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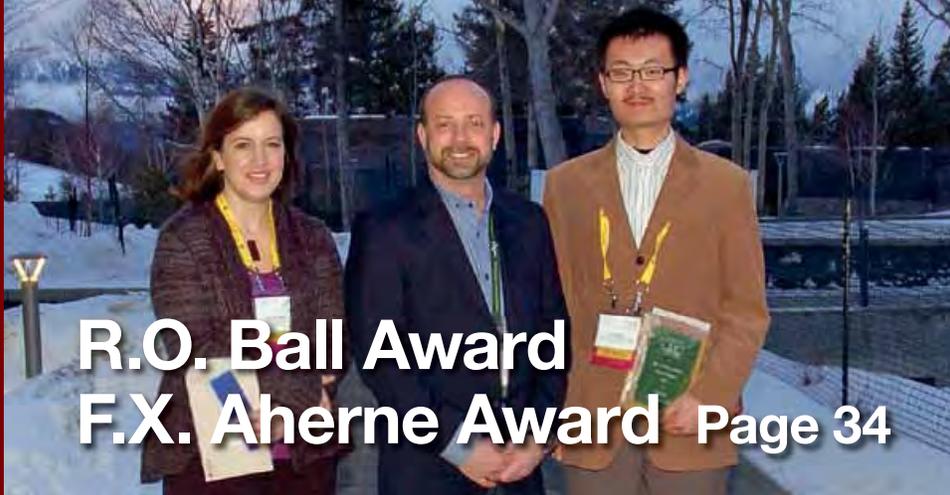
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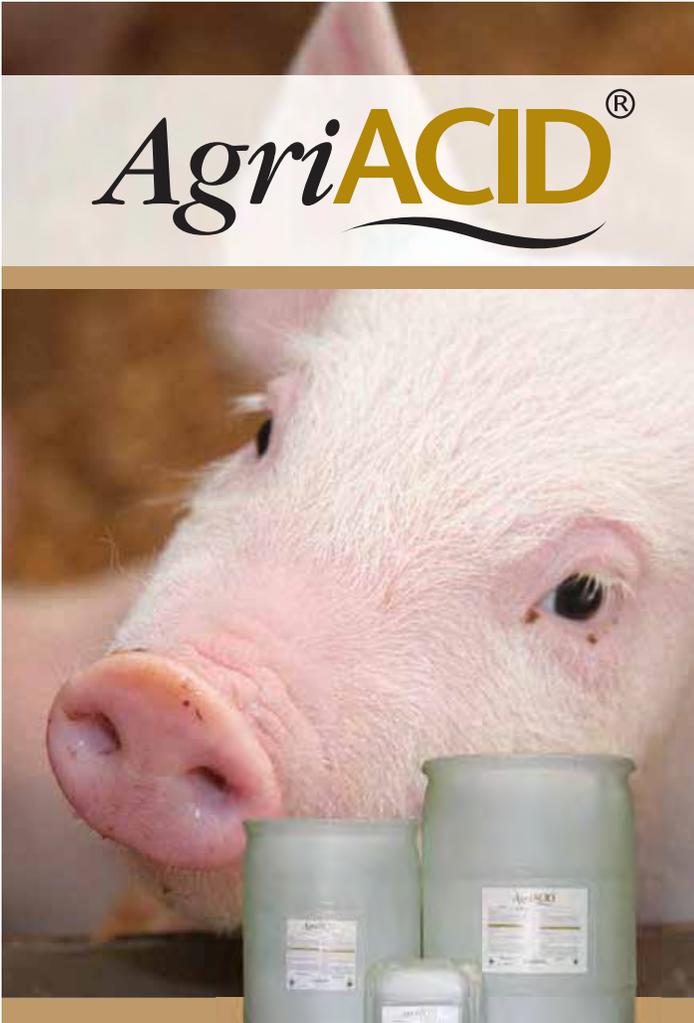
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Helmut Janz (left), the Aherne Award winner, is presented with his award by Dr. Michael Dyck, chair of the F.X. Aherne prize committee amid the beautiful backdrop at Banff. *Photo by Sheri Monk*



# R.O. Ball Award F.X. Aherne Award Page 34

Message from the Editor.....	4
Message from the Chairman.....	8
<b>Plenary Session 1</b> Who controls the value chain?.....	10
<b>Breakout Session 1</b> Making the Most of Labour .....	18
<b>Breakout Session 2</b> Industry Structure and Finance.....	23
<b>Breakout Session 4</b> Sow Housing and Code of Practice.....	28
<b>Breakout Session 5</b> R.O. Ball Award and F.X. Aherne Award.....	34
<b>Plenary Session 2</b> What Controls Future Production?.....	36
<b>Breakout Session 6</b> Long Live the Hyperprolific Sow .....	40
<b>Breakout Session 8</b> Swine Health Update.....	46
<b>Breakout Session 9</b> Controlling Feed Cost.....	54
<b>Breakout Session 10</b> Advocating Pork and Production.....	57
<b>Ad Index</b> .....	62



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## Message from the editor

This was my first Banff Pork Seminar, and I wasn't sure what to expect. I'd never been to the Banff Centre, I didn't know what to wear to the reception, I didn't know how many people were going to be there – all I had was an agenda and a blank note pad. What I didn't expect was to have my socks knocked off!

To the organizing committee, thank you – you did a tremendous job! And a big thanks to everyone who continues to support such a stellar event – the sponsors, the exhibitors, the speakers and of course, the participants who keep coming back each and every year.

I was so impressed. And I don't say that lightly – I've been to more beef conferences, meetings, and seminars than I can count, but the Banff Pork Seminar is at another level entirely. I've never been to an industry event that requires an overflow room that simulcasts the presentations because there are so many people in attendance. And never in my wildest dreams would I imagine that the overflow room would be full, and the audience listened as attentively as if they were the first table in front of the speaker. Some even clapped when the simulcast speakers were finished.

There's another thing I've noticed about the pork industry – every segment of it embraces science and research. It doesn't seem to matter how large or small a producer may be, they want to know what the latest research developments are. Not only does the industry seem to support science and research without complaint, there seems to be a genuine enthusiasm for it, and a hunger for information. As a journalist with an avid interest in science, this is sweet music to my ears.

At first I attributed the research support to the integrated supply chain. When one producer is working with the animals from farrow to finish, it's a lot easier to apply knowledge and see the results of all the different applications thereof. But in talking with Helen Thoday from the Prairie Swine Research Centre, she gave me the other big reason – you can see the effects of research on a pig operation much faster than you can obtain results in the beef sector. The production cycle is faster, and of course, the animals are much more prolific. Pork producers receive more feedback at a faster rate, and it makes sense that this would then drive science and research. It's impressive to see how the research and science sector works in partnership with the production

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 6*

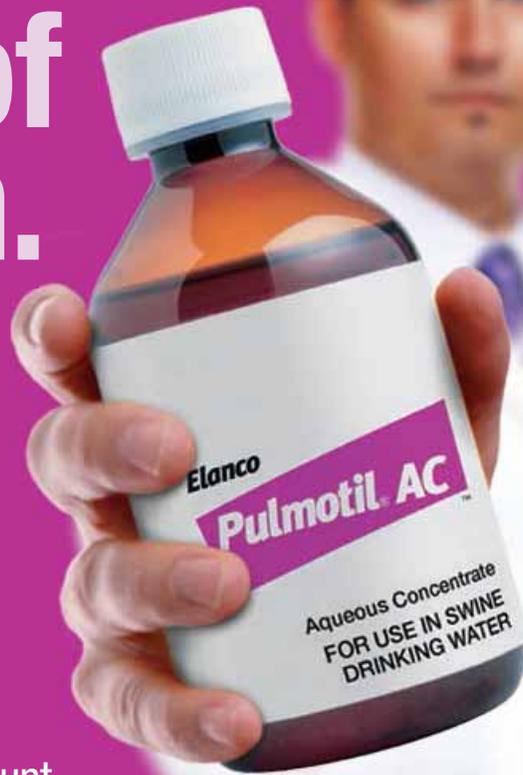
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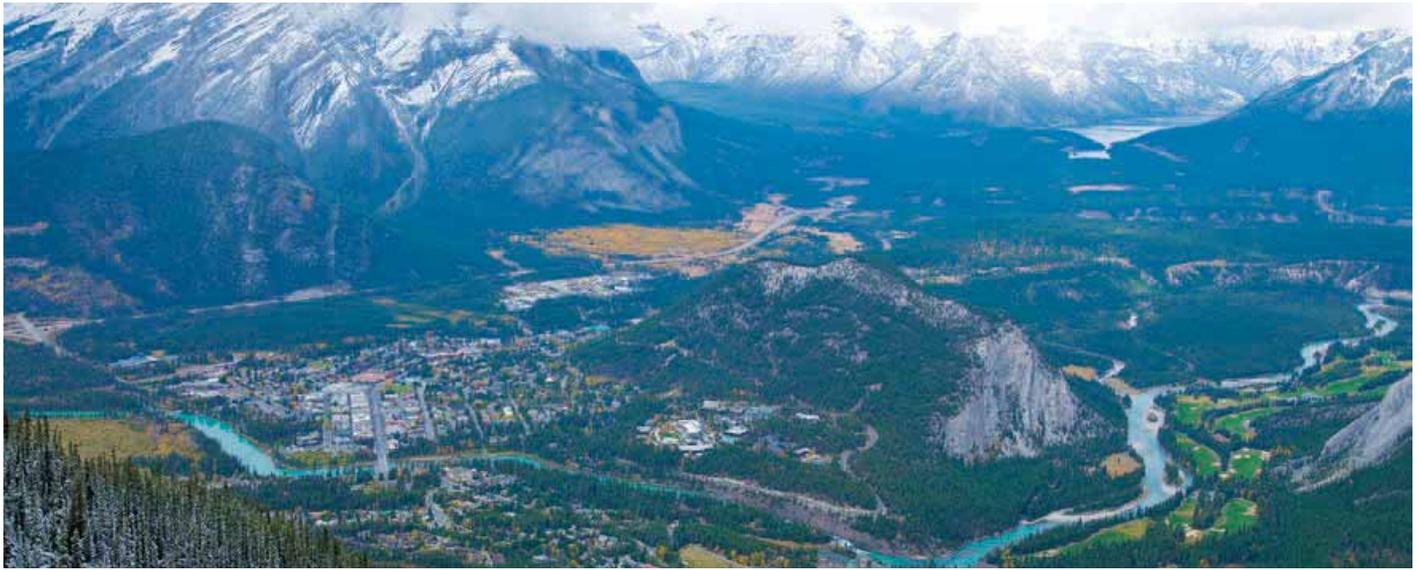
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sector. It's refreshing, and it's something the entire industry should be commended for.

Of course, the speakers were informative and the line-up impressive, but where I learned the most was in the networking opportunities. And for the record, I find new social situations a little bit awkward, and certainly, as someone who knows very few people in the industry, it can also be intimidating. But there was no reason for that whatsoever – I had a wonderful time getting to know more people in the industry. I even had the great pleasure and surprise of running into my neighbour Dan Walter from Spring Point Colony! I learned so much from everybody – not necessarily about production, I'm definitely not ready to start my own barn – but about the culture of this business.

There's a lot of pride in the Canadian pork industry, and in how progressive it is. Our strong biosecurity protocols was one of the reasons credited with why it took PED so long enter Canada. It was during the last day of the seminar, we learned of the first confirmed PED case in Canada, and although it wasn't entirely unexpected, the news was still devastating.

It was perhaps this day that I learned the most about this business... and what I learned is that it isn't just a business – it's a community.

After the PED news broke, people were gathered in clusters, talking in hushed tones with solemn voices. While most people may think a journalist's main task is to write, our real job is to listen, and that's exactly what I did. And what I heard was heart-lifting. I didn't overhear people talking about prices, supply, or market disruption. I didn't see finger-pointing, frustration or anger. I did, however, hear overwhelming concern for those affected. I heard producers asking what they could do and how they could help. These aren't the words of an industry – they are the words of a family, and one I'm proud to be a part of.

Until next year... ■

sherimonk@gmail.com

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S Monk." The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

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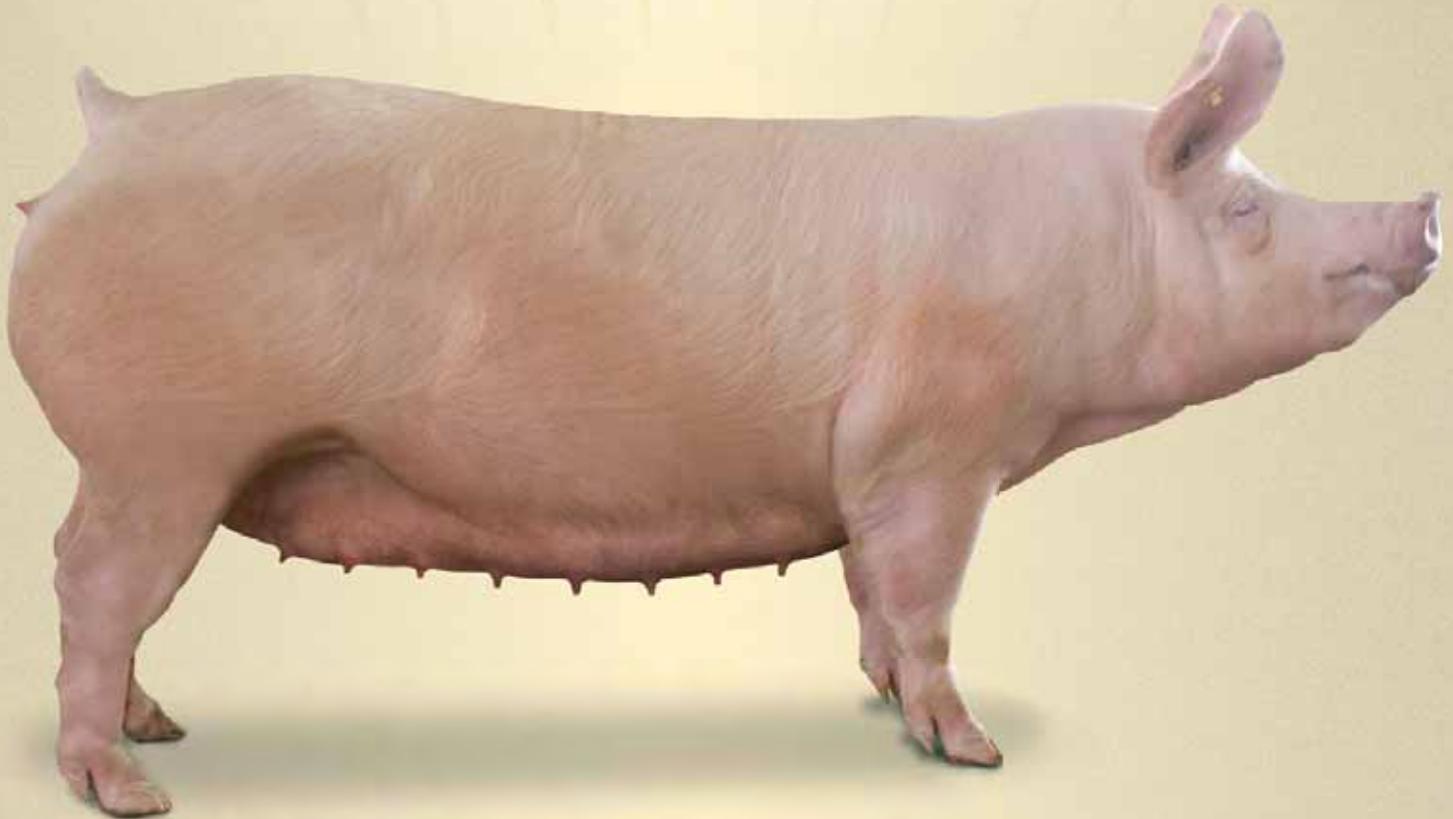
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The 43rd Banff Pork Seminar was held at the Banff Centre January 21-23, 2014. There were 560 producers and industry partners from across Canada, the U.S. and other parts of the world in attendance to hear internationally renowned speakers talk about "Today's Challenges, Tomorrow's Opportunities". Banff Pork Seminar is a success due to the support shown by industry partners who assemble to start new friendships

and business relationships, as well as to learn and share ideas with our presenters and colleagues.

We have significant challenges in front of us. Several of these challenges were highlighted at BPS 2014.

- The challenge of social pressure is stronger than ever before. Dallas Hockman from NPPC discussed the approach the US Pork industry is taking. His presentation provided the Canadian industry with some ideas and key learnings.
- Nelson Kloosterman focused on the "Dignity of Raising Animals for Food". His presentation brought to light the tactics that activists group are using. We need to be aware of them targeting youth and peoples' religious beliefs.
- The global population is growing quickly and the need for safe, abundant and affordable food is critical. Jose Cardenas discussed the important role of technology in meeting the food demands of 9 billion people by the year 2050.

Along with challenges come opportunities. There are a lot of good things happening in our industry that will provide opportunity.

- Steve Meyer echoed the global demand for food and the impact of this on Canadian production. Steve painted a positive financial picture for producers over the next year

due to improved pork prices, lower grain prices and a weakening Canadian dollar. Canada does however need to be able to compete with the US in the cost of production. More US Pork now comes into Canada from the US than is sent back the other way.

- There continue to be advances in sow productivity research and this year's winner of the George Foxcroft Honorary Lectureship, Dr. Billy Flowers focused on Gilt and Sow Management and Longevity.
- With some positive returns in our industry producers are beginning to look forward. The financial future of the Pork industry was highlighted by J.P. Gervais. Can we plan for expansion down the road?

The Banff Pork Seminar wraps up with a Boar Pit Session. This year's boar pit session was dominated by the disappointing news that PEDv had entered Canada. The timing of this news coincided with industry leaders being in the room for some lively discussion and a call to action to contain this virus, and to learn from the PED outbreaks in the US. Dr. Doug MacDougald led the discussion and provided some good science and guidance to the next big challenge our industry is facing.

The Banff Pork Seminar is able to attract world class presenters as a result of the excellent support of our sponsors and delegates. I want to thank the advisory committee members as well Conference Coordinator, Marli Wolfe Lafreniere for their hard work and dedication to making Banff Pork Seminar 2014 a success.

In closing, I would like to thank the Western Hog Journal and agriculture media for their coverage of this year's Banff Pork Seminar. This provides an opportunity to share the information presented at the seminar with those who were unable to attend. I know you'll enjoy reading about the innovations, management ideas and successes in this issue.

Don Down  
Chair, BPS Advisory Committee

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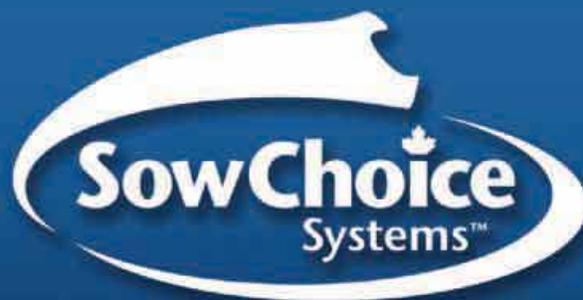


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## PLENARY SESSION ONE: Who controls the value chain?

### Part one - Impact of social pressure in the marketplace



**Dallas Hockman,**  
National Pork Producers  
Council, Iowa

Summary by Terry Hockaday

The “Corporate Responsibility Report” is a relatively new phenomenon among the major food brands and companies of the world. And it’s not only influencing expectations, but driving new demands, says Dallas Hockman, Vice President, Industry Relations, with the National Pork Producers Council.

Photo by Terry Hockaday

As part of a broader talk on social pressures, Hockman noted that as this becomes a standard part of corporate governance in the food sector, it is creating more focus and incentives for action. “Once you have the reports, you need to put something in the reports. You want to have things to point to that demonstrate you are doing a good job,” he says. “No question it’s having an impact.”

It’s not just the reports, he says. Companies today are bringing on more and more corporate responsibility or corporate sustainability staff, departments and initiatives. “It’s going on in all the big brands. They are facing the same pressures we are at the production level and they need to show they are

good stewards of everything from the environment to animal welfare. So we have an overall environment of our customers, these companies, wanting to demonstrate progress.”

The overall dynamic between producers and these customers is changing rapidly, he said. “If you look at the supply chain historically it’s a fairly simple model. We had the producer and then the processor, who that dealt directly with the grocers and restaurants. It was a business-to-business relationship based on supply and price, product availability - those types of basic factors. Today we’ve seen NGOs, like in our case the Humane Society of the United States, insert themselves into this and it is really changing the game.”

### Part two - The dignity of raising animals for food



**Nelson Kloosterman,**  
Worldview Resources  
International

Summary by Bryan Passifiume

*You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet: all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild, the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.*

– Psalms 8:6-8 (NIV)

Photo by Terry Hockaday

While a simple question of ethics may seem straightforward on the surface, the question of what is (or is not) ethical, especially when dealing with the food animal industry, depends largely on your point of view -- and reaches deeper than the simple comfort of an animal.

With a background in ethics education spanning nearly three decades, *Worldview Resources International’s* Nelson Kloosterman led the Wednesday plenary by speaking directly to the animal food industry on preserving the ethics and dignity of animal husbandry, and detailed the PR war that’s being



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waged against the industry by powerful the animal rights lobby.

The message spread by these groups, according to Kloosterman, is that cruelty is an integral part of the animal food industry. They also suggest that choosing a meatless diet is an integral part of living a moral and just life.

While the animal rights groups preach about the evils of eating animals for food, Kloosterman has been countering this with a different message directly to the food producers themselves. Instead of seeing themselves as parts of a vast food production network, he calls on producers to take pride in their craft.

“For the past several years, as an advocate for those who raise animals for food, I have been encouraging food producers with a message that I hope many will find helpful and inspiring,” he states. “That message celebrates the dignity of raising animals for food. At the core of the message is the notion of stewardship.”

Animal rights groups, such as the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and the Humane Society of the US (HSUS) are not only very effective at targeting the media with their message, Kloosterman says they are just as effective at targeting the consumers directly.

A key tactic of these groups, says Kloosterman, is to draw firm parallels between animal welfare and animal *rights*.

“All of us ought to be in favor of animal welfare,” Kloosterman explains. “The problem is that the organizations I have identified, PETA and HSUS, slide over these terms. They use terms like animal *welfare* when in fact they are defending animal *rights*.”

According to Kloosterman, animal rights groups typically utilize three tools in spreading this message: *children*, *religion*, and *language* to create what he calls an ideology of food tyranny.

### Children as a tool

Children are often prime targets for propaganda by animal rights groups, and organizers offer a two-pronged approach to convince them of their message. Not only do they target children directly, but of particular concern to Kloosterman are the efforts to influence what he calls the “*mind-makers*”.

“The mind-makers are anyone who teaches schoolchildren -- anyone who shapes the intellect or communicates public information and knowledge,” he said. “These folks teach children about what happens on farms, and provide

them with alternative worldviews that reject the legitimacy of eating meat. Veganism and vegetarianism are on the rise, not only in North America but around the world as well – ideas rooted in a worldview that offers a competing story about animal welfare and wellbeing.”

PETA’s website is full of fun games and activities especially designed to appeal to, and influence children. One powerful tactic is what Kloosterman calls the *petification* of animals – equating farm animals to household pets. This emotional connection is especially effective with children, who are taught

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

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that roast beef their parents served them for dinner last night could just as easily have been the beloved family cat.

The demonization of animal-based agriculture is also well covered, with PETA teaching children that farmers regularly abuse their animals as part of their daily chores. They paint agricultural workers as cogs in this giant gear work of animal suffering that makes up the modern food production industry. Imposing intergenerational conflict has also proved useful.

“The not-so-subtle message is that older people ‘just don’t get it,’” Kloosterman says. “The older generation is part of the problem, and the younger generation has the solution.”

### Religion as a tool

Religion, according to Kloosterman, has become a popular tool for animal right groups, with organizers going as far as developing faith-based resources targeting Sunday schools, youth groups and even adult ministries.

Kloosterman says that aiding the animal rights groups in their endeavours is the increasing level of ignorance about religion in today’s society.

“I was chatting with someone about the recent election of the Pope, and I pointed out how, in my opinion, most people in the media seem to lack categories for understanding, analyzing, and reporting the election of a new Pope as a spiritual reality, a spiritual process, and a spiritual endeavor,” he explains. “The problem is that the public is fed by the media’s ignorance, inability, and incompetence when it comes to matters of religion.”

This religious illiteracy goes hand-in-hand with an ignorance towards what he calls the animal *stewardship* industry. He

explained that workers should understand how terms like *stewardship* and *vocation* apply to their day-to-day lives -- in order to be re-assured that what they do is both “noble” and “necessary.”

“In a conversation I had with somebody with whom I debated this issue, he told me rather confidently that Jesus was a vegetarian,” Kloosterman recalls. “This person apparently did not know that Jesus ate the Passover lamb, and ate fish, and even multiplied fish for others to eat. Jesus was not opposed to eating animals.”

The person then stated that the killing of animals is frowned upon by God, a concept contrary to several instances in scripture that specifically refer to the deaths of animals at the hands of God.

Kloosterman refers to the parable described in the Gospel of Mark, where Jesus cast demons out of a possessed man into a herd of 2,000 pigs.

*A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. The demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.” He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. Mark 5:13 (NIV)*

Elsewhere in the Bible, Acts 10 speaks of Jesus’ rejection of the Old Testament dietary laws, ordering Peter to “rise, kill and eat” animals that were until then forbidden to eat.

In an effort to further muddy the waters of religion and animal rights, attempts by PETA to remove what it calls ‘speciesist’ animal pronouns in the New International Version of the Bible were soundly rejected by the translation committee. PETA’s intention was eliminate referring to

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animals as ‘it’ and instead use the same pronouns as humans -- *he* and *she*. Kloosterman talks about personification of animals later.

The use of religious language is common among animal rights groups, with Kloosterman citing the popular “Thou shalt not kill. Go vegetarian” bumper sticker as an attempt to mix Judeo-Christian ideology with PETA’s supposition that animals and humans are equal beings.

Other stickers include references to eating meat as a violation of Christ’s redemption, and comparing living a vegan lifestyle to the immaculate conception.

“If you think for a moment that these slogans are innocuous or benign, you need to realize that many people are coming under the influence of this use of religion in service to animal rights,” Kloosterman explained, citing that PETA’s own executive have publically claimed that their victory for what they consider to be ‘animal equality’ will involve proselytizing to North America’s faith community.

“Considering the level of religious interests in the United States, it seems unlikely that we’ll achieve animal liberation without mobilizing especially Jewish and Christian progressives, and perhaps also many of the conservatives,”

said Bruce Freidrich, a campaign director for PETA.

Kloosterman maintains that the introduction of religious imagery in their message is intended to groom North America’s faith community as a means to further disseminate their propaganda. Which, he says, seems to be working – with many prominent evangelical Christian leaders jumping onto the animal rights bandwagon as a religious crusade.

A two minute video produced by the Humane Society of the United States and widely available on YouTube ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJpUW9G3\\_\\_4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJpUW9G3__4)) furthers this goal by using ‘credible’ presenters to legitimize the biblical value of the animal rights movement.

Kloosterman points out several tried-and-true tactics in the video, the most prominent being the conspicuous use of children. The video also makes use of anthropomorphization by assigning animals human characteristics in order to create empathy -- a practical application of *petification* discussed in the previous section.

This connection, Kloosterman says, is the most powerful propaganda tool the animal rights groups have in their arsenal, and is designed for only one purpose: to put the food animal industry out of business.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



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## Language as a tool

Quite possibly, the most effective method of spreading their message, manipulating language allows the groups to create their own vocabulary to spread their message that today's food industry is nothing but organized tyranny.

Those who feed us this information, according to Kloosterman, aren't concerned with current or even accurate information.

"Often those who purvey, or sell and promote, ideology about animal farming are the least informed about the reality of the industry," he states. "This is why ideology possesses an unrealistic or idealistic nature."

Kloosterman calls these people *storytellers*. Their message is readily eaten up by the media, the marketplace and the mind-makers, and characterized by what he calls "manipulation, coercion and violence".

"I don't think I need to illustrate for animal producers how their industry is being assailed, ambushed, and attacked by these storytellers in ways that can be characterized as manipulative with regard to information and reality," he explains. "These accounts and their resulting recommendations are coercive because they want to force, compel, and tyrannize people into submission. This can be accompanied by violence as well."

Kloosterman points out that animal rights groups have a habit of co-opting slogans made popular by other causes. As with their religious imagery bumper stickers, PETA's "Eating meat stops a beating heart," "Pro life? Go vegetarian" and "Animals are little people in fur coats" bumper stickers

draw their inspiration from another contentious social issue: abortion.

"From a moral, ethical point of view, they are making a statement of moral equivalence between killing a child in the womb and killing a pig for dinner," Kloosterman says. "The premise of the slogan is that those actions are equally immoral."

The infamous '*little people in fur coats*' bumper sticker roots its insidiousness in a cloak of cuteness.

The equation of animal rights struggles versus civil rights is another popular tactic. PETA produces a poster comparing the pork industry with the North American slave trade. This, according to Kloosterman, demonstrates that the animal rights movement is more concerned with their message than good taste.

"I would like to ask the rhetorical question, 'How does the comparison with pigs as slaves make an African-American feel?'" opines Kloosterman. "What they endured as part of the sad, regrettable, despicable history of slavery, is being compared to factory farming, raising pigs, cows, and chickens for slaughter today. In my judgment, this goes way beyond the boundaries of proper moral discourse."

## An alternative message – three recommendations for the industry

Kloosterman wants the food industry workers to embrace the concept of *stewardship* -- to assure workers that, despite popular opinion, there is a real and tangible dignity in what they do.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

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“I want to suggest that to use an animal is not to exploit an animal,” Kloosterman explains. “We have got to be clear on our definitions and terms. Proper use is *not* exploitation. We also have to be very clear—and this is where your storytellers, message-makers, and industry spokespeople have to be explicit and clear—that animal *welfare* and animal *rights* are two different things.”

Kloosterman establishes that animal welfare and rights are not as interchangeable as the activists would like you to believe. While the welfare of animals should be at the forefront of anybody involved in the food animal industry, giving animals the same rights as humans is a dangerous road.

“We need to be clear on the difference between animal welfare and animal

rights,” he explains. “If we are going to be clear in our response to our critics, to the activists, and to those whose goal is to put us out of business, then we must distinguish between pets and food animals.”

Kloosterman readily admits that cultural aspects play into this, especially in parts of the world that raise dogs and cats as food sources. This North American aversion to eating our pets is strong, and readily exploited by animal rights groups.

Going forward, Kloosterman recommends that the industry should adopt what he calls *comprehensive transparency*.

“By this, I am suggesting that you need to be confident enough about what you’re doing, why you’re doing it, and how you’re doing it, to let other people in the barn to watch you at work,” he says, continuing that the ‘ag-gag laws’ that serve to end animal rights groups from smuggling hidden

camera footage out of food processing facilities demonstrate the need for transparency.

He also cites *agritourism* as another means of introducing the public (namely children) to the other side of agriculture that groups like PETA tend to leave out of their learning materials. He speaks of several successful farms in the United States that show schoolchildren what life on the farm is really like. They allow visitors to interact with animals so they see first hand how they fit into the food production chain. Some even allow children to witness the live birth of calves – observed from glassed-in mezzanines that show real-life farm workers going about their daily business. Other organizations take steps like installing live webcams in their facilities for public viewing.

Kloosterman recommends that the industry, at all levels, move towards a platform of public service over advocacy.

“This doesn’t mean that industry advocacy is unimportant, or that you should ignore legislative initiatives that affect the animal food industry,” he clarified. “In terms of the public image, the industry needs to move beyond simply serving the producers to serving the public.”

He states that a shift in thinking has overtaken the agricultural industry, one that puts the demands of the customers in the forefront. The pork industry’s switch from gestation crates to group pens, for example, was driven by the demands of the market.

Kloosterman calls this the ‘pink backhoe perspective.’

“I have a friend who is a construction project manager, with whom I discuss debates like this one, about gestation crates versus group pens,” he explains. “We talk about farmers and



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animal producers who fiercely oppose any outside demands on their way of doing things. He clarified for me the real issue at stake in this debate when he said, 'If I am bidding a construction job, and the specs for that job require that I use a pink backhoe to dig a hole, then if I want that job, I'm going to get a pink backhoe, regardless of what it looks like when I'm operating that pink backhoe.'

The axiom *The Customer is King* is illustrated by Kloosterman's anecdote. He says that the purpose of the pork industry is to serve the people, rather than simply raising animals for food.

"The people are the end-users, and if they're not happy, nobody is happy," he says. "You have to decide as an industry between simply raising animals for food or serving people with your product."

Kloosterman's third recommendation is to partner with animal science educators. He says that including sound, empirical science to the food animal industry's message is an effective counter to the animal rights group's tactics of manipulation and coercion.

"They've been able to capture the moral high ground because they are being assisted by academics and others who know

how to craft the message," he said. "The industry needs message-makers and communicators -- people who are able to meet the opposition on their turf with language, definitions, ideas, and concepts."

He calls this *messaging*, and he says that it's going to be the chief weapon to maintaining an equal battleground.

All this comes at a cost, however. Kloosterman suggests that the industry needs to commit funds to fund advocacy programs of their own. This requires an attitude shift from producers, however, some of whom he's seen are only interested in making it to retirement, where they can pass down their farm, and their obligations as a vital part of this messaging strategy, to the younger generation.

Kloosterman concluded by stating that the pork industry needs to adopt what he calls a *confident identity* -- one that uses concepts of stewardship, vocation and dignity to not only represent their industry in a positive light, but also to be able to stand up to the barrage of misinformation coming from a well-practiced, well-funded and well-spoken opposition. An opposition, Kloosterman says, who doesn't only want to see the end of animal based food products, but the end of the animal food industry altogether. ■

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## BREAKOUT SESSION 1

### Making the Most of Labour

**When pennies count – and they always do – labour management is critical**

Summary by Marvin Salomons, Salomons Group Solutions, Red Deer, Alberta

For many Canadian employers labour is a topic they've had to think about more and more. The pork sector this is no exception as producers across most parts of this country find it harder and harder to attract the skills and retain the people they need to support their businesses. Again this year, the 2014 Banff Pork Seminar highlighted a labour breakout session as it continues to be a key topic of interest. Success in producing pork requires operations to be efficient in how they attract labour. On top of that, they need to be using the right tools to bring new people into the business and use all possible means to ensure the talent they hire stays on the job long-term.

Approaching the topic from different perspectives, speakers in the breakout gave participants some great insights on what they can do to make things a lot easier when it comes to handling human resources in their swine business. On the practical front Nick Holden VP and GM of the Sow Division at Holden Farms Inc, Northfield, Minnesota, talked about the practices and technologies he has implemented in his own pork business to enhance labour efficiencies. On the support side to business, Portia MacDonald-Dewhirst, Executive Director of the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC) presented information on human resource tools employers need to have and consistently use. She concluded with what her organization has to offer for employers, managers and barn staff in terms of support products and HR information.

#### Speaker one - Nick Holden

### Making Labour Efficient on the Farm



Photo by Terry Hockaday

Nick Holden is no stranger when it comes to dealing with people. Along with three family members, Nick, with his business degree under his arm, is in the driver's seat operating their fifth generation Holden Farms business. Primarily a 47,000 sow system that partners with over 200 family farms in Minnesota and Iowa, its focus is on pigs but Holden Farms also operates three turkey farms and is a part owner in a turkey processing plant. Holden Inc., has people that are an integral part in all facets of their business. In practice Holden Farms has put some ideas, tools and technologies in place that keeps workers focused and the job of recruitment less daunting.

For Nick, labour efficiency in his business means developing and making life easier for the work team, removing the roadblocks, adding technology where possible, increasing employee engagement, and finally recruiting the right and best people to do the job. For Holden Farm staff, life on the job has got easier as Nick Holden has looked at tools that make it that way. Automated feeding systems, buying remote-control boar movers, buying piglet holders, and getting staff to use chase gates rather than sort boards is making the job a lot easier. Holden has zeroed in on eliminating the "time wasters" that do not have a significant effect on their bottom line, such as stopping teeth clipping, flipping farrowing crates from

three rows to two rows for easier access, and reducing the paperwork staff are required to do. “This allows our staff to focus more on the high value work of caring for pigs,” says Holden. “We have also seen making the environment comfortable for our team pays off big.” Holden ensures clean and organized locker and break rooms with heated floors, has put in extra microwaves, dishwashers and ovens in the lunch rooms, and makes sure all workers have proper sized clothes to wear in the barn. For Holden Farms, comfort equates to higher employee morale. People want to work at Holden and people want to stay working there.

**Holden ensures clean and organized locker and break rooms with heated floors, has put in extra microwaves, dishwashers and ovens in the lunch rooms, and makes sure all workers have proper sized clothes to wear in the barn. For Holden Farms, comfort equates to higher employee morale.**

Holden Farms has also moved towards using newer technologies that make work easier and more interesting for staff. “Technologies like post-cervical AI allows faster breeding and takes away the tedious work of stimulating sows and focuses the work more on heat-checking. We have moved to using products like OvuGel® and 80 dose multi-dose AI bags to save time and reduce matings,” says Holden. Holden Farms is working towards reducing matings from about 2.5 to fewer than 2.0, to possibly 1.0 mating per sow. It saves work and makes life for staff easier noted Holden.

Holden Farms continues to look for ways to get their employees more engaged in both the farm they are on and in the parent

company itself. Nick Holden believes the level of engagement varies between people and occurs on different levels so the business needs to be flexible. At Holden they get staff engaged in both big and small ways, often tailored to the individual. Goal setting and personal evaluations are big items and Holden Farm managers are encouraged to run their own meetings and focus more on people skills rather than the usual production parameters. Everything from monthly pizza parties, cash bonuses, to helping staff develop ownership into the business is worked into the company’s plan. Holden sees this paying off in many ways that makes both his staff and him happy.

## New Recruiting Approaches Required

Holden Farms has realized a higher percentage of future workers will never have worked on a farm before. As a result, they have adjusted how and where they recruit new staff. Having more of a 24/7 presence and targeting job openings accessible in non-traditional advertising routes such as through the use of Smartphone technology is the future for Holden Farms. To Holden, it is also about doing a better job of selling the job story as a career and he sees the future of training and education playing a larger role, one that he is willing to tackle head-on. Farms also need to be more flexible and allow people to work under different work schedules. Some workers with spouses in shift or weekend work might prefer a work schedule that is outside of our normal work pattern but it may be the thing that gets and keeps that employee on your team. For Nick Holden pork production will always require people to operate the farms. To be successful, employers like him will need to look at better ways to improve labour efficiency and make the job more attractive as a career choice. Holden believes success depends on whether he can hire and retain the best future talent that is out there.

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## Speaker two – Portia MacDonald Meeting the Demands for Staff



Photo by Terry Hockaday

The Canadian agriculture sector is extremely fortunate to have the services of the Canadian Agriculture Human Resource Council (CAHRC). Although not widely known among primary producers, this national non-profit organization is focused on addressing human resource issues and challenges within the agriculture sector. Unfortunately, most agriculture employers have never heard of the organization. CAHRC has a myriad of human resource tools available

specifically geared towards helping the agriculture employer. Portia MacDonald-Dewhirst is CAHRC's executive director and knows the current agriculture labour situation well. She handles the task dealt to CAHRC with a career of over 20 years of human resource experience in both the private and public sectors.

Portia MacDonald-Dewhirst sees a multitude of challenges when it comes to meeting the demands for staff. In her observations, human resources in many businesses is often overlooked and even more so, is also typically under-invested in. With the Canadian labour market being squeezed, the demand for good labour is very high. The current demographic picture in Canada shows an aging workforce with high labour mobility and when combined with political and social factors she predicts most industries in Canada continue to struggle to meet demands for both higher and lower-skilled labour.

In western Canada, the labour shortage remains very evident with local talent virtually non-existent. Competing for a limited pool of workers is a major challenge for any industry, noted MacDonald-Dewhirst, particularly so for swine farms

which operate in low-population rural areas, require people with specialized skills, and have to compete on salary with booming industries like mining, oil, and gas. Experienced workers are exiting rural areas and there is a general lack of interest in working on a swine farm as a career. She sees the need to make an immediate investment in human resources and mitigate the risks. "We need to put in place effective recruitment and retention methods. If we don't do it now ultimately there will be no people to do the work," says MacDonald-Dewhirst.

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**"We need to put in place effective recruitment and retention methods. If we don't do it now ultimately there will be no people to do the work." – MacDonald-Dewhirst.**

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A strategic human resources plan is required. It needs to assess all farm tasks, the skill competencies and training required, as well as the farm's current and future bench strengths. Statistics show only 25 per cent of employers have or keep an updated plan. When labour is hard to find, employers are going to need to draw on this documented plan to find the next great worker, noted MacDonald-Dewhirst. Looking for workers needs to be strategic process. She outlined a number of key "knows";

- Know what you are looking for.
- Know where and how to look for people.
- Know how to advertise your opportunity.
- Know how to select the best candidate.
- Know how to ensure the success of your new hire.

In the recruitment process, you need to be clear in whom and what you are looking for. A good job description and realistic job preview is a must. Knowing where to look for new hires is crucial. MacDonald-Dewhirst says employers need to use all their networks and institute a multi-pronged

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approach in recruiting, whether it's for domestic or foreign hires. Candidates need to have enough detail in job ads to see there is a fit for them and you, as an employer, need to make selections based on your job description and on this ad. The interview is also a critically important step says MacDonald-Dewhirst. She recommends the use of behavioral interview techniques as proven and effective methods of making successful selection decisions. A question like "tell me a time when..." is a better interview approach than "what would you do if..." The question gives a better way of assessing a person in the interview.

For MacDonald-Dewhirst ensuring the success of a newly hired staff member is accomplished by having an "on-boarding" procedure that introduces the person to all the team and all the resources for the job. "You need to set people up for success in your organization," says MacDonald-Dewhirst. This is often overlooked and the reason the statistics show 22 per cent of staff turnover happens in the first 45 days of being on the job. Losing staff is equated in value of three times that person's salary as it affects the business and other staff as well.

Retention is essential in a time of labour shortages. The efforts employers put towards retaining the current workforce are typically smaller and less costly than the cost of finding new staff. Good retention efforts in place lead to more effective staff, but also employees who will champion their work and talk positively about it to friends and family. In the end, this can translate into an efficient route to acquiring new quality hires.

CAHRC has an array of human resource information, tools and templates that can be accessed on their website (<http://www.cahrc-ccrha.ca>).

- AgriGuide.ca
- AgriTalent.ca
- AgriPathways
- AgriHRToolkit
- AgriLeadership

AgriGuide offers a database of national, regional and provincial not-for-profit and publicly-funded farm organizations and commodity groups that are of value to a farm's business and human resource needs. AgriTalent is an interactive on-line tool to access information about all agricultural training options and can be searched by subject or by Province. AgriPathways outlines the exciting opportunities available in primary agriculture as a career choice. The AgriHRToolKit provides working templates and valuable information on managing the human side of a farm's operations. And finally AgriLeadership is a great resource to assess your current level of knowledge, skills and attitudes in agricultural leadership. Portia MacDonald-Dewhirst encouraged employers and employees to access the resources and tools available on her Council's website or contact CAHRC directly for any specific help needed.

In summary MacDonald-Dewhirst reiterated that as a business owner you must invest in HR management if you want to run your business more effectively. Workforce training, effective recruitment strategies, dealing with things like tension and conflict in the workplace, as well as implementing an intentional retention program will ensure you hire and retain the right people. In today's labour market it pays to be at the leading edge and take hold of every advantage one can get. ■

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## BREAKOUT SESSION 2

### Industry Structure and Finance

#### Making sense of economics makes cents (and dollars!) for producers

Summary by Bernie Peet, Pork Chain Consulting, Lacombe, Alberta

#### Speaker one - J.P. Gervais, Farm Credit Canada

#### The financial future of the hog sector

Over the last few years, Canadian hog producers have been challenged by a 'perfect storm' of economic drivers including the strong Canadian dollar, higher feed prices, Swine Influenza and US Country of Origin Labelling regulations, notes J.P. Gervais, Chief Agricultural Economist with Farm Credit Canada. But, he says, the outlook for the pork sector is encouraging with demand for pork forecast to grow by 13% worldwide over the next 10 years. Also, domestic demand is finally stabilizing after almost two decades of reductions in per-capita consumption. Gervais examines the financial health of the hog sector and its future prospects.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

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Due to the poor economic environment, producer incomes have been negatively affected, Gervais pointed out. “The Farm Financial Survey (FFS) reveals that average net operating income per hog farm, including government payments, declined from \$59,000 in 2005 to \$17,000 in 2009,” he said. “The average net market income from 2007 to 2010 was negative at \$24,000, \$98,000, \$77,000, and \$30,000 respectively. It is only the substantial increase in government payments that managed to pull overall net operating income into positive territory.”

In that context, he said, it is not surprising to have seen a significant decline in hog production, with market hog inventories falling 14 percent from the peak observed in early 2006 to early 2013 according to Statistics Canada. “The decline in the breeding hog inventory from the peak observed in late 2005 was 26 percent and the number of farms with hogs has declined from 29,500 farms in 1991 to 7,300 farms in 2011,” Gervais observed. “It is revealing that 94 percent of the decline in the number of farms between 2001 and 2011 is in the category of farms selling less than 5,000 head annually.”

Farm size and the resulting economies of scale are important drivers of profitability of hog operations, Gervais believes. “Industry estimates suggest that the average loss in 2008 for a 500-sow operation was approximately \$40 per head while a 3,000-sow operation lost an average \$25 per head,” he said. “Profit margins remained negative all through 2013 for small operations, while larger operations managed to break even in 2010 and turn a slight profit in 2011.” The cumulative effect of negative profit margins in the hog industry is especially important after successive years of challenging market conditions, he added. Operations that undertook expansions between 2000 and 2005 were especially hit hard as there have been no opportunities to cover these expansion costs.

Low profitability in the hog sector has had a devastating impact on the debt-servicing capacity of producers, Gervais noted. “The ratio of actual liabilities in the hog sector to maximum feasible debt steadily climbed to 107 percent in 2008, a situation clearly unsustainable for the industry,” he said. “However, the steep decrease in interest rates observed in 2008 played a major role in strengthening the debt-servicing capacity of the sector.” The Hog Industry Loan Loss Reserve Program (HILLRP), introduced in August 2009, improved the access to credit for eligible producers by converting short-term debt into longer term loans.

Given the influence of farm size on profits, it is not surprising that the impact of the hog crisis on the balance sheet was different according to farm size. Larger operations had a lower debt-to-asset ratio than smaller farms and, at the outset of the crisis, the risk exposure of hog farms climbed faster for

smaller operations than larger ones, Gervais pointed out. The average financial position also varied enormously between individual farms, irrespective of size, he said.

What about the future for hog producers? Gervais suggested that, while large operations benefit from economies of scale, increasing the size of operations is neither necessary nor sufficient to manage financially sustainable hog operations. “Diversification has worked well for hog producers in recent years,” he said. “Producers who own land have essentially been able to subsidize their hog operations. But in most cases, having access to your feed is not nearly enough; it is often about being large enough to own your feed mill.”

Agriculture is no longer strictly a commodity business and being a low-cost producer is only one option among many other strategies, Gervais stressed. “In the new agriculture environment, there is value in differentiated products and more tightly aligned marketing and distribution systems,” he explained. “Being competitive is about controlling cost, but also about choosing product quality features and being responsive to market demands. Some producers will optimize their scale of production to produce at the lowest possible unit cost; others will find that marketing a differentiated commodity makes sense at a lower scale.”

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### **Larger operations had a lower debt-to-asset ratio than smaller farms and, at the outset of the crisis, the risk exposure of hog farms climbed faster for smaller operations than larger ones.**

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“What is the appetite for risk in the industry?” Gervais asked. “Falling grain prices, strong red meat demand, and lower livestock inventories all inspire a positive outlook for the sector,” he said. “However, it will take some time for hog producers to rebuild equity and reduce debt load, so while I’m really optimistic about the outlook for the industry, I’m only moderately optimistic about future growth.”

Gervais pointed out that low interest rates had been a helpful factor during the period of low profitability. But, while short term rates based on the Bank of Canada rate are still low, long term rates, based on the bond market, have increased since the USA started to withdraw its economic stimulus, he noted. “This impacts the rates offered by financial institutions on longer term mortgages, which have already started creeping upward,” he said. “It would be prudent for producers to look at the many financial aspects of their operations, as a transition out of exceptionally low interest rates could come sooner than expected.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26



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## Speaker two – Troy Warren, Maple Leaf Foods

### Future structure of the Canadian pork industry

Over the last 10 years the Canadian pork industry has undergone significant change, with a 49% drop in the number of producers and a 35% drop in the number of packing plants, points out Troy Warren, with Maple Leaf Foods. Over the same period, the marketing of pork, both domestically and internationally, has changed dramatically, he says. Whereas Canada used to export four times more pork to the USA than it imported, now we are a net importer. In addition, domestic consumption has dropped by 8lbs per person over the same period. He examines the factors that have influenced change in the industry and how its structure might change in the future.

Competition with the USA has been a major challenge for Canadian processors, Warren said. “We have no inspection of pork coming from the USA, whereas they inspect Canadian pork. Also, there are no labeling requirements like there are for Canadian pigs processed in the USA,” he noted. The appreciation of the Canadian dollar has certainly been a key factor in the increase in US pork exports to Canada, he believes.

Trade access is a major barrier for Canadian pork exports, Warren argued. “Unlike the Americans, we don’t have a Free Trade Agreement with Korea, we have problems with access to the Russian market and we have the challenge of mCOOL in the USA,” he said. “Countries continue to find ways to protect their pork industries while we remain likely the easiest place in the world to do business.” Hog producers have also faced a

series of challenges over the last six years. The industry as a whole has responded by increasing its global competitiveness. “Today, the average plant in Canada processes 55% more hogs than it did 10 years ago and average farm size has grown by 66%,” he noted. “There has been an incredible focus on costs throughout all parts of the chain and we continue to see gains in pigs/sow/year. We’ve also kept pace with the USA in terms of increasing the weight of market hogs.”

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**With a lower Canadian dollar, lower feed prices and sustained hog prices led by export demand and lower beef production, the outlook is bright. However, he said, the industry must collectively address some of the structural issues and also focus on managing volatility more actively – an area where our U.S. counterparts have been very successful.**

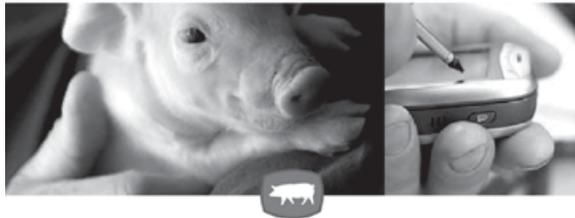
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This year and next are shaping up to be very positive years for the pork industry in Canada, Warren suggested. With a lower Canadian dollar, lower feed prices and sustained hog prices led by export demand and lower beef production, the outlook is bright. However, he said, the industry must

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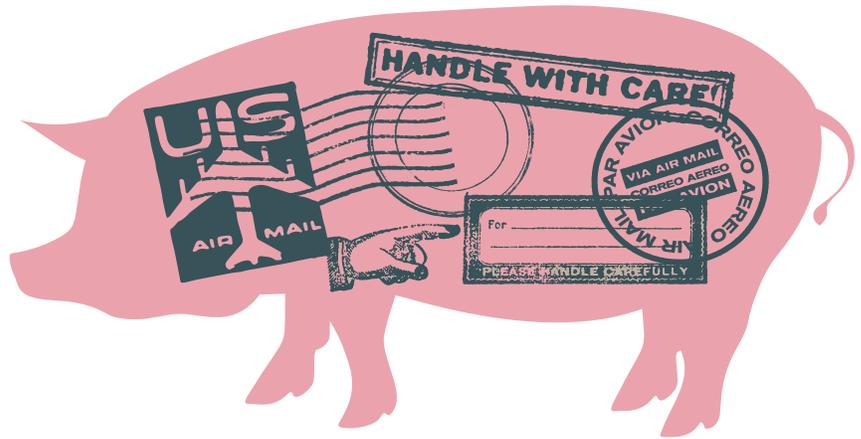
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collectively address some of the structural issues and also focus on managing volatility more actively – an area where our U.S. counterparts have been very successful. “Producers need to develop their hedging knowledge and skills and utilize these to smooth their margins,” he said. “Packers also need to do the same by forward-selling pork as markets have become far more unpredictable than in the past.”

Warren stressed the need to improve trade and improve access to important markets. “We need a trade deal with Japan, it’s such an important market,” he said. “We have made progress with Russia, providing Ractopamine-free pork, but it is a challenging market as they keep changing the rules arbitrarily to control the market.” China has been primarily a by-product market but, Warren believes, there is an opportunity to sell chilled pork. However, there is currently a requirement for a 15-day quarantine period, which effectively stops chilled pork exports. “We need to get governments to sort out trade requirements,” he said. “There is a lot of demand in China for imported products, partly due to a lack of confidence in their own food production systems, so there is the same opportunity to take the same branding approach we took in Japan.” Pork comprises 63% of meat consumption in China and, although China is home to over half the world’s pigs, it has been steadily increasing its imports.

Warren describes his thoughts regarding the structure of the industry in the future. He felt that vertical integration will continue to grow, but that a strong independent supply base was also essential. “Vertical integration allows a quick response to emerging market needs, helps offset value chain earnings volatility and provides stability of raw material supply,” he said. “Independent producers need to be prepared to change to meet market demands and to share the risks and opportunities in the value chain.”

Warren urged the government to better support the needs of the pork industry. “We do not receive the support that the other protein industries do in Canada,” he said. “We need to solve the market access issues with the government and also properly support and build a domestic market strategy. Every packer is under siege from the US and we need a branded product to rebuild our market here.” ■



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## BREAKOUT SESSION 4

# Sow Housing and Code of Practice

Change is coming and coming soon – how producers adapt to it will be the difference between success or catastrophe Summary by Bryan Passifiume

Speaker one – Dr. Jennifer Brown, Prairie Swine Centre

## Group sow housing and considerations for barn conversion



Photo by Sheri Monk

With pressure mounting from consumers, retailers and animal rights groups, an industry-wide shift regarding the housing of sows has swept the Canadian pork industry.

The *National Sow Housing Conversion Project*, a joint initiative of the University of Manitoba and the Prairie Swine Centre, aims to facilitate and encourage producers to convert their barns from stalls to group housing, which is widely viewed as being more humane.

On hand to address attendees at her afternoon breakout session was Dr. Jennifer Brown of the

Prairie Swine Centre – one of the researchers behind the conversion project.

In Canada, acceptable standards for the housing of sows is outlined in the *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pigs*, a publication of the National Farm Care Council. Last revised in 1993, the council launched an initiative in 2010 to revise the standards of acceptable care for pigs, with a specific emphasis on welfare, pain control, euthanasia and housing.

According to Dr. Brown, the draft's public comment period, held last summer in response



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to a May 2013 draft code of practice, garnered over 4,700 submissions from across the pork industry, as well as the public, and animal rights groups.

**Sow housing changes**

According to the draft code, all new facilities must provide group housing for their sows. Existing facilities will have 10 years to ensure that mated gilts and sows are housed in group pens.

As bred sows are especially vulnerable during early stages of their pregnancy, many experts agree that penning is still a necessary practice. Stress related to tussles over food, dominance and bullying affect the health of less dominant animals when freshly bred.

To that end, the draft code states that stalls may still be used after breeding, but must be ‘sized appropriately,’ and be used for no longer than 35 days out of the typical four-month gestation period.

**As for what will make it to the final document, Brown said that flexibility is a concern for producers, as is the 2024 deadline for barn conversion. She does say that despite the uncertainty, the industry should be prepared for change.**

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**Will it be effective?**

Brown said that many are questioning whether the changes will actually produce positive changes in sow welfare.

While stalls limit the movement and interaction of sows, they do allow the farmer to tailor monitoring and feeding regimens for each specific animal. They also simplify animal management, and reduce variation.

Brown’s belief is that a mandated enforcement of group pens probably won’t improve things in the short-term, but may have a positive effect down

the road.

As for production levels, studies suggest that they are generally unchanged when group and penned sows are compared. According to University of Minnesota agricultural economist Brian Buhr, the changes in sow housing was negligible.

“There is no clear difference in productivity that can be attributed to

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stalls or group housing systems," he said in his 2010 economic analysis of gestation pen reform. "Farms using pens reported no differences in labour, productivity or animal welfare."

### To renovate... or not to renovate...

Farmers wanting to follow the new guidelines generally have three options: expand on their existing facilities,

renovate their current barns or build from new.

Buhr's report stated that the economic benefits of renovating versus new construction depended largely on the age of the structure and its net present value. If the barn is over 21 years old, Buhr suggested that it would be more economical to build new rather than renovate.

Buhr also suggests that factors such as

the condition of the building itself, the condition of its electrical and ventilation system, and the suitability of the existing structure to accommodate new pens should also be considered.

The draft code also dictates new floor space regulations, depending on the type of flooring provided and the type of animals. The dimensions range from 15 to 23 square feet for partial slatted floors and 16 to 25 square feet for bedded floors.

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### The National Sow Housing Conversion Project

The Prairie Swine Centre developed the National Sow Housing Conversion Project to allow producers to evaluate different group housing options before committing to any particular design.

Under collaboration with the University of Manitoba and various provincial pork associations, the project aims to develop a central information database for producers that will allow the industry to make informed and sound decisions.

Information in the database will allow producers to see before & after information on existing facilities, including the layout, the cost and how it impacted production.

Phase one of the project, initiated in 2013, involved two pilot barns in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

Phase two is an expanded four-year program that will document eight barn conversions across Canada. Funding for phase two is pending.

### Quality versus quantity

Dr. Brown said that *quality* of the space in which a sow lives is just as important as the quantity. A 1992 study in Australia by John L. Barnett concluded that pen design is just as important for reducing aggression among herds than the space of their pens. Positive design aspects for group pens include solid partitions that allow bullied pigs places

to escape and hide from their tormentors, and comfortable flooring.

As sows spend most of their time lounging around, Brown said that flooring is important not only to the psychological wellbeing of the herd, but also to maintain proper leg and hoof health. A good floor allows the animals to lie down and relax as well as provides proper manure management, with bedded floors providing the most comfort as opposed to slatted floors.

Proper enrichment is also important to creating a sociable herd. Enrichment can come in the form of positive contact with other pigs or even their human handlers, psychological enrichment including providing challenging activities to keep the pig's mind sharp and occupied, physical enrichment such as nest boxes, sensory enrichment including interesting stimuli like a television, music or different taste or tactile modalities, and changing the types and flavours of feed provided to the herd.

**What's the cost?**

Dr. Brown says that there is no documentation on what conversion will cost. She provided an anecdotal cost of \$300-\$600 per sow based on American experience.

A study by the Quebec Industry Committee on Animal Welfare suggests that the cost could change based on the number of sows.

Looking ahead, Dr. Brown told the audience that producers must consider the long-term financial implications of conversion, taking into consideration the effect on feed, production and sow replacement costs.

Key factors to consider when investigating conversion options include judging space quality over quantity, addressing feeding concerns and ensuring proper herd management.

Lastly, producers need to balance the animals' quality of life and production capabilities over the benefits to the producer and their staff.

**Speaker 2 - Dr. Mike Sheridan,  
Sheridan & Heuser Swine Health Services  
Pain Control - What do Honey and  
Jewish Homemade Wine Have to do with  
the Impact of Pain?**

Nobody ever wants to see an animal unduly suffer. Human feelings of empathy aside, pain causes stress and aggression that can negatively impact production and the efficacy of the entire herd.

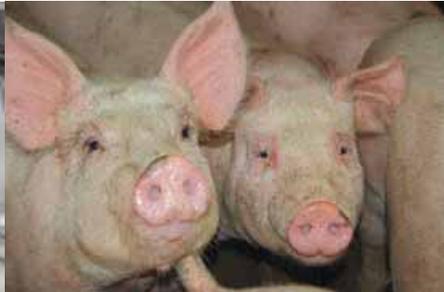
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A veterinarian and partner in Winnipeg-based Sheridan & Heuser Swine Health Services, Dr. Mike Sheridan spoke to breakout session attendees about traditional and new ideas in pain management in swine, and how changes in the Code of Practice may affect the industry.

Pain management in pigs is mandated in the *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pigs* – a topic that received much attention as of late until focus switched to the ethics of sow housing.

In the recent release of the draft code, the topic of pain control was a key issue up for revision. The draft calls for changes in procedures for pigs undergoing castration, and calls the current methods ineffective.

*Castration of pigs is painful regardless of age. The administration of analgesics is beneficial in controlling post-procedure pain. The application of topical anesthetics is ineffective in relieving pain during castration. – Draft Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pigs, page 33*

Pain control, says Dr. Sheridan, is a relatively new aspect in agricultural veterinary medicine.

For testicular castration, many injectable options are available. While lidocaine is often suggested by vets, it tends to burn and doesn't address tail and tattoo pain. Analgesics also have the added benefit of reducing fever, but concerns such

as drug bioavailability in the meat, interactions with other administered drugs, dosages and cost should always be on the minds of both producers and animal health practitioners.

Gauging pain in non-human patients has always been a particular challenge for vets. Unable to vocalize about the specifics of pain, researchers have been investigating other routes to determine the efficacy of pain relievers.

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**Gauging pain in non-human patients has always been a particular challenge for vets. Unable to vocalize about the specifics of pain, researchers have been investigating other routes to determine the efficacy of pain relievers.**

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Researchers are investigating the possibility that facial cues in mice could be the key to measuring accurate pain levels. According to Dr. Sheridan, separate studies in England and at the University of Guelph in Ontario have found that piglets may show similar facial cues in response to pain stimuli. The results of these studies, says Dr. Sheridan, may finally be able to answer the question of what pain animals feel during castration, tail docking or ears, as well as how effective different pain management systems are.

Dr. Sheridan told the attendees that, during a conversation with his wife about the subject, she brought up rituals used by Mohels prior to infant circumcision.

The Mohel, as part of the bris ceremony, would administer several drops of sweet wine to the baby. Tradition states that the wine serves to soothe the baby, but recent studies in both animals and humans suggest that ingesting sugar may actually have a real and quantitative analgesic effect – confirming much anecdotal advice to that effect.

Dr. Sheridan says that thinking outside of the box in regards to pain control could yield interesting results, and the industry would greatly benefit from it. ■

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