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## Message from the editor

Thank you to everyone who offered positive feedback on our last issue, and my first as editor of Western Hog Journal. Your encouragement and suggestions are welcome and valued, and I hope to continue to hear from even more of our readers in the future.

In this edition, we've delved a little bit more deeply into the sow stall issue, taking a closer look at the unprecedented reaction to the draft code released June 1 of this year. We've also gone one step further, and interviewed the leader of the organization responsible for taking secret video at a hog facility in Manitoba in 2012.

I've covered the livestock sector for several years now, and the animal rights movement is an ever-present threat, openly feared, and often referred to only in hushed tones. I wanted to blow that door wide open and forge a new path forward. Animal rights activists are never going to go away, just like the meat industry is never going to go away. In Canada, approximately four per cent of the population was considered vegetarian in 2004 – and that means that roughly 96 per cent of us still eat meat. In reality, animal rights activists aren't fighting livestock production – they are fighting for the public's opinion on livestock production.

That's an important distinction to make. It means that if we're doing our jobs to the best of our ability, we have no one to fear. It means that we need to continually strive to do better, to be transparent, and to communicate to our stakeholders why we do the things we do, and how we do them. And I think it means that we need to start understanding the mentality of the activists because in the future, we may be seated at the same table. In 2011, the Humane Society of the United States came to an agreement with the United Egg Producers to fundamentally change the way laying hens are kept. The dynamics are changing in our industry, and knowledge is power.

You'll also hear from the Alberta Farm Animal Care Council to illuminate their role as a buffer zone between producers and activists, and from the Center for Consumer Freedom on one of their surveys on sow stalls. And while not dealing with the hog industry specifically, the news in livestock isn't all bad. A South African fellow named Allan Savoury recently spoke in Calgary about how more – not less – livestock production is needed. Savoury is referring specifically to grazing cattle, but his message of "more meat" has been heard around the world since his recent Ted Talk went viral.

In addition to dealing with code and welfare issues, we've got the latest facts on the PED situation in the U.S., another column from Kevin Grier, some exciting new industry research, and some timely articles on welfare issues related to group housing.

Thanks for reading, and we'll see you again this winter! Don't forget to send your letters to the editor, story ideas and any suggestions to [sherimonk@gmail.com](mailto:sherimonk@gmail.com)! ■



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# News and Views from Far and Near

## A done deal

On the morning of September 24, Smithfield Foods shareholders voted to sell the company to Chinese company Henan Shuanghui Investment and Development. The decision was nearly unanimous, with reports that 96 per cent of shareholders were in favour of the massive sale.

Initially, there was major backlash against the proposal as the move will mean that the largest U.S. pork producer is foreign-owned. The \$7.1 billion deal was approved by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, despite some very vocal opposition. The activist hedge fund shareholder Starboard

Value LP tried to find a different buyer, but was unsuccessful, paving the way for the arrangement to go through.

## Fast Genetics sends another shipment to China

Fast Genetics and its parent company HyLife successfully sent a Boeing 747 cargo transport aircraft with 868 head of purebred breeding stock to Chengdu, China. The pigs originated from Fast Genetics' nucleus sites near Spiritwood, Saskatchewan and were for its new customer Zigong Tequ Pig Farming Company.

## Workshop program addresses hot production issues

Don't forget to register for the Red Deer Swine Technology Workshop. Topics will include feed efficiency and reducing feed costs from keynote speaker Dr. Steve Dritz from Kansas State University. PED, group housing and much more will



also be covered. The workshop is being held Oct. 30 at the Sheraton Hotel in Red Deer. Registration is \$75, and there is "5 for the price of 4" package for \$300. To register, contact Bernie Peet at Pork Chain Consulting at 403-782-3775 or email [bjpeet@telusplanet.net](mailto:bjpeet@telusplanet.net).

## Alberta Pork AGM approaching

Alberta Pork will hold its AGM on Nov. 14 at 9:30 a.m. at the Coast Plaza Hotel in Calgary. Lunch and hors d'oeuvres to follow. RSVP by Oct. 31 to Barb Brimmage at 877-247-7675 or email [barb.brimmage@albertapork.com](mailto:barb.brimmage@albertapork.com).

## Nuhn's new Lagoon Crawler making a splash

Not everyone needs a vehicle capable of driving into a lagoon where it then transforms into an agitation boat, but those who do can't get one fast enough.

In fact, the invention won the award for most innovative product of the year at Farm Progress Show in Decatur, Illinois and there has been a flood of media attention surrounding its launch.

When in the lagoon, the Lagoon Crawler is powered by a triple port, Nuhn Header

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

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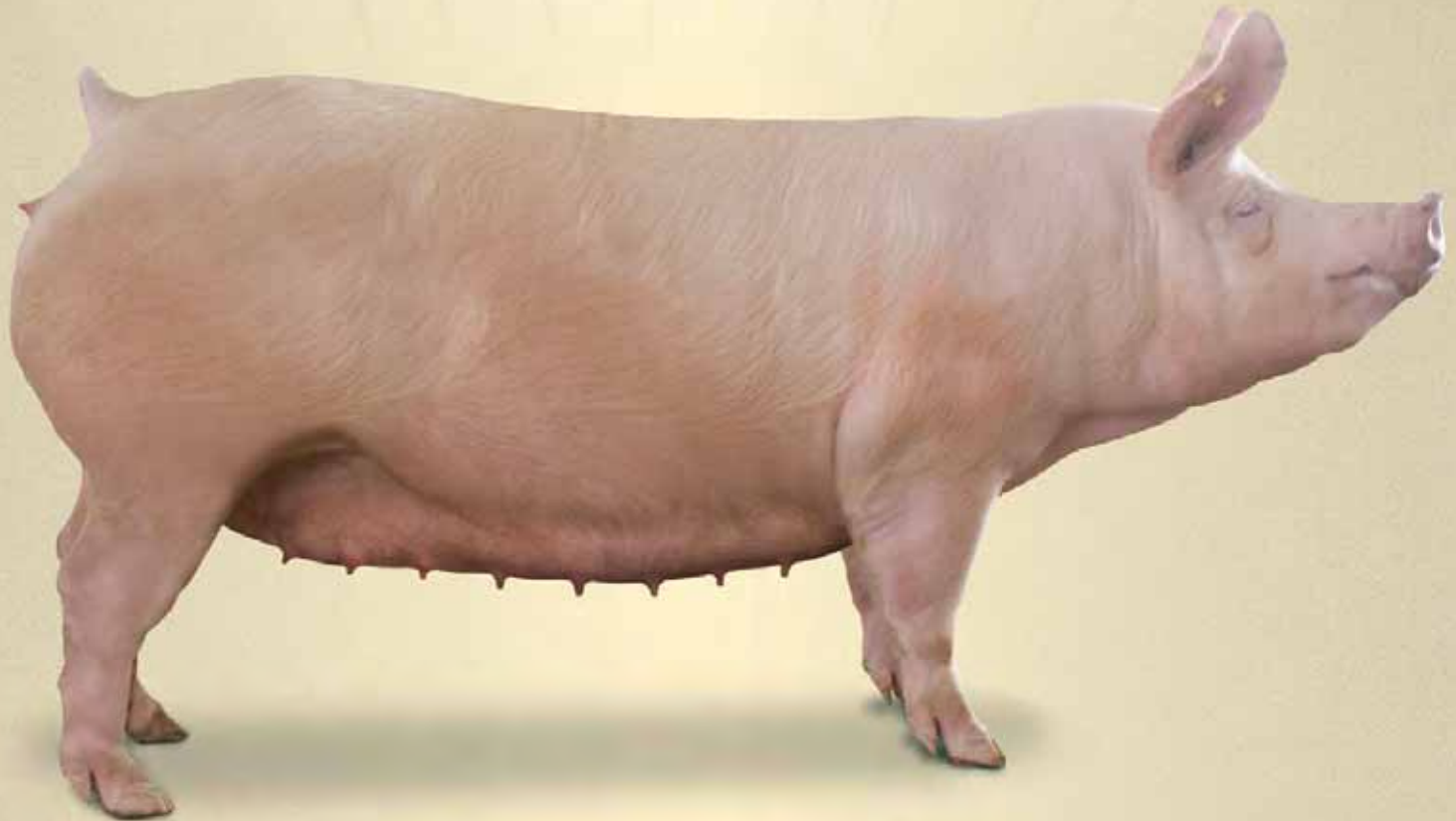
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For more information, visit [www.nuhn.ca/lagoon-crawler.html](http://www.nuhn.ca/lagoon-crawler.html).

### A costly mistake leads to recall

Neatly 70,000 pounds of cured pork products were recalled from Westlake Foods in Santa Ana, California in August because of undeclared allergens. The recalled products allegedly contained wheat and soy, and were not listed on the ingredient labels.

### Full genome sequence of 70 TOPIGS pigs

Researchers from the Animal Breeding and Genomics Group at Wageningen University and TOPIGS recently sequenced the full genome of 70 TOPIGS pigs. As a result of the sequencing more than 10 million new SNPs have been identified. The information from this sequencing increases the range of possibilities TOPIGS has to improve and speed up genetic progress within its lines. Having more precise information about the effect of genes and where they are located improves the accuracy of breeding and also makes it possible to breed for new traits.

An international consortium of researchers and sponsors from the breeding industry, including TOPIGS, recently published the complete pig genome sequence in the scientific journal Nature. This information provides not only the basis for the genomic selection tools but also for analyses of the TOPIGS pigs' sequences.

These data also provide new insights into areas of the

genome that were preferably maintained during pig domestication and breeding. Researchers can even distinguish between older and more recent selection pressure. This research should finally lead to breeding with animals selected using genomic tools.

### Hypor names new sales rep



Hypor, a global leader in swine genetics, has named Denni VanDasselaar their new sales representative for Alberta and B.C. Denni resides in Calgary and will be in charge of providing technical service and sales support to Hypor customers in the region.

"Denni brings with him a real passion and enthusiasm for the pork business, continuous learning and customer satisfaction through strong on-farm performance and professional service," said Chris Tokaruk, sales manager for Hypor Canada.

Denni can be reached at 403-304-9502 or [denni.vandasselaar@hendrix-genetics.com](mailto:denni.vandasselaar@hendrix-genetics.com).

### Widespread use of sow stalls reported in EU

Britain's National Pig Association announced in August that half of the European Union had failed to phase out sow stalls – seven months after the deadline had passed. The phase-out was announced for the EU in 2011 and gave producers until January 1, 2013 to comply with the group housing requirement. According to reports, only Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, and the UK have made the transition. The UK banned the stalls years

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

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ago, and the associated higher costs of production were difficult to contend with when retailers could import from countries in the EU with lower production costs.

## PED continues to spread, baffles researchers

Since appearing last spring, PED (Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea) has continued to spread. Originally discovered in Indiana, Iowa, Illinois and Colorado, swine samples have also tested positive in Arkansas, Colorado Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin, according to the American Association of Swine Veterinarians.

According to some estimates, more than 1.3 million hogs

have died because of the virus. Though the mortality rate is high – 80-100 per cent for piglets – it poses to danger to humans, and doesn't affect pork products. Trying to determine how the virus came to the United States is an ongoing challenge as it had previously only been seen in Asia and Europe. There is some evidence to indicate the virus might be spread through the air in the U.S., which is concerning.

PED has not surfaced in Canada, and the industry is working very hard to maintain rigorous biosecurity protocols. Transportation of pigs is seen as one of the major threats, which means it's of critical importance that trucks be sanitized according to best practice guidelines each and every time they arrive and leave a destination point.

To learn how to properly disinfect transportation equipment, visit [www.swinehealth.ca/documents/Live%20Hog%20Transport%20Vehicle%20WashDisinfectDry%20Protocols.pdf](http://www.swinehealth.ca/documents/Live%20Hog%20Transport%20Vehicle%20WashDisinfectDry%20Protocols.pdf).

## Alberta grants available to go green

The Alberta government has made grant money available to qualifying farms in an effort to help them become more energy efficient. A number of qualifying actions are part of the grant, including making the switch from traditional lighting to more efficient LED lighting options.

The grant program aims to alleviate some of the cost of investments that will improve energy efficiency on Alberta farms, while also allowing for increased industry competitiveness, improved environmental stewardship, and improved energy management. Backed by Growing Forward, a government agricultural fund, eligible farms – those with a minimum of \$10,000 farm commodity or livestock production income – the grant program encourages applications with a variety of projects in mind, including but not limited to:

1. Construction projects that install high-efficiency

equipment from the Program's Funding List

2. Retrofit projects that improve the farm's energy usage per unit of production
3. Installation of submeters to monitor on-farm electricity and/or natural gas usage

Lumican – an LED lighting supplier – is offering to help with the grant application process, although producers can also apply independently. For more information, visit [lumican.com](http://lumican.com) or [growingforward.alberta.ca](http://growingforward.alberta.ca) and click on the On-Farm Energy Management category under the program listing.

## Maple Leaf Foods sells rendering business

In late August, Maple Leaf Foods released the details of an agreement in which it would sell a rendering and biodiesel business located in Rothsay. The deal is valued at \$645 million and is expected to close by year-end. Maple Leaf Foods attributed sale to a

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decision to focus on growth in the consumer packaged foods market. Shares rose in response to the announcement.

## mCOOL woes continue

The request for a preliminary injunction on the revised mCOOL rules were denied in a District of Columbia courtroom because it didn't meet the criteria needed, according to the decision.

The efforts to stop the new rules were the result of a coalition of industry groups, which included entities on both sides of the border. They wanted a decision to block the new labeling rules pending the results of a lawsuit against them. The coalition has filed an appeal to overturn the decision.

## Traceability deadline set

July 1, 2014 has been bandied about as the date the mandatory traceability program will be implemented in Canada. Known as "PigTrace," the program will track movement of pigs and apply to everyone who produces, assembles, slaughters and transports pigs.

"PigTrace is an industry led, live animal traceability initiative designed to ensure protection, prosperity and peace of mind for the Canadian pork industry and its customers," reads the website at [www.pigtrace.ca](http://www.pigtrace.ca)

With the continuing concern of PED, biosecurity has been increasingly in the spotlight. Implementing a robust, manageable and effective traceability system has long been viewed as an

integral step to preserving market access.

## Passion for Pork picking up steam

In partnership with the Alberta Livestock and Meat Agency (ALMA), Alberta Pork created the Passion for Pork consumer awareness campaign to help differentiate Alberta and B.C. pork, establish a brand that reflects the high-quality pork Alberta and B.C. produce and change the fundamental way business is conducted in the pork industry. Since 2012, Passion for Pork has engaged chefs, food bloggers and consumers through restaurant weeks, a new website, social media, videos and more. Phase one of the project saw the construction of the

online platforms as well as a marketing campaign that crossed major stations in radio, print and television, including 23 professional videos that showcased the versatility of pork. The next phase focuses on increasing the cooperation throughout the pork value chain. Passion for Pork will continue to act as a consumer awareness and education campaign, but it is going a step further by working with processors who use Alberta and B.C. pork in their products and retailers who stock Alberta and B.C. pork on their shelves. Learn more at [passionforpork.com](http://passionforpork.com). ■

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## In praise of pushed production and pulled pork

By Kevin Grier



### HyLife to Expand Production

HyLife is executing on a planned expansion to 31,500 head at its slaughter facility in Neepawa. The company finished an expansion to 28,500 in the latter half of last year. Prior to that, it was generally handling about 18,000 - 19,000 head during the previous three years. This current expansion, which should be complete by late September, will add another 3,000

head to bring the plant to 31,500 per week. The La Broquerie-based company is expanding its capacity by investing in an additional carcass cooler.

The company slaughters on two shifts now after their 2012 expansion. They currently slaughter and cut about 3,750 on

the first shift and just under 2,000 on the second. The 2013 expansion is designed to better match up the kill and the cut. The increased production will be directed to their fresh-chilled Japanese program. The added hogs will be a combination of HyLife hogs, as well as purchased hogs.

The expansion at HyLife contrasts with the slaughter situation at Brandon. By my rough estimates, Maple Leaf appears to be killing about 75,000 - 80,000 hogs per week, with an average closer to 76,000 so far this year. That is at least 7,000 head per week less than in the first half of last year. At most this year the plant might have hit around 85,000, while last year in the first half it hit over 90,000. While the Brandon plant is three times the size of Neepawa, the 3,000 head expansion at one is an interesting comparison to the 7,000 head decline at the other.

This is also in contrast to the situation in Red Deer. Last year through August slaughter, I estimated that slaughter in Alberta was likely running about 45,000 head per week. This year I put that number at just 40,000. Removing what the smaller plants do each week leaves just about 30-34,000 head for Olymel. That is not good for a plant that can do at least 10,000 more on a single shift basis.

Meanwhile, through the first half of the year, nearly 80,000 weaners and feeders per week on average have been moving south from the eastern prairies through North Dakota for finishing in the United States. Additionally, during the last couple of months in Manitoba, there have been approximately 5,000 sows that have either been liquidated, or are in the process of being liquidated. That means there are another 2,000 or more head per week out of the potential slaughter mix.

### Canadian Pork Demand is Strong

Demand for pork produced in Canada and North America in general is comprised of two parts. There is export demand for pork and domestic demand for pork. Both comprise critical

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components of the supply-demand equation that equals the price that producers and packers receive for pork.

In Canada, pork demand has been weak for many years, and not only have Canadians been eating less pork, we've been eating less pork at declining real pork price levels. I can't remember the last time I said there was good news on the domestic front in terms of demand for pork, but I am going to say it now. There is good news on the domestic front when it comes to demand for pork!

Canadian pork demand was robust in the first half of 2013. Consumption from January through June increased by an impressive 5 per cent compared to the first six months of 2012, and while consumption was going up, so were pork prices. The Canadian Consumer Price Index for fresh and frozen pork, which is the retail price of pork, increased by two per cent. Additionally, the CPI for retail bacon and ham combined increased by 1 per cent this year compared to last year's first half.

When the pricing and consumption are combined, the overall demand for pork can be estimated. In this regard, pork demand appears to be very strong in 2013 compared to last year, and to most other recent years. Consumers are willing to eat significantly more pork despite the higher price points. That is a positive sign considering how weak domestic demand has been during the last 10 years, which has hurt pricing throughout the chain. The strong six-month performance of 2013 does not mean that the long-term trend has been reversed, but it is encouraging for the industry.

In addition, in the U.S., the George Morris Centre Index of U.S. Meat Demand shows that the first half of 2013 generated an improved demand over 2012 and demonstrated the strongest

demand in several years. Consumption in the U.S. was the highest in the last three years, and while down from 2012, pricing was still near record levels. The improvement in domestic demand is likely the result of very high beef and chicken prices. In fact, U.S. chicken breast prices, although down from record peaks, continue to trend at exceptionally high levels.

Believe it or not, I think the improved demand has actually been increased by pulled pork. That product is everywhere – even Subway has added it to their menus. Not only does it move pork, but it moves pork from the shoulders, an area where the industry needs help.

All of this good news concerning demand leads to higher pork cutout values for packers and higher hog prices for producers.

The buoyant performance of the cutout during the late spring and early summer has been interesting given the absence of the key export market of Russia. The industry is rapidly learning what the U.S. broiler industry learned long ago – Russia cannot be factored into a sustainable marketing plan. Russia went from being the number one export market for U.S. broilers to being just one of many important markets. U.S. broiler marketers found other markets as Russia proved to be an erratic and inconsistent market from year to year. As the Canadian pork industry learns to work around the evolving Russian situation, particularly on hams, the loss of the Russian market becomes less of a burden.

*Kevin Grier is the senior market analyst at the George Morris Centre. He provides industry market reports and analysis, as well as consulting services. You can reach him at [kevin@georgemorris.org](mailto:kevin@georgemorris.org) to comment or to request a free two-month trial of the Canadian Pork Market Review. ■*

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## What's good for the goose better be good for the gander

By Sheri Monk

Recently, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) was reviewing the guidelines for being able to declare whether a meat is an official Product of Canada. Canada's labeling program isn't mandatory – it's entirely voluntary, and that's why you don't see it consistently used, and why we're not facing any trade issues over it.

Nonetheless, in 2011, a change was made to the program that stemmed from an issue in the beef sector. A handful of cattle feeders had bought feeder cattle from the U.S. for finishing in Canada when inventories were dropping. When those finished animals were ready to go to market, the cattle feeders discovered the Canadian packers weren't interested in them. For one thing, all their pre-existing packaging was already marked as being a Product of Canada. Secondly, China imposed its own origin requirements to ensure product they considered American wasn't brought in under Canadian pretenses.

The feeders successfully lobbied the CFIA to change the guidelines. While they had asked for a rule based upon substantial transformation – which means the origin becomes Canadian when the product is substantially transformed



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from cattle to meat – the CFIA granted an interim solution specifically for beef. The new rule for beef only requires that animals reside in Canada for 60 days before slaughter, regardless of where they were born.

At the time of this writing, the comment period was just ending, and I'm uncertain what the CFIA will decide when it comes to our new guidelines for beef and pork, although I suspect I'm not going to be happy with it.

It was a mistake to adjust the rules for a very small and very temporary problem in one sector. Some livestock organizations feel watering down our Product of Canada regulations will

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

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set a positive example for the ongoing mCOOL, but that's an erroneous position to take. The beauty of Canada's system is that it was a voluntary, market-driven program. After all, COOL isn't a problem, but mCOOL is – the 'm' stands for "mandatory".

If we weaken our own guidelines, we have no mechanism by which consumers can

accurately choose to support Canadian producers. Furthermore, consumers are increasingly demonstrating more and more of an appetite for transparent marketing. They want to know more about their food, not less. How are they going to feel when they learn that the trusted Product of Canada stamp was changed as part of a trade dispute?

Earlier this year, the Retail Council of Canada announced that its grocery members – Co-op Atlantic, Canada Safeway, Costco, Federated Co-operatives, Loblaw, Metro, Sobeys, and Walmart Canada – would phase out sow stalls by 2022. The voluntary commitment is worded like this:

"RCC grocery members support the Canadian Pork Council's process to update its Codes of Practice and will work towards sourcing fresh pork products from sows raised in alternative housing practices as defined in the updated Codes by the end of 2022.

The members further agree to dialogue with other stakeholders in the pork supply chain, including the Canadian Pork Council, and through our membership and committee participation with the National Farm Animal Care Council.

Each company will implement this commitment in accordance with their own specific business requirements and in consultation with their vendor partners."

This sounds wonderful – for the retailers. The press release lists the benefits of the commitment:


- Responds to current understanding of pig welfare science and stakeholder input.
- Establishes a clear industry-wide timeline for moving to an alternative solution.
- Provides Canadian pork producers with appropriate time to address the issue given the significant financial investment required.
- Institutes a dialogue with our supply chain partners to encourage broad industry collaboration in support of this commitment.
- Establishes a minimum commitment for fresh pork sourced from North America.

That last benefit is important – it implies that these retailers will apply these new standards to pork produced outside

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of Canada as well. As an industry however, we need more than a vague reference to this issue. We need them to make a commitment to us every bit as firm as the one they made to the public.

It would be a disaster if the Canadian industry went stall-free while the U.S. kept the status quo if retailers were free to backfill their shelves with cheaper American-produced pork. In the West, consumers tend to just assume that the meat being offered is Canadian in origin, yet we know that just isn't always the case, especially with pork. If Canada's retailers believe their market wants stall-free meat, they'd better be prepared to put their money where their mouth is – and that means supporting Canadian producers right now.

Although 2022 seems like it's just around the corner, the reality is that eight years is a very long time in an industry that's been hammered for years. What happens as the Canadian industry starts transitioning to group housing? As an example, let's say that 60 per cent of producers are switched over by 2018. What happens during the next four years before the retailers' deadline passes? What's to stop them from sourcing sow-stalled product in the interim, if it happens to be less expensive? The producers who invest in the transition sooner will need to extract more value to compensate for increased production costs. However, depending on how the transition plays out, there's a very real risk that the producers who invested in the switch before deadline will be forced to take an artificially-low price if there is no market impetus for retailers to pay a premium prior to their own set deadline.

Next issue, we're going to take a close look at Canada's retail scene, the commitment the council made, and the pork that's on grocery shelves right now. I'll be talking with the major retailers one-on-one and asking how they plan to deal with the different codes of practice on either side of the border.

And group housing isn't the only issue. Many Canadians want to support Canadian pork producers, but much of the packaging simply doesn't reveal where it's from. Canada will certainly never pursue mandatory origin labelling, so as an industry, we need to pressure the retailers to promote Canadian pork, and identify it.

And we need consumers to begin actively asking for it, so our retailers feel the pressure from both sides of the food chain. Speak up, and ask your friends and neighbours too as well.

As an industry, we need a strategy for converting to group housing, no matter what the finalized new code says – our buyers have made it clear what they want. For our part, we have to ensure that the value chain is truly going to work together on this, and we'll have to demonstrate leadership. That means doing as much as we can to ensure a level playing field during and after the transition – we simply can't afford to do anything less. ■

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# HOT ISSUES

## Interview with an activist - a rare glimpse at the other side of the issue

**For better or for worse, animal activists will always be part of the agricultural landscape, but can we learn from them**

By Sheri Monk

**In December of 2012, video secretly taken at a Manitoba hog operation was released to the media. It was recorded by an undercover investigator working for Mercy For Animals Canada, who posed as a worker at the facility. While the new code of practice for pigs was already being worked on when the video was released, it catapulted the issue of sow stalls onto the public's radar, and is credited with accelerating retailers' demands for future group housing. Stephane Perrais, the director of operations for Mercy For Animals Canada, agreed to grant Western Hog Journal's Sheri Monk a candid interview about the video, and his take on Canada's pork industry.**

The video begins with eerie, unsettling music in the background, and as the camera pans across the sows in stalls, a female voice begins to narrate.

*"The footage you are about to see was recorded with a hidden camera by a Mercy For Animals Canada investigator."*

The camera then cuts to a piglet being slammed to the concrete floor by a worker, then to a sow with an eye infection. The voice continues, *"It was shot at a Manitoba pig factory farm that supplies pork to WalMart, Superstore, Loblaw, and Metro."*

The video's title, "Crated Cruelty" is splashed across the screen, and then the image of sows in stalls return.

*"Thousands of pregnant pigs are confined to filthy gestation crates so small, they are unable to even turn around or lie down comfortably for their entire lives. Driven mad from stress and boredom, these naturally curious and social animals have nothing to do day after day, hour after hour, but to bite the bars of their cages out of desperation."*

It's only four minutes long, but with seamless edits and high production values, the film packs a punch - which was exactly what it was designed to do. Less than five months after it was released, the Retail Council of Canada announced that some of its major members were voluntarily phasing out the stalls

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*This billboard was placed in Calgary, Winnipeg and Saskatoon by Mercy For Animals Canada. Messaging like this is becoming increasingly common as activism in Canada increases. This one was designed to make people think about the differences between animal species, and why we perceive some as food, and others as pets. Image courtesy of Mercy For Animals Canada.*

by 2022. Those retailers included Co-op Atlantic, Canada Safeway, Costco Wholesale Canada, Federated Co-operatives Limited, Loblaw Companies Limited, Metro Inc., Sobeys Inc., and Walmart Canada.

“The aim of our investigation was not just to reveal certain practices which were absolutely egregious animal cruelty, but also to make people understand that a lot of the practices they witnessed in this footage were actually considered standing operating procedures from the industry,” Perrais said.

The announcement of the 2022 retail phase-out came somewhat as a surprise to the hog industry in Canada. After all, the Retail Council of Canada was actively engaged with the National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC) as one of the stakeholders helping to develop the new pig code of practice. When the draft code was released on June 1 – a little more than a month after the Retail Council made its announcement – it proposed phasing out sow stalls by 2024. Did the undercover video trigger the decision? Perrais is confident it did.

“I think the investigation was a catalyst, and it certainly helped speed up the process,” he said.

As with any visual presentation designed to trigger emotion, it’s just as often the context and background that causes a reaction as much as the actual content, and “Crated

Cruelty” was no exception. Although plenty of the video was genuinely off-putting, much of the video showed current industry standards – perhaps executed poorly – but the public lack the context to know what current standards are, or why they are employed.

“I know the industry has condemned some of these practices, such as pulling a sow by its ears, or kicking a sow or jumping up and down on a sow after it was killed,” said Perrais. “And I think not only was the public shocked by those images, but also shocked to learn that certain things that we demonstrated such as the castration of piglets without anesthetic, or the thumping of a sick piglet against a concrete wall or floor to kill them – these practices are standard in the industry.”

Retailers fear visceral public reactions, and once such a reaction has begun, it can be very difficult for the meat industry to back away from. Animal husbandry is a complicated business, and it’s not easy to explain to the public why castration without anesthetic is performed, or that animal welfare was one of the reasons sow stalls were introduced in the first place.

“I think that’s what really brought it to the forefront is a lot of people were shocked to realize that not only was there an issue pertaining to the extreme confinement of these animals, but also that all these other practices were the industry standard,” Perrais explained.

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### **Retailers were pressured**

Perrais says that in Canada, there aren’t a lot of options open to animal rights organizations like there are in some states south of the border. There, he says, voters can have referendums at election time on any issue and through that mechanism, animal rights agendas have been forwarded, such as banning confinement practices.

“Unfortunately, we do not have that ability in the current Canadian system. The biggest

agents for change were the grocers themselves because of their purchasing power,” he said.

Before and after the investigation, retailers in Canada were approached by Mercy For Animals Canada and asked to stop supporting confinement practices in the hog industry by publicly stating their opposition to it. Several companies in the U.S. had already taken that step, including McDonald’s in 2012.

“We felt that the Canadians were just a step behind, and that they could also make a similar commitment. They refused and so we kept up the pressure,” said Perrais.

Perrais said the retailers would respond by stating their affiliation with the Retail Council of Canada, and the work that was being done to modernize the pig code. Meanwhile, Mercy for Animals kept on them, informing them whenever another big company would come out against the stalls. In Canada, Olymel and Maple Leaf announced their intentions to phase them out, and Perrais feels the campaign gathered even more momentum then.

“We went back to the grocers and said even some of the producers themselves think that systems have to go. I think after a while they did come to the realization that it was not sustainable in the long run to continue hiding behind the Retail Council,” he explained.

**Will the new code be enough?**

When Perrais was interviewed, the draft code hadn’t yet been released, but he was confident it would include a phase-out of the stalls. However, he was adamant that even if the new code does discontinue use of sow stalls, it wouldn’t be enough to protect the animals because at the end of the day, producers are not bound by law to follow it.

“Some of the footage that we documented, if it was done to a cat or a dog, it would be considered animal cruelty. Castrating your pet in the backyard or cutting its tail off without anesthetic or just deciding to thump it against the wall because it was sick, those would be animal cruelty charges if it was a domestic animal. But because they are farm animals and they have absolutely no legal protection whatsoever in Canada, anything can be done to them during the course of their life,” said Perrais. “As long as they are not mandated and not enforced, and there are no penalties attached to it whether they are financial penalties or jail time, no, it’s not really enforceable because then you can basically do what you want.”

While Canada’s codes of practice aren’t enforceable by law, they can be used as the standards used to benchmark appropriate care in cases where provincial entities may be investigating animal neglect.

“There are only two federal laws that pertain to farm animals. One of them is called the Meat Inspection Act and deals with the slaughter process, but it mostly deals with the design and all the issues pertaining to the slaughter process and the other one deals with the transportation of farm animals. The only

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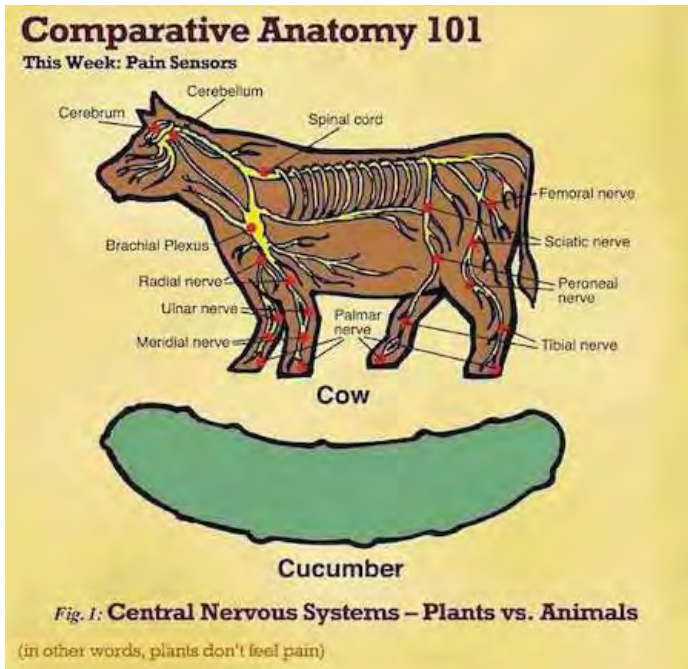
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Another Facebook meme, this one to promote veganism because it doesn't cause pain. Image courtesy of Mercy For Animals Canada.

time the animals are subject to federal law is during their transport to slaughter and during the slaughter process, and both of those laws are extremely weak," he said.

**An uncertain future with or without stalls**

Even without the added economic burden of having to invest in new group housing infrastructure, pork producers in Canada have been struggling. An industry-wide exodus continues and smaller producers throw in the towel out of desperation and consolidation of the business continues. Many

people fear the sow stall phase-out will become the final nail in the coffin for struggling producers – many of which are family farms. But Perrais is not buying that story because he says the pork industry's infrastructure is aging after an expansion boom in the '90s, and current facilities are nearing the end of their lifespan.

"If you look at our footage closely, you'll notice that a lot of the gestation crates that we filmed were all rusted. There was filth everywhere. The walls, the floor – everything was covered with filth. I can understand that people will hang onto certain systems, but the need to convert to group housing is something that they will have to absorb sometime in the next decade, and we don't consider these new or unexpected costs," Perrais said.

Perrais attributes much of today's economic strife in the business to the economies of scale that have become prevalent throughout agriculture.

"What I would say to the small family farms, and what I would say to you who advocates for them, is that we haven't started this demise. It was started many years ago when factory farms were started and agricultural groups such as Maple Leaf and Cargill and all these other ones decided to integrate a lot of their operations. We are saying that the practices that they decided to undertake are completely abusive and extremely cruel, and we are focusing on them because 95-99 per cent of the food (from animals) that's produced in Canada is raised in factory farms."

He also says the model of constantly trying to decrease pricing at the retail level has changed the landscape.

"They can moan and be grumpy about animal activists, but ultimately, they should really realize that the problem lies with these big, big corporations that have slowly but surely

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

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## Animal rights movement lexicon

What's the difference between veganism and vegetarianism? The following is a list and explanation of terms commonly used in the animal liberation movement.

**Anthropomorphism:** The assignment of human characteristics and emotions to non-human creatures or objects.

**Carnivore:** An animal species that exclusively consumes meat.

**Cruelty-free:** Used initially as a term to describe products that had not been tested on animals, it has started to be loosely applied to meat and animal products. It is not a regulated term, so individual companies may use it to market confinement-free meat, or free range eggs, for example. Animal rights advocates, as a general rule, only agree a product is cruelty-free if animals were not used at all in its production.

(Continued on Page 26)

put pressure on price. They are constantly putting pressure on prices, but you also then have to ask the consumer and citizen if they want to live in a civilized and compassionate society, and what price are they willing to pay for it.”

## Philosophical differences

The bottom line is that Mercy For Animals Canada and other animal activist groups don't just want an end to sow stalls – they want an end to meat, period. In fact, they advocate for veganism, which is an entirely plant-based diet, free of any animal products, including dairy and eggs. Yet, despite their complete lack of participation in animal husbandry as a consumer, animal rights organizations do influence policy.

According the NFACC, Canada is unique in its development of codes of practice, and the process and the subsequent standards assist in stabilizing livestock production against extremist pressure.

(See page 38.)

“It almost seems that as we've learned more and more about these animals, we've decided to confine them more and more. And today I think we've come to a point where it's no longer tenable to have such a position with all the knowledge about the sentience and the awareness these animals have. We cannot just view them like we used to in the 16th or 17th century as robots that are devoid of any emotions, but that they are actually living, breathing and feeling creatures,” he said.

For people like Perrais, the animal rights movement is a life-long struggle against injustice and cruelty. For farmers, it's viewed as one of the biggest challenges in the industry, and the future of their communities. What happens in the

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**“The animals of the world exist for their own reasons. They were not made for humans any more than black people were made for white, or women created for men.”**

**Alice Walker**

Many animal rights activists believe that every living creature should be afforded personhood – the same legal status and protection as human beings. The term “speciesism” is used to describe the act of discriminating against species other than human beings, similar to how sexism and racism are used.

future will largely depend on the public, and how the public perceives livestock production. The battle for the hearts and stomachs of consumers won't be fought in the boardroom, or even in the pages of an industry magazine like this one. It's a war that's already hit the streets, and it's hard to imagine a truce.

"Through the ad campaign that we launched, we're trying to make people realize that these animals are true living beings that have a whole range of emotions, that they're as conscious and aware as we are, and just because we can't communicate with them in a language, it doesn't mean that we shouldn't treat them with utmost respect," Perrais said.

Many animal activists use the term 'speciesism' to describe the inequality of how animals are treated. The term is applied in the same way that racism and sexism are used, and is based upon the notion that every species – not just humans – are entitled to personhood.

It's difficult to imagine a middle ground where meat producers and vegans could break bread together, but the livestock industry is increasingly concerning itself with animal welfare issues brought forward by activist groups. In 2011, precedent was set when the United Egg Producers (EUP) of the U.S. announced they had made a deal with the Humane Society of the United States to seek a federal law requiring larger cages and better conditions for all laying hens in the country. UEP was lambasted by other livestock producers for making a deal with the devil, and HSUS was viewed by many activists as traitors for doing the same.

While there haven't been as many animal rights undercover investigations in Canada as there have been in the U.S., there's little doubt there will be more.

"Nothing is off limits as far as we're concerned. Our first investigation just happened to be in a pig breeding facility, but all of the animal production industry is on our radar, absolutely," Perrais said.

In some ways, the extremism of the animal rights movement has in part insulated producers. Very public protests



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Because of the confinement issues, the pork industry has been a frequent target, such as in this Facebook meme. Image courtesy of Mercy For Animals Canada.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26

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## Animal rights movement lexicon **CONTINUED**

**Farm animal sanctuary:** Blanket term for organizations that offer sanctuary to farm animals, offering long-term care for rescued food-animals. Often these farms offer public tours, as well as volunteer opportunities, to showcase to the suffering, (real or perceived) to which they believe livestock are subjected.

**Flexitarian:** An individual whose staple diet is vegetarian in nature, but does not totally abstain from meat consumption.

**Herbivore:** The term used to describe animal species that do not consume meat, such as cattle and deer.

**Omnivore:** Term used for people or animals that consume all natures of food, animal or plant. Humans are considered biologically omnivorous.

**Pescetarian:** People who eat fish and other seafood, but decline to eat meat from land animals. May or may not consume dairy and eggs.

**Pollotarian:** Those who eat chicken and other poultry, but refrain from consuming meat from other animals.

**Pollo-pescetarians:** Consumers who eat fish and poultry, but do not consume red meat, or meat from other animals.

**Raw vegan:** A diet that excludes the consumption of meat and animal products, as well as eliminating foods cooked at a temperature higher than 48C. Raw veganism is not always based on animal rights alone, but health, spirituality and environmental concerns can play a role in the diet.

**Sentient:** A description for a life form that is self aware, a conclusion often reached through anthropomorphism.

**Speciesism:** A philosophy often prescribed to by animal rights advocates in which all species are afforded the same rights of personhood as human beings are. The word was formed as being similar to racism and sexism.

**Vegan:** An individual who abstains from all products derived from animals, including fish and insects such honeybees.

**Vegetarian:** Similar to a vegan, however may not adhere to as strict a regimen when it comes to animal products such as leather and honey.

by organizations such as PETA are sometimes so outrageous that they confuse and alienate the moderate middle. Meat consumers often aren't sure of the difference between a vegetarian or a vegan, and why some vegetarians will eat some animal products and not others. It's a question that even perplexes Perrais, and he is an avid vegan.

"If you look back at the history of the words 'veganism' and 'vegetarianism,' they were one and the same, but over the years I think the word vegetarian sort-of got hijacked by people who were not eating meat, but were eating fish and dairy products," he explained. "Honestly, I really don't understand why people would continue to eat fish and dairy and eggs. I think it's because in a lot of the studies that have been done, fish are considered as being a completely different type of animal, and it's much more difficult for us to relate to them."

Like other animal rights groups, Mercy For Animals Canada tries to engage the public with advertising to make them reconsider their choice to eat animals. But given the chance, would they eliminate the choice entirely?

"Making meat illegal? That's the first time I've heard the question. Ultimately, we would like to see meat consumption decline tremendously, but whether making meat illegal is the way forward... I'm not really sure that's the best avenue," said Perrais, who emphasized that if people switch to veganism, they're more likely to stick with it if they are doing it for ethical reasons.

"Making it illegal would be great, but I don't see that happening, and I don't know if that ultimately would result in the right effect because it's almost like Big Brother showing up and telling them what to do. But if you educate the people, then the decision becomes theirs, and that's what we're trying to do."

Like Perrais, most livestock producers are very heavily invested in animal welfare issues. The majority of farmers abide by best practice guidelines and take pride in the condition of their animals. While animal rights campaigns and secret videos can be very damaging, they do serve to reinforce how critical it is that industry continually strive to do the best job they can – not to satisfy the protestors, but to keep the confidence of the consumers. ■

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# Can livestock reverse climate change?

It's not often that more domestic grazing animals - not less - are called for as part of the solution to climate change. ALMA brought Dr. Allan Savory to Calgary to talk to producers about his groundbreaking research.

By Sheri Monk



Savory addresses the packed theatre in Calgary full of people who have come to learn about how producers might be able to improve the environment.

It's not something you hear everyday – that our planet would be healthier with more cattle. But that's exactly the message Allan Savory is desperately trying to give the world, and he came through loud and clear in Calgary recently. ALMA (Alberta Livestock and Meat Agency) brought Savory to Canada for a speaking engagement on July 17, and the large audience was riveted. While Savory may have been focused on cattle, his stance is a positive development for all livestock sectors simply because for the first time in recent history, the public is hearing that eating meat is good for the planet.

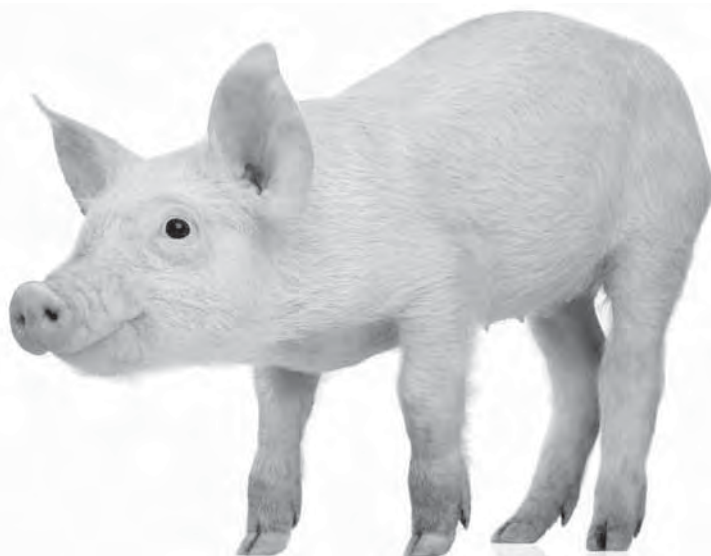
Though he's been studying the relationship between grassland health and grazing for decades, his work hadn't received widespread recognition until a recent TED Talk. For those who haven't caught on to the talks, TED stands for technology, entertainment

and design, and the talks are part of a global set of conferences owned by the non-profit Sapling Foundation. Their slogan is "ideas worth spreading" and the talks are available for free online. Speakers are given 18 minutes to present their ideas in the most captivating way they can. Mr. Savory gave his TED Talk in March of this year, and it's garnered an unusual amount of attention – especially for a global audience largely uninterested in agriculture. Even the mainstream media has picked up on it, from daily newspapers, to Bill Maher and National Geographic, and his talk has been viewed by nearly two million people to date.

"There are many reasons why beef is vilified, and there are strong movements to get people not to eat beef or meat. Some people actually took me to a vegan restaurant the other day in Boulder and I said to them, 'Please, don't ever



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do that again! It was terrible, that artificial meat. We're even going to the extent of manufacturing artificial meat these days, and I am not exaggerating, it was ghastly," said Savory to the full house at the BMO Centre.

A Zimbabwean biologist, farmer, soldier, exile, environmentalist, and politician, Savory is known as the father of holistic management, and began studying grasslands health in 1955. Originally, he subscribed to the belief that still dominates today – the theory that too many animals and overgrazing leads to land and vegetation degradation. But Savory is swimming against the current, and he fervently believes that intensive, perfectly-timed grazing may in fact be the solution.

The concept is simple. Most grasslands around the world evolved in harmony with large herbivores in massive herds that grazed the vegetation, and recycled that vegetation back into the soils with their manure. The hooves of these animals worked the surface of the land, thus allowing moisture and nutrients to penetrate the earth. The herds of animals were never in one place for every long for a couple of reasons – they don't like grazing where they've been eliminating their waste, and because of pressure from predators. But most wild herds of roaming herbivores are gone, and so are most of their predators. Grasslands on arable land have been broken to plant crops, and grasslands that remain intact are often home to broken ecosystems. In response, many governments have rushed in to save the land by ushering out the livestock. Savory says resting the land is the wrong response, and ultimately leaves the fragmented grasslands worse off.

Instead, he says, we need to manage the land holistically, and use livestock as a tool to replicate as best we can the natural conditions of the grasslands.

Fortunately, he doesn't suggest introducing lions and wolves to prey on the cattle to keep them moving – that's up to producers who are trained in holistic management.

Savory's methods have the potential to dramatically increase the carrying capacity of current pasture, and his for-profit institute does offer training sessions for interested producers. But perhaps most importantly, the message he is imparting may change the public's perception of beef production – at least at the cow-calf level. With soil erosion in crop production becoming a larger problem, livestock production could be one way to mitigate that problem – perhaps by grazing cattle on pasture co-seeded with grain.

"Even after we develop alternatives to fossil fuels, climate change will continue because of agriculture. With that in mind you see that the most urgent problem in the globally is to start looking at agriculture seriously," he said. "Agriculture is going to have to feed 10 billion people. And at the same time

we are going to have to deal with its role in climate change."

Currently, Savory's institute is buying and rehabilitating land into productive grasslands, offering a return to investors. There are Savory Institute hubs all around the world, but none yet exist in Canada, and he's looking for interested land owners. More information can be found at [www.savoryinstitute.com](http://www.savoryinstitute.com).

The overall message is this – more cattle will produce healthier grasslands, and healthier grasslands can store an incredible amount of carbon, thus reversing climate change while feeding the world. One thing is clear – Savory is singing a song producers have long yearned to hear. But will the public listen – and most importantly – is his theory correct? He thinks so.

"I can think of almost nothing that offers more hope for our planet, for your children, and their children and for all of humanity." ■

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# Draft pig code attracts record comment volume

## More people commented on the draft pig code than all other codes combined

By Sheri Monk

There was unprecedented interest in the draft code of practice for pigs. In fact, the sheer number of comment submissions dwarfs those received from any other in code the National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC) has dealt with.

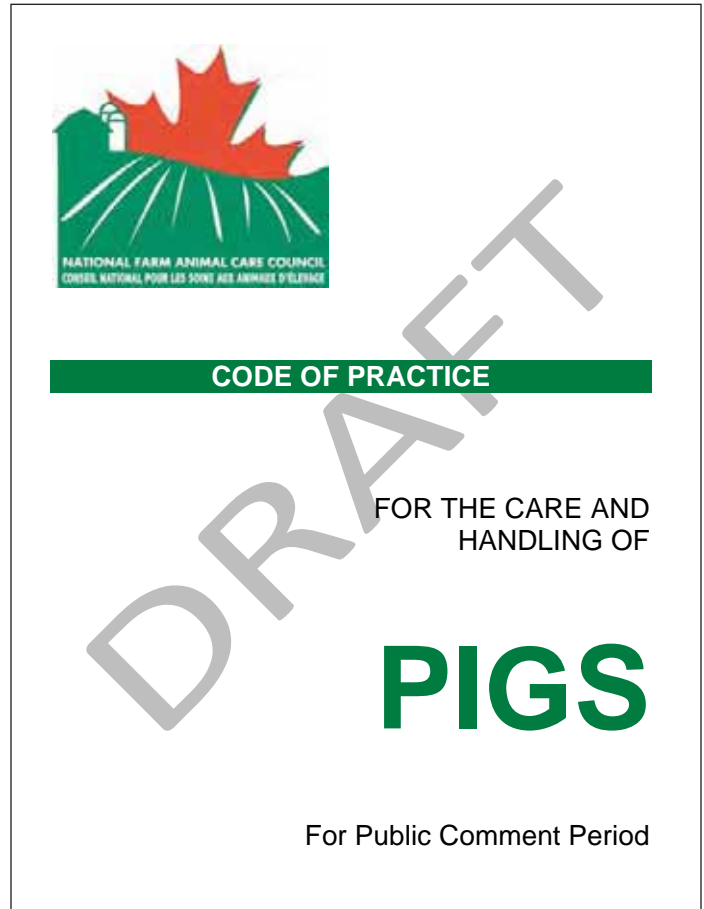
“The equine code had just under 600 and that is the next highest. Beef had 482 comments. The pig code draft had over 4,700 submissions. We had more submissions for the pig code than all the other codes that have gone through the public comment period combined,” said Jackie Wepruk, general manager of NFACC.

Released June 1, the highly anticipated draft Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pigs proposes phasing out sow stalls by 2024. Although there were several changes in the code, the issue of sow crates and group housing has been the most contentious because it represents a costly shift in production. Undoubtedly, many of the nearly 5,000 comments addressed the issue, and now all of those comments will have to be absorbed before the code is made final.

“Now the hard work of taking the comments into consideration begins. The sheer volume of submissions and the breadth of perspectives that came in through the public comment period were quite substantial. The code development committee has a pretty challenging task ahead of them, but they are committed to ensuring that they take the time to go through the range of views that were presented, and give them fair consideration to keep working toward a finalized code,” Wepruk said.

While the issue of sow stalls may have received the most attention, the draft included other significant changes pertaining to space allowances, castration and environmental enrichment.

“Certainly the public profile of the pig code has influenced the level of engagement on this code. Submissions came



from across Canada, the United States, and around the world. We had producers, processors, veterinarians, animal welfare advocates, the general public and many others comment,” she said.

Pork producers have been on the edge of their seats through the development of this code. While every producer wants to do the best for their animals, making significant infrastructure changes to accommodate group housing is a difficult prospect in a struggling industry. Knowing how keen an interest animal rights advocates have taken in sow stalls, producers are worried that comments coming from that sector may unduly influence the development of the final code. However, Wepruk says numbers aren't the only thing that matters when it comes to reading the feedback.

“What's really important to the code development committee is the constructiveness of the comments,” said Wepruk.



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In other words, if 500 people write to say ‘Meat is murder,’ those comments are not going to affect the finalized code.

“This was not an avenue for further stirring the debate. This is an avenue for real constructive input on a Canadian code of practice,” she added.

Even among producers, there is often some confusion about how the code is developed, and how the NFACC operates.

“The National Farm Animal Care Council is a partnership of very diverse stakeholders that work together to promote farm animal welfare and develop processes by which we can address farm animal welfare issues,” said Wepruk. “A core component of our membership includes virtually every national commodity association in Canada including the Canadian Pork Council, Canadian Meat Council, Chicken Farmers of Canada and the Canadian Cattlemen’s Association.”

Of course, other stakeholders include animal welfare advocates, government representatives and enforcement, but ultimately the mandate of the NFACC is to advance farm animal welfare in partnership with farmers and industry. On its website, the organization states that, ‘NFACC is the only organization in the world that brings together animal welfare groups, enforcement, government and farmers under a collective decision-making model for advancing farm animal welfare.’



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Wepruk believes this allows Canadian producers to be in an enviable position in comparison to other countries where farm animal welfare issues have become a very public runaway train.

“That is something we can be really proud of in Canada. We do have that kind of engagement between different groups and we have that capacity to work through our differences. That is very different from other countries where farm animal welfare has become a very divisive and a contentious issue. If we can avoid that kind of scenario, it’s a much more cost effective approach when we can arrive at a consensus rather than deal with these issues in a public forum.”

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**“Submissions came from across Canada, the United States, and around the world. We had producers, processors, veterinarians, animal welfare advocates, the general public and many others comment.” – Jackie Wepruk, NFACC**

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It can be stressful for producers who understand just how much is at stake, but Wepruk says it’s a meaningful endeavor.

“This is a means by which industry can maintain their hand on the steering wheel of these issues, and talk about what is important to them with groups that may have a different focus,” she said, adding the process is about building understanding and relationships. “It is far more effective than having these conversations in a public forum. We have some constructive and difficult conversations, and we build understanding that ultimately leads to an environment where farmers can address consumer concerns, as well as maintain their viability and sustainability.”

The federal government provides the funding for the development of the Canadian codes of practice, and the pig code is scheduled to become final by the end of the year. However, because of the number of comments, the code development committee may require an extension. The committee will be meeting this fall, and will review the comments. After considering the comments from the draft code, the committee will release the final code.

“Each of the public comment periods for each code has been integral to further improving the codes of practice for sure,” said Wepruk. “It may require more time, but in the end we will have a code that the industry can be really proud of. This should contribute to a longer-term vision that supports animal welfare, but does that through a financially stable and competitive hog industry.” ■