



September 4, 2012
(Episode 4229)

New Device Eases Stress of Euthanasia

Farmscape for September 4, 2012 (Episode 4229)

Research conducted on behalf of the National Pork Board and Swine Innovation-Porc has shown a device developed at the University of Guelph to be a highly effective alternative for euthanizing piglets. The Zephyr, a device that uses a non-penetrating captive bolt, was developed at the University of Guelph as an alternative to blunt force trauma to euthanize piglets. With funding provided by the U.S.-based National Pork Board and the Canadian Swine Research and Development Cluster or Swine Innovation-Porc, scientists tested the effectiveness of the device in one study on piglets up to three days old and in another on larger piglets up to nine kilograms. Dr. Tina Widowski, a professor of animal and poultry science and the director of the Campbell Centre for Animal Welfare at the University of Guelph, says the device was 100 percent effective, rendering all of the pigs immediately unconscious.

Clip–Dr. Tina Widowski–University of Guelph: What this means is that there is a very easy, much more aesthetic way for producers to euthanize piglets on farms. Piglets are a littler bearing species so typically we have runts and low birth weight piglets. Litter bearers tend to lose some offspring. They might die on their own within a few days but a more humane option is to euthanize those animals to end suffering and also to increase the overall welfare of the rest of the litter. There are very few options available for producers and particularly in the nursery range it's difficult and so this provides an option and it's aesthetically much more pleasing as well. Euthanasia is emotionally difficult for anybody who's caring for animals and so by making it easier to do and ensuring that to the stock person that it's very effective and training them what to look for to know it's effective, it improves the welfare of both the piglets and the people working on the farm.

Dr. Widowski says developers are now seeking a manufacturer capable of producing the device on a commercial scale..

*Farmscape is a presentation of Sask Pork and Manitoba Pork Council

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