \$1.85 | \$4.00 | \$12.83 |
| Operating Loan Interest | \$0.26 | \$0.33 | \$1.17 | \$1.80 |
| Total Variable Costs | \$30.73 | \$24.06 | \$101.80 | \$160.86 |

Fixed Costs (\$/pig)

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| Depreciation | \$4.22 | \$2.04 | \$7.18 | \$13.95 |
| Interest | \$2.36 | \$1.14 | \$4.02 | \$7.81 |
| Taxes & Insurance | \$0.84 | \$0.41 | \$1.44 | \$2.79 |
| Total Fixed Costs | \$7.42 | \$3.59 | \$12.64 | \$24.55 |

Summary of Costs (\$/pig)

| | | | | |
|---|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Feed | \$12.95 | \$16.19 | \$85.94 | \$117.19 |
| Other Variable | \$17.78 | \$7.88 | \$15.86 | \$43.66 |
| Fixed | \$7.42 | \$3.59 | \$12.64 | \$24.55 |
| Total Variable & Fixed Costs | \$38.15 | \$27.65 | \$114.44 | \$185.41 |

| Summary | Farrow to Wean | Feeder Pig | Wean to Finish | Farrow to Finish |
|--|----------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Total Cost (\$/pig) | \$38.15 | \$67.35 | \$143.57 | \$185.41 |
| Net Return Farrow to Finish (\$/pig) | | | | -\$34.41 |
| Farrow to Finish Breakeven Base Price (\$/ckg, 100 index) includes 101% Base Price & \$2 Premium | | | | \$158.72 |
| Farrow to Finish Breakeven Base Price (\$/ckg, 100 index) excludes 101% Base Price & \$2 Premium | | | | \$162.06 |

This is the estimated accumulated cost for a market hog sold during the month of April 2018. The farrow to wean phase estimates the weaned pig cost for November 2017 and the nursery phase estimates the feeder pig cost for January 2018. For further details, refer to the "2018 Budget Notes" posted at <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/swine/finmark.html>.



ESF TECH SIMPLIFIES HERD MANAGEMENT

For group housing, ESF is the best tool to manage sows individually while ensuring animal welfare.

For over 30 years, the concept of electronic sow feeding (ESF) has evolved, and become an accepted and powerful tool, in group sow housing. With rapidly advancing technology and the constant pressure to provide better swine welfare, it is worth taking the time to understand today's ESF technology and what benefits it has to offer.

Using a global approach with the best swine industry practices and design for training pens, feeding stations, pen layout, and performance and health management is very important to the successful rollout of an ESF system.

Training pens

Producers should aim for a well-developed and relaxed training process to prepare new gilts for feeding from an ESF. During this period, producers put the feeding station into training mode which allows the feeder to remain open at all times.

This period allows the gilt to easily find the trough. The entrance door only closes once the gilt is directly in front of the feeder, which prevents the door from touching and distracting her.

The use of simple well-known practices goes a long way in achieving a productive and fast training period. These practices include incrementally reducing the space in the entrance area to assist timid gilts, and blocking gilts from returning to the feeder a second time.

Feeding stations

Manufacturers have designed ESF feeding stations for group sow housing to meet the latest swine industry standards for sow productivity, comfort and welfare.

The feeding station should be placed so that the entrance and exit have sufficiently wide surrounding



At the EFS station, producers have the option to manually control the system – like opening or closing trough and gates.

areas. This positioning allows for the free movement of sows, eliminating traffic congestion and reducing stress.

Using an open entrance door approach, the sow is invited into the station and, once detected, the entrance door closes, leaving the sow alone and undisturbed. At the feeder, the sow is quickly identified and, if she has not yet eaten her daily ration, the trough will open and fill with a measured amount of feed.

The trough remains closed for a sow who has already consumed her daily rations and she quickly learns that she should not return to the station.

Pen layout

For successful ESF in today's group sow housing, pen layouts that eliminate sow traffic in the rest areas and keep sows in the activity area while they are feeding will significantly reduce noise and stress levels.

A typical layout has ESF stations that border the centre aisle (selection area) and the activity area of the building.

This placement has two major advantages. It allows producers to add sows and gilts to the pen from the centre aisle with minor disruption. It also allows for easy selection of sows

Big Dutchman, Inc. photo



This sow is eating her ration in the ESF station.

into the centre aisle, when the ESF station is equipped with selection technology. The selection area should be large enough to accommodate a complete farrowing group and be equipped with drinker bowls.

Additionally, this central aisle position gives the producer an excellent vantage point for seeing all sows without having to enter the pen. Drinker bowls are located on the opposite side of the activity area

along the border of the rest area. Directly beside the activity area, but distinctly separate, is the rest area, which uses short penning panels as dividers to create large resting bays for a least six to eight sows. Each

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In this layout, sows are in pens to the left and right of the central alley. The left ESF station shows the selection gate, which can be used to sort sows.

animal has 8 or 9 sq. ft. (0.7 or 0.8 sq. m) of space. These bays are usually deeper than 7 ft. (2 m), allowing the sows to feel protected, avoid contact with active sows, and create small, friendly groups.

Performance and health management

One of the advantages of ESF is that each sow is fed individually according to ear tag identification. Throughout gestation, producers can control and measure a sow's feed consumption. Farmers can also review statistics on feeding and station visits to improve production management.

In addition, ESFs have the ability to evolve with the sow's nutritional needs. Each station can blend multiple feed components to make individual sow diets, and/or provide phase feeding with the option of dosing out minerals and medication supplements. An anti-bridging device ensures a constant flow of feed at each station.

Depending on your approach to group sow housing, today's ESF technology is an excellent option. It measures sow performance and provides the producer with useful management tools to improve productivity.

With rapid advances in technology, these systems are incredibly user-friendly with the help of computers, phones and tablets. The producer can view or change parameters, analyze historical data, and troubleshoot issues with remote access. All of this work can be done while also providing a higher level of animal welfare and comfort to sows. **BP**

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by
**MOE AGOSTINO
& ABHINESH GOPAL**

HOW IMPORTANT IS CHINESE DEMAND?

President Trump's trade wars could be just 'headline news' and pork exports should remain buoyant.

Kondor83/istock/Getty Images Plus photo



Last year, total American pork exports to all destinations were 2.45 million metric tons.

In 2017, China and Hong Kong were the second-largest volume and third-largest value destination for American pork exports at 495,637 metric tons (MT) and US\$1.08 billion, respectively.

Last year, total American pork exports to all destinations were 2.45 million metric tons (MMT), breaking the 2016 record by six per cent.

Specifically focusing on the market in China and Hong Kong, however, these figures dropped nine per cent from 2016. China's total imports decreased, reflecting a bounce in domestic production.

Indeed, in 2017, Chinese farmers produced 96 per cent of the pork consumed in the country. And that trend is expected to continue.

Chinese pork companies imported the remaining 4 per cent of pork from around the world, with two-thirds coming from the European Union (EU).

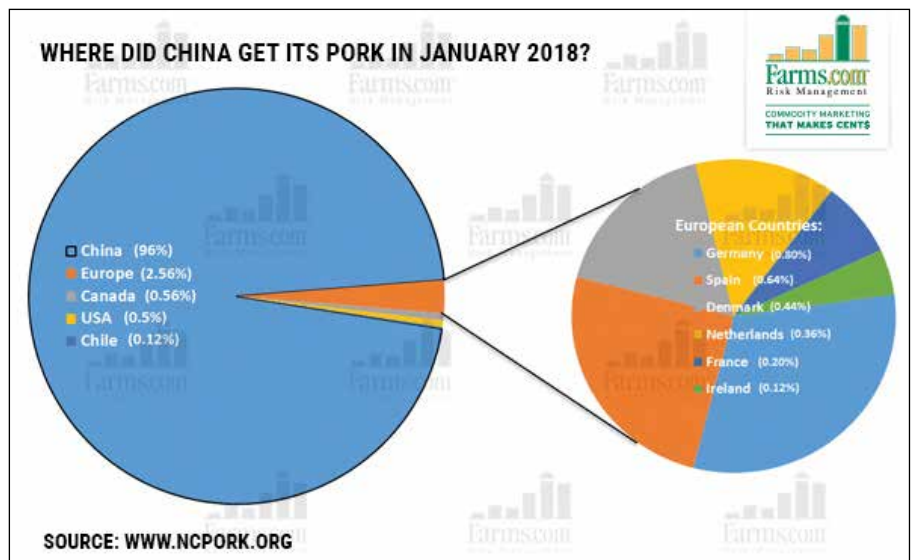
China's pork output rose by 2.1 per cent year-on-year (Y/Y) to 15.4 MMT in the first quarter of 2018, after the

country's farmers rushed to slaughter their pigs due to a swift weakening in prices. Chinese hog prices dropped by around 30 per cent in the first quarter, which is one of the steepest declines ever recorded.

Reportedly, however, small- to

medium-sized Chinese hog producers are looking to scale back or halt expansion plans after recent years of aggressive growth have pushed prices down to an eight-year low.

On March 23, the Chinese government announced plans to impose a



China produced 96 per cent of its own pork in January but it also made some purchases from Europe, Canada, the United States and Chile.

25 per cent tariff on imports of American pork. This announcement came as a retaliation to American tariffs on Chinese goods. If implemented, this new import duty will put U.S. pork exports at a significant disadvantage compared to China's other major suppliers: the EU, Canada, Brazil and Chile.

China may not implement the tariff, however, as negotiations continue with the United States.

American pork loin prices were particularly weak in early April and Asian buyers took full advantage of this pricing. Weekly export sales of pork loins in the second week of April increased by 123 per cent.

Typically U.S. pork exports decline during spring-summer due to lower slaughter numbers but, this year, increased slaughter as a result of increased American pork packing capacity fueled robust export growth.

Focusing on the current American trade spat with China, if the U.S. fully lost the 2 per cent of demand represented by Chinese volume, American live hog prices would decrease by about 4.4 per cent or about US\$6 per head. On a carcass basis, this drop equates to about US\$2.75/hundred-weight (cwt) in lean hog futures prices, which is much lower than the drop of \$13/cwt witnessed in February and March. (The trade war headline news caused this winter decrease.)

The export markets are important for American pork producers, as these markets represent at least 25 per cent of production value. A loss in Chinese business would be missed but it could also be replaced with markets like Argentina, which recently opened its doors to American pork for the first time since 1992. Argentina is a potential US\$10-million-per-year market for America's pork producers and it offers significant growth opportunities.

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP, which was formerly known as the Trans-Pacific Partnership) are more important deals for American pork



American pork loin prices were particularly weak in early April and Asian buyers took full advantage of this pricing.

exports than China. Mexico, Japan and Canada imported a combined total of 58 per cent of American pork in 2017. China, in contrast, imported 20 per cent of this pork.

American hams are sent to top export markets like Mexico. Indeed, a continuation of NAFTA would go a long way in solidifying this market and the U.S. has softened some of its key NAFTA demands. NAFTA renegotiations will get resolved, so export demand for American pork should remain robust.

Another main pork trading partner for the U.S. is Japan. The American government's reconsideration of CPTPP held positive news for pork future prices, as Japan is a key participant of this partnership. But market analysts are uncertain if the other CPTPP-participating countries are in a hurry to renegotiate a deal with the U.S.

A recent Japan-EU trade agreement threatens American pork exports to Japan, as the EU gains preferential tariffs under both the Japan-EU and CPTPP trade agreements. As a result, American pork producers could face decreased profits from the loss of this market.

Lean hog futures plunged in

late-March due to the news of the Chinese tariff retaliation, and the associated uncertainty and fear. After hitting a market low early in April, however, prices made a V-shaped rebound and looked technically to push higher.

In mid-April, the most active lean hog futures contract held a premium of US\$24.48 to the hogs' cash market. To put this figure into perspective, the normal premium is US\$7.40 for this time of the year.

President Donald Trump told legislators he would protect American producers, who were among the majority of his electoral base, from any harm in trade negotiations. His willingness to return to the negotiation table with America's prominent trading partners bodes well for American pork and the ag industry as a whole. **BP**

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by
**RICHARD
SMELSKI**

SEEING THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING

While animal husbandry skills are important, staff need to communicate effectively to ensure success.

I was once sitting in a barn office with David, the owner of a larger pork operation, discussing who will end up managing such “larger” operations. David was considering the promotion of one of two employees within his business.

One employee, Jerry, had worked with David for 13 years and ran his own operation prior to joining this business. During our conversation, Jerry walked into the office and David asked him to check the number of sows in heat.

David’s second choice was a younger employee, Sergio, who had only worked with him for three years.

Jerry came back into the room and said 28 sows were in heat. David asked how many of the sows were purebred. Jerry left to check.

David and I moved into a discussion of whether the barn manager and breeding manager should hold the same qualifications. We also discussed whether the pay scale for these roles needs to be different.

The barn manager needs people and communication skills, while the breeding manager needs patience, sound judgement and a passion for animals. Both sets of skills are highly valued. David and I agreed that the two pay scales may need to be similar.

Jerry came back, said six pure-breds were in heat and left the office. Meanwhile, David called Sergio in and asked him to check the farrowing room. Heat checking is critical for the success of the operation and David and I chatted about the procedure. Throughout the week, staff have to continuously check and recheck the sows.

Sergio returned. “Six sows farrowed and their piglets were nursing,” he said. “Another two sows were farrowing, one of which was a gilt. I relocated the heat bulbs.”

David thanked Sergio and he left



Photography/Stock/Getty Images Plus photo

People talk a lot about communication when they should focus on improving listening skills.

the room to return to his work.

Returning to our discussion, David said that some people have one year of experience, 13 times over. (He was referring to Jerry.) Other people have 13 years of experience. Of these two, he asked, who do you promote?

On a later call, I found out that this operation lost a really good employee because Sergio left. David said he did not take time in training – and, specifically, listening.

“Jerry was a worker and did what I asked. He was loyal, hard-working and dependable, but he did not understand the big picture,” David said. “Sergio was smart, financially astute and labour efficient.”

Later, David told me that he now spends more of his time communicating with staff rather than working directly in the barn.

“I saw this operation grow from

my dad’s small operation, always hands-on. Dad and I worked side-by-side, rarely talking, and we expected the same from our employees,” David said.

“I never realized the different skill sets that I needed and my employees needed, especially with the expansion and new ventures.”

This understanding came later, after he worked with staff like Jerry and Sergio.

People talk a lot about communication when they should focus on improving listening skills. You cannot rush communication. The effectiveness of this work proceeds at the rate of the listener, rather than at the speed of a busy schedule. **BP**

Richard Smelski has over 35 years of agribusiness experience and farms in the Shakespeare, Ont. area.



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