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Cover Photo

The World Pork Expo isn't just about business – it's become a popular event for the whole family. See page 55 for more photos.



Pig Barn Tour

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Clarification

On page 18 of the spring 2013 edition of Western Hog Journal, it was reported that the Calgary Co-operative Association had elected to phase out close confinement systems for pork and eggs within the next five years. However, this was in fact an amended resolution put forward and passed at the AGM, which the board may or may not ratify. At the time of this writing, no ratification had been made.



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Message from the editor

This is my very first issue as editor, and I'm super nervous about it. I'm learning a lot and I've really enjoyed working on this issue, which covers a lot of important topics. There are some aspects of this business that confuse me, many which intrigue me, and others that upset me, such as the low prices in the West forcing many to exit the industry. I know that in a year from now, or longer, the views and opinions I hold now will change and morph as my understanding of this industry matures and deepens.

This first issue under my watch is a reflection of what this industry looks like to a newcomer, and you'll notice a few new elements. Kevin Grier of the George Morris Centre will be writing a column for us every issue. Many readers will already be familiar with his no-holds-barred approach to industry analysis. I've had the pleasure of interviewing Kevin many times over the years, and we've become not just colleagues, but friends. Sometimes, our opinions and philosophies diverge, but that doesn't matter. What matters is that we care deeply for the future of agriculture in Canada. As writers, our job is to stimulate discussion, to ask questions and ensure readers have not only raw data, but the context and background to make that data useful.

You'll also notice our new Wine and Swine Me feature. It's so easy to get caught up in topics like cost of gain, feed efficiency and grading issues that we can sometimes lose sight of what we're actually producing – an experience. In Canada, our consumers enjoy a world-class product and those that have the time to prepare a gourmet meal are very invested in the process. In our hurried, modern lifestyle, preparing meals has become a luxurious hobby, and we're going to explore the latest consumer trends right here in Western Hog Journal.

You might also notice that we're dealing with some of the more hot button issues in a different way. In this edition, we're taking a look at ractopamine, the draft of the just-released code of practice and the gestation stall issue.

There are many unsettling developments in the business right now, and there isn't a lot on the horizon to suggest we're going to recover quickly. It's heartbreaking to hear of the producers we've lost. We can either look the other way and hope we won't be caught too, or we can honour their contribution, and help grieve their loss. At Western Hog Journal, we're not going to avert our eyes – we're going to meet everything head-on – even the tough stuff.

If you have any suggestions, comments or ideas, please email me at sherimonk@gmail.com. I'm asking that all industry organizations and businesses also add me to their press release lists, to ensure I'm not missing out on industry news and developments.

As producers or even just as writers, all each of us can do is our very best – and that's what I've done for my maiden issue as editor of Western Hog Journal. ■

S Monk.

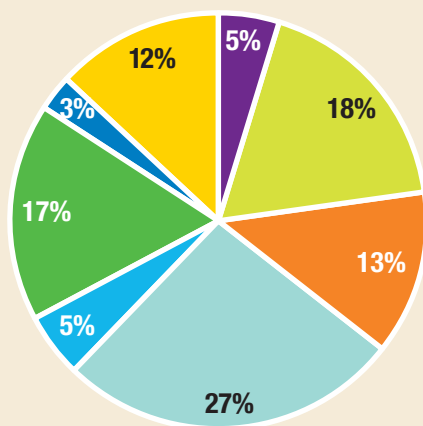
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- Mexico
- Japan
- China/Hong Kong
- U.S.
- South Korea
- Russia
- Australia
- Others

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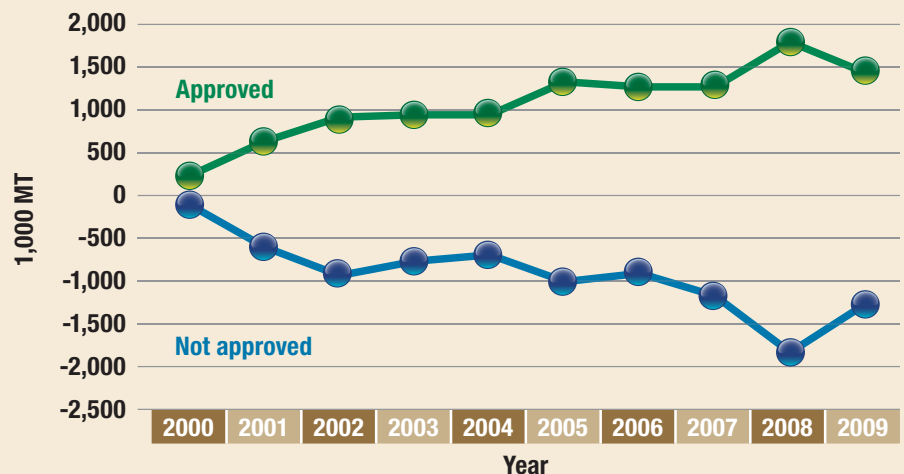
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Net pork exports related to Paylean approval



As shown above, those countries that have approved ractopamine have seen a sharp increase in exportable volumes of meat.¹



\$3/hog

Paylean adds an estimated value of **\$3 or more per hog** in terms of live production.²



+3 kg

Paylean adds up to **3 kg of lean pork per pig**.¹

¹ Raymond, R., Sutton, A., Fritz, R. and Stuart, B. 2011. Ractopamine Hydrochloride (Paylean® and Optaflexx®) in Pig and Cattle Feed. An Expert Review of the Global Benefits and Human Safety. Elanco Animal Health. Data on file.

² Grier, K. 2013. Ramifications and Consequences of the Ractopamine Protocols on the Canadian Pork Industry. George Morris Centre, Canada. Accessed 4/11/13. Available at <<http://www.georgemorris.org/publications/file.aspx?id=48fb7995-b680-43f0-9975-753858fc02b5>>.

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News and Views from Far and Near

Smithfield goes to China?

U.S. pork giant Smithfield Foods has made a controversial deal to sell the company to China's Shuanghui International Holdings. The deal is estimated to be worth \$7.1 billion, but must first be approved by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States.

There is concern among producers and the public in the U.S. that the deal would cause 26 per cent of U.S. pork processing and 15 per cent of domestic hog production to be owned by Chinese interests. Food security and public and animal health concerns have been raised, but proponents of the sale dismiss the fears as unfounded because

all that would change is ownership. Geographically, the production and all associated infrastructure would remain in the U.S.

New Ontario Pork Program to provide 20,000 meals to food banks

In partnership with Ontario Pork, the Ontario Association of Food Banks recently announced it is launching a new program this summer – the Ontario Pork Program. Through the direct donation of ground pork to food banks, the initiative could benefit up to 412,000 adults and children living with hunger in Ontario.

The generous donation made by Ontario Pork will make a tremendous impact in ensuring children and adults living with chronic hunger have access to healthy protein, the most needed item in food banks. Recipients will also be provided with recipes and information on fresh ground pork.

“Ultimately, farming is about providing food for people. This donation by Ontario's pork farmers strengthens that

commitment to families who are in need,” says Ontario Pork Chair, Amy Cronin. “As farmers, we work hard to produce safe, quality pork and we are pleased to be involved in such a worthy cause.”

The Ontario Pork Program will launch its pilot program in Southern Ontario this June, and hopefully expand throughout the entire province this fall. This program was made possible through generous financial contributions from Ontario Pork, Elanco, Zoetis, Shur Gain, and Mabel Honor Farm – The Fraser Family.

CPC reacts to Retail Council of Canada's sow housing stance

The Canadian Pork Council views the commitment made by the Retail Council of Canada (RCC) on Sow Housing as an opportunity for productive dialogue between farmers and retailers.

“As a farmer, my first priority is the care and welfare of the animals. I am proud that my farm helps the Canadian pork industry provide consumers a healthy and safe food supply,”

says CPC chair Jean-Guy Vincent. “Any change on farm must be done in a way that protects the welfare of the animals and keeps Canadian farms strong.”

Significant work has been undertaken by the industry in animal care through research, the Animal Care Assessment program, and involvement in the National Farm Animal Care Council review of the Code of practice for pigs.

At the same time, the Canadian Pork Council understands that stakeholder expectations are changing.

The RCC announcement recognizes that the conversion of sow housing is a significant investment which will require support from other stakeholder groups. Not only will substantial capital investments be needed to physically change barns but also considerable human resource efforts to choose the right system and train stockpeople to a new way of handling animals.

The CPC looks forward to meeting with RCC to hear its proposals on how changes to sow housing can be managed and how the value chain and others can share in the investment.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

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Smiling new face at Prairie Swine Centre

Lee Whittington, president of Prairie Swine Centre, recently announced the recruitment of Helen Thoday to their management team as manager of contract research services.



“Recruiting talented people with knowledge of and a passion for the pig industry is the foundation for making progress at Prairie Swine Centre. Helen has the right

combination of technical training, practical pork production and business experience that will allow her to bring value to our research clients,” said Whittington.

In her new capacity as manager of contract research, Helen will be responsible for liaising with industry partners to assist in their confidential research needs. With qualifications in agriculture and animal science, as well as experience in communication and international agriculture, Helen brings a variety of skills to this position.

Helen will also be involved in technology transfer for specific research projects and developing the Centre’s social media. Helen’s previous roles with PIC UK and as a Knowledge Transfer Manager for BPEX (British Pig Executive) have given her a wealth of experience in communication and grasping the most important aspects of research conclusions relevant to farmers. Although Helen has worked in the UK pig industry, she is not a stranger to pig production in other countries.

Workshop will focus on production efficiency

This year’s Red Deer Swine Technology Workshop will have a core focus on maximising the efficiency of feed use. One of the keynote speakers will be Dr. Steve Dritz from Kansas State University, who will be giving two presentations, “Optimizing Feed Efficiency in the Grow-Finish Herd” and “The Top 5 Research Projects Aimed at Reducing Feed Costs”. Production manager Scott Hyshka will be addressing the topic “Controlling Sow Feed Costs and Body Condition”.

Other topics include “Raising the Bar: Improving Farrowing Rate”, “Are You a Good Stockperson? Animal Care with Accountability” and “Optimum Carcass Weight: Cost -v- Revenue.”

“The workshop continues to bring producers and their staff information about new ideas and techniques, with a broad variety of topics,” says Bernie Peet, the workshop manager. “This year’s program is intended to address the challenge of

high feed costs in addition to focusing on breeding herd efficiency, animal care and optimal market weight.”

The workshop is being held on Wednesday, October 30 at the Sheraton Hotel in Red Deer. Registration costs \$75, with a special “5 for the price of 4” package available for \$300. For further information or to register, contact Bernie Peet at Pork Chain Consulting Ltd. on 403-782-3776 or 403-392-3104 or email bjpeet@telusplanet.net

Third Smithfield plant goes ractopamine-free

On June 1, Smithfield Foods converted a third plant to produce ractopamine-free product. More than 50 per cent of the company’s operations will not use the controversial ingredient as part of its feed.

With Russia joining China and the EU in not allowing use of ractopamine, major pork exporters are expected to follow the same trend, such as Olymel’s Red Deer plant in Alberta.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

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feed efficiency and slow down growth.

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Young Saskatchewan producers informing consumers

People traveling Saskatchewan roads learn about the source of the foods they eat with the recent launch of the Farm Animal Council of Saskatchewan's (FACS) billboard campaign.

"The FACS 'We Care' billboards feature photographs of young producers and their families, as examples of the dedicated care provided by those who raise livestock and poultry in Saskatchewan," said executive director Adele Buettner.

"This year's multi-commodity campaign builds on the consumer awareness created in previous years by presenting the face of modern farming and ranching."

Until November, 28, the 'We Care' billboards will be seen in



and around Regina, Saskatoon and Moose Jaw.

Since the first 'We Care' billboard appeared in 1996, the campaign has evolved into one of FACS' most anticipated, high profile and visible activities. It is the largest multi-commodity CBS Outdoor campaign in Canada.

FACS thanks the 2013 campaign partners: Chicken Farmers of Saskatchewan; Sask Pork; Saskatchewan Bison Association; Saskatchewan

Cattlemen's Association; Saskatchewan Egg Producers; Saskatchewan Horse Federation; SaskMilk; and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture.

The Farm Animal Council of Saskatchewan (FACS) was established in 1992 to serve as the voice of Saskatchewan producers regarding animal welfare. During its long, respected history FACS has become the only member-based, industry-led non-profit organization advancing

responsible animal care for livestock and poultry commodities in Saskatchewan.

Alberta Pork group sow housing project underway

Alberta Pork is currently investigating the cost of converting sow stall housing to group housing, on six farms ranging in size from 300 to

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3,000 sows. The evaluation is being carried out by DGH Engineering and will identify the financial implications of meeting the requirement to move towards group housing over the next 10 years. Further stages of the project will involve establishing a resource centre with information about group housing alternatives, design considerations and management. This will take the form of a web-based library of information and a series of leaflets.

In addition, existing group sow housing systems in Alberta will be used to establish current experience in the province. If you have a group housing system and would be willing to share information about its design and management, please contact Audrey Cameron on 780-469-8982 or email audrey.cameron@albertapork.com

Genesis signs record breaking deal in Russia

In May, Genesis announced it had signed a contract with Russian Company Ariant of the Chelyabinsk Region.

Cited as the largest swine importation between Canada and Russia ever undertaken, eight 747s will deliver 6,300 Genesis breeding animals



The contract is toasted at the contract signing ceremony held in Russia, with federal agriculture minister Gerry Ritz in attendance.

including registered purebred Duroc, Yorkshire and Landrace to Russia.

The signing ceremony and reception was held at the Moscow residence of Canada's Ambassador Sloan with Canada's Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz, Ariant Director Alexander Askenov and Jim Long, president and CEO of Genesis Inc.

"This contract is significant for Canada, there has never been so many purchased at one time from our country," Ritz said.

Ariant currently produces 300,000 head per year. Ariant has a "field-to-fork" strategy with land holdings, grain production, feed mills, meat processing and a network of 350 branded stores, for the Genesis natural pork product.

U of S International Vaccine Centre certified

New vaccine research and development against existing and emerging diseases can now proceed thanks to final certification of the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization's International Vaccine Centre (VIDO-InterVac) at the University of Saskatchewan.

"This project is a collaborative effort among many partners, who all deserve our heartfelt thanks," said VIDO-InterVac Director Andy Potter. "This vision, initiated by our former director, Lorne Babiuk, was

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

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achieved thanks to substantial efforts from a team led by our associate director of operations Cam Ewart, working with our partners at the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.”

Since the facility will study both animal and human pathogens (e.g. bacteria and viruses), it had to meet the safety and operational standards of both the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency for certification. That certification has now been achieved.

“InterVac greatly enhances our capacity to develop new tools, technologies and policies to help prevent disease and save lives,” said U of S Vice-

President Research Karen Chad. “Scientists at InterVac will work at the forefront of efforts to combat human and animal infectious disease threats, creating new knowledge and unparalleled education and training opportunities in this globally important ‘one health’ signature area of U of S research.”

InterVac, a \$144-million expansion to VIDO, is one of the world’s most advanced containment level three vaccine research centres and one of the largest of its kind. It is the product of a funding partnership among the Government of Canada, Canada Foundation for Innovation, Government of Saskatchewan and City of Saskatoon, with support from the U of S.

InterVac provides facilities for scientists to safely conduct research into level three

diseases like tuberculosis, hepatitis C, HIV/AIDS, avian influenza, as well as prion diseases like mad cow disease and chronic wasting disease in elk and deer. Scientists from across Canada and around the world will be able to use the facility.

New regional sales representative joins Schippers Canada



Schippers Canada recently Andy Stahl as their new regional sales representative for southern Alberta, south Saskatchewan and northern Montana. Based out of Lethbridge, Andy will be working closely with Bart Kleinlugtenbeld to continue to serve customers. He can be reached at 403-360-0354 or by e-mail at a.stahl@schippers.ca.

TOPIGS: improved fertility and mothering ability with genomic selection

Applying genomic selection for traits like litter size, mothering abilities and number of still born piglets results in extra genetic progress. TOPIGS’ use of genomic selection for

these traits has resulted in an increased reliability of the breeding values of young male selection candidates in dam lines by 16 per cent to 44 per cent compared with selection without genomic selection.

The use of genomic selection for these fertility and mothering ability traits on young male selection candidates in dam lines results in a higher intensity of selection. The genomic breeding values of boars are predicted before the end of their performance test, before they have produced offspring. In the past, genetic quality could only be differentiated between full sibs for these traits based on the results of their offspring.

The higher reliability and the higher intensity of genomic selection results in substantially faster genetic progress for economically important reproductive traits in TOPIGS dam lines. Additionally, producers benefit from working with sows that are easier to manage and require less labour and feed.

Canadian pork producers meet with NAFTA counterparts

In April, the Canadian Pork Council (CPC) hosted a meeting of North American pork industry leaders, finding several areas of common interest and concern. The meeting took place in Niagara Falls, Canada, where representatives of the CPC met with their counterparts from the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) and the Mexican pork producer organization, the Confederación de Porcicultores Mexicanos.

“It is quite clear to me from our discussions that pork farmers from all across North

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America share the same abiding commitment to providing consumers a nutritious, safe and affordable food supply”, said Jean-Guy Vincent, Chair of the Canadian Pork Council. “Pork producers will continue to adapt to consumer demands but this must occur in partnership with the entire value chain and government.”

The Mexican, U.S. and Canadian producer representatives also discussed several others areas of common interest including the potential for TransPacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations to open up additional export opportunities for the North American pork industry, a desire for the United States to come into compliance with WTO rulings on Country-of-Origin Labelling (COOL) and to thus avoid retaliatory actions by Canada and Mexico, and the need for science-based food safety and animal health regulations that avoid unnecessary disruptions to trade.

The next meeting will be take place in the fall of 2013 and be hosted by the National Pork Producers Council.

Alltech's Gator Giveaway

More than 360 farmers from Western Canada attended Alltech's Gator Giveaway on April 25 to discuss the latest industry challenges and trends and to find out which farmer would go home with a new 625i John Deere Gator. Stahlville Colony near Drumheller, Alberta took home the prize.

The event, which was live-streamed across three locations in Western Canada, is an opportunity for Alltech Western Canada's region to express the importance of customer appreciation, elevate exposure and bring excitement back to the agricultural community. Now in its third year, the Alltech Gator Giveaway has quickly become an annual coveted competition in the Canadian livestock and agriculture industry.

“This giveaway is not about products. Customers like this



are the reason we need to continue working together to feed the world,” said Stuart McGregor, sales manager of Alltech Western Canada. “The Alltech Gator Giveaway is a small way for us to say thank you and it helps to drive agriculture forward. It's about bringing together community and technology by connecting with our customers.”

Plans for next year's giveaway have already begun.

Three-year trial shows savings from on-farm blending

Feedlogic Corporation, a leading supplier of intelligent solutions for livestock production, has released results from a three-year trial which demonstrate the value of blending feed on farm to more closely match the dietary requirements of the animals.

The trial was conducted at a 1,200-head commercial hog finishing site in Minnesota and showed a net improvement in profitability of over \$3.75 per marketed pig by blending feed versus feeding standard phase diets. The savings came primarily from a reduced feed cost per pound of gain.

More than 12,000 pigs were involved in the trial over a total of 10 turns. The trial facility was set up with a FeedSaver blending system which allowed half of the pigs

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

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(approx. 600 head) to be fed the standard phase diets and the other half to receive a blend of two standard diets – typically the first and fourth diets used in the standard phase program. Key results from the trial:

- Feed conversion for the blend-fed group was 5% better than the control group (2.56:1 vs. 2.69:1).
- Blend-fed pigs averaged slightly better average daily gain (1.92 lbs vs. 1.89 lbs for the control group).
- Carcass yield, lean percentage, and backfat thickness were all virtually identical between groups.

- The average carcass premium per pig (which included sort loss) was \$5.23 for the blend-fed group and \$5.24 for the control group.
- Feed cost per pound of gain averaged \$0.27 for the blend-fed group vs. \$0.29 for the control group.

The results of the trial confirm previous theories that altering diets more frequently than the standard industry practice can improve feed conversion and lower feed cost per pound of gain. They also provide strong evidence that the blending does not come at the cost of carcass premiums.

Hypor extends genomic selection to customer level

Global pig genetics specialist, Hypor, is leading the way forward in pig breeding by standardizing the use of genomic selection in its breeding program. Hypor's customers can now make choices based on the genomic breeding value of stock to improve breeding results and enhance their business' profitability.

Hypor introduced the standard integration of genomic selection into its breeding program one year ago, signifying the start of a new era of genomic breeding. During the past year this has progressed to incorporate a greater proportion of Hypor's lines and an increasing number of animals that are DNA-sampled. In addition, the number of genetic traits analyzed in the genomic selection process has also increased. Hypor's Great Grand Parent (GGP)-pigs are now selected on a genomic breeding value that is based on each pig's unique pattern of DNA-markers. The system offers pig producers more opportunities to increase the profitability of their total system.

The first customer to join Hypor's Genomic Selection program is Hyvar Select, located in Belgium. It is using genomic selection to select replacement animals for its Hypor Landrace satellite nucleus and is already finding that it offers superior results. ■

Story Ideas? Press release? Comments?
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Learning to spell Ractopamine

By Kevin Grier

Just six months ago, most people in the agriculture and food industry had never heard of the word “ractopamine”. I had heard of it, but I could never pronounce it properly, let alone spell it. Now most people in the industry have heard of it and I can both say it and spell it. The reason for the

newfound awareness of the word is the late 2012 decision of Russia, and to a lesser extent China, to ban pork from hogs produced with the assistance of ractopamine.

As hog producers know, ractopamine is a feed additive that utilizes energy from fat growth and redirects it to promote the increase of muscle fibre diameter, and the growth of lean muscle protein. It is used in the livestock industry to increase carcass leanness, dressing percent, and to improve feed efficiency, as well as the rate of weight gain. Ractopamine was approved by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) as feed for finishing barrows and gilts in 2006, and in the U.S. in 2000. The Codex Alimentarius Commission, a unit of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, has approved a Maximum Residue Limit (MRL) for ractopamine, and has set acceptable daily intake standards. Ractopamine is currently approved in 26 countries. Paylean is Elanco Animal Health's trade name for ractopamine hydrochloride.

There have been over 300 studies conducted on Paylean prior to its approval. Elanco is still funding research to document in more depth how Paylean works. The main point is that the product safely helps produce a leaner meat product with less grain and water input, less manure, and at a lower net cost and higher net revenue with environmental benefits.

A crude estimate is that from 2009 through mid-2012, it is likely that up to 60 per cent of Canadian market hogs were fed Paylean. This provides both an indication of production efficacy and the wide base of experience and knowledge of this product.

The Russian Challenge

Late in 2012, the Russian authorities stated that they would only import meat into Russia from animals not fed with ractopamine (pork and beef). From January through March, reduced quantities of pork were exported to Russia based on CFIA certifications of being racto-free. As of April, however, those shipments dwindled as Russia tightened its requirements and its approval process.

The Russian action is a significant development for the Canadian pork industry. In 2012 Statistics Canada reported that Canada sold \$492 million of pork to Russia. In 2012, Russia grew to become Canada's third largest export trading partner behind the United States and Japan. While Russia took 17 per cent of Canadian exports, its share of Canada's total pork production amounts to about 10 per cent, assuming 60 per cent of Canada's 21.1 million head slaughter production is exported. Moreover, when considering the 5.6 million live hog exports, the Russian share of Canada's hog marketings amounts to eight per cent. By comparison, the U.S. represents over a third of all Canadian hog marketings and Canadian consumption represents less than a third. As a final point, this is largely an eastern Canadian challenge given the very small share of western production that is destined for Russia.

Product is sold to Russia not because it is a premium market, but because as with all markets, at any one time, it is the best alternative for the sale. Russia, like most export markets is a commodity market and extremely price driven. Canada's sales to Russia have grown because Russia was the best alternative at any time, but also because Canada is losing its own market and U.S. market share. Furthermore, Russia has shown itself



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to be a fickle trading partner. Its practice of utilizing non-tariff barriers and penalties on trading partners is common and widely known. The generally recognized reason for this behavior is protectionism and the acknowledged desire to become self-sufficient in livestock and poultry production. Dealing with Russian uncertainty is a cost of doing business with Russia. Russian demands are not in compliance with international trade practices and have no merit according to CODEX. This is not a case of meeting customer requests – it is a case of complying with unreasonable and costly demands.

While few dispute the Russian motivations or the benefits of Paylean, the industry in both Canada and the U.S. are slowly moving towards generating greater shares of production to being racto-free. Major companies such as Smithfield and Tyson in the US as well as Olymel in Canada are dedicating plants to being racto-free in accordance with Russian and Chinese demands. This is not a case of following that age-old marketing adage of supplying what the customer wants. This is a case of being forced to bend to unreasonable demands in order to keep the market from eroding. Obviously these packers did the math and found that it is best to go Paylean free.


What's Next?

Many industry participants believe that if Canada and the U.S. fully supply Russia with racto-free product, there will be further demands designed to impede the trade flow. In other words, if we meet these demands, what will they throw at us next? The so-called premium of the Russian racto-free market will be lost once enough suppliers meet their demands. Racto-free will be commoditized without the imagined “premium” and the industry will be without the margin, and environmental benefits Paylean provides.

Looking ahead, it is estimated that world food production is going to need to expand rapidly over the next decade in order to meet growing population and human health needs. Given the fixed land base, environmental concerns, animal health concerns and many other challenges, most of the increase in production will need to come through technology. The precedent of giving way to one country's non-tariff barrier does not bode well for the future prospects of feeding a hungry world through technological advances.

The policy question that we are left with is how we can respond to the industry's need for market access without sacrificing the integrity of international trading standards and rules.


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 to comment or to request a free two-month trial of the Canadian Pork Market Review. ■



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Radical insurance

By Sheri Monk

The meat industry is under a tremendous amount of pressure from animal welfare lobbyists, and extremist organizations. At the same time, we've heard a lot about developing our "social licence to operate".

Producers – especially pork producers who are struggling just to keep their heads above water – are frustrated, tired and misunderstood. As a result, I'm seeing a trend emerge where producers are lumping the radicals together with the concept of social licence – but nothing could be further from the truth.

In order to figure out who we need to develop our social licence for, and our code of practice for, let's take a closer look at the public.

First, we have the activists who won't eat meat, and would prefer the rest of the world shared the same appetite. We'll call them the radicals.

Then we have the consumers who are concerned about price, and food safety and quality – and we'll call this group the economists.

Last, we have the group I like to think of as engaged consumers. They are the ones who value knowing where their meat came from, and how it was produced. They're usually urban, and often don't have a great understanding of agriculture, but they know they want it to be sustainable. Food security is important to them, and they like the idea of supporting the family farms in their province or country. We'll call this group the cognizants.

Think about those three groups for a moment, and now imagine that some catastrophic biosecurity event has closed our borders, and obliterated our domestic price. Which of those three groups is going to support you?

The radicals? Not a chance.

The economists? Maybe. They'll certainly buy your rock-bottom-priced pork, and with enough media coverage in your favour, they might become sympathetic. But they're unlikely to write a letter to their MP or choose to pay more than the depressed market price for your product as a show of support.

The cognizants are the only group that will stick its collective neck out for you and this is the segment very affected by any investments we make into our social licence.

At its most basic form, a social licence to operate is the public's sanction of your business, your industry and the practises of both. A social licence to operate has three tiers – approval, acceptance and trust. Each tier is an important benchmark within the public's subconscious and each subsequent tier provides a greater insulating factor when the industry in question is facing scrutiny.

The bottom line is that your social licence to operate shields you from the radicals. It protects you. It's an insurance policy for the future. It's the motorcycle helmet between you and the pavement.

Now imagine a scenario where some horrifying video has come out from somewhere within the industry. We all recoil in horror, because good producers cringe at the thought of our animals suffering. But it's out there, and the public is horrified and we fear many of them will swear off pork forever. How do you combat that?

You hold a joint press conference with the National Farm Animal Care Council and you show the media the up-to-date 2013 Code of Practice for care and handling of pigs. You don't just tell them, you actually show them how Canadian pork producers are different from what they saw on a video. You explain how the code reflects the best science we have, and how it was developed by producers, government, veterinarians, transporters and even animal welfare advocates. You know what happens? People keep eating pork... and not just because it's the best tasting pork in the world, but because they know you, they believe what you are saying and they trust you.

As someone so new to the industry, I can't pretend to know what's good or what's bad in the draft of the new code. But you certainly do – and that's why you need to comment before the August 3 deadline. You genuinely need to believe in that code so that you can stand behind it if you ever need to get in front of an approaching disaster.

We can't paint everyone as out to get us, because in reality, it's a very small minority who really are. In fact, the public doesn't spend a lot of time thinking about us, or how we do what we do. And that's the real reason we need to continue investing in our social licence to operate – we need to talk to our consumers before the radicals get to them first.

Most importantly, we need to believe in what we say. ■

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Western Hog JOURNAL

HOT ISSUES

Draft code axes gestation stalls

By Sheri Monk

The draft Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pigs was released June 1, and to no one's surprise, gestation stalls are being phased out. There are some other significant changes as well, pertaining to space allowances, castration and enrichment, such as:

- As of July 1, 2024, mated gilts and sows must be housed in groups. Individual stalls may be used for up to 28 days after the date of last breeding, and an additional period of up to seven days is permitted to manage grouping.
- For all holdings newly built or rebuilt or brought into use for the first time after July 1, 2014, mated gilts and sows must be housed in groups. Individual stalls may be used for up to 28 days after the date of last breeding and an additional period of up to 7 days is permitted to manage grouping.

- After July 1, 2024, all individual stalls, as well as all new installations and replacements of existing individual stalls that occur after July 1, 2014, must be sized appropriately to allow sows to:
 - Stand up at rest in a stall without simultaneously touching both sides of the stall,
 - Lie down without their udders protruding into adjacent stalls,
 - Stand up without touching the top bars,
 - Stand in a stall without simultaneously touching both ends of the stall,
- Time in stalls can only be extended to protect the welfare of individual sows on the advice of a competent stockperson.
- Pigs must be provided with some type of environmental enrichment (social, occupational, physical, sensory, and/or nutritional).
- Castration performed after 14 days of age must be done with anesthetic and analgesic to help control pain.







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Sizing requirements for the group housing of gilts and sows

Group Description	Partially Slatted Floors		Solid Bedded Floors	
	m ²	ft ²	m ²	ft ²
Gilts	1.4-1.7	15-18	1.5-1.9	16-20
Sows	1.8-2.2	19-24	2.0-2.4	21-26
Mixed (Gilts and Sows)	1.7-2.1	18-23	1.9-2.3	20-25

- As of July 1, 2019, castration performed at any age must be done with analgesics to help control post-procedure pain.
- Tail docking of pigs over seven days of age must be done with pain control.

The code draft has sections on major issues, and lists requirements, and then supports those requirements with recommended practice suggestions and ideas. It also includes several charts which detail space requirements for pigs in all life stages, as well as drawings and photos to score body condition.

Darcy Fitzgerald, executive director of Alberta Pork, says the content of the code isn't surprising, and that most

producers are already meeting or exceeding most of the code's requirements. However, he warns without mitigation, adopting one requirement in particular is going to hurt the industry.

"First off, our producers are doing a good job right now, and they take pride in the job that they do, but this is going to cause significant challenges for our producers in Alberta, if not in all of Canada," he said. "The problem is, we have all of these existing barns –some of which are set up to meet these group housing requirements – but most still have gestation stalls in them."

While the code gives producers until 2024 to phase out the gestation stalls, for some producers that will mean retrofitting or tearing down buildings before the end of their lifetime.

"So you're asking people to decide whether they are going to shut a barn down five or 10 years before its time, or are they going to go in there and cut it all up, retrofit it and possibly make it worse for the pigs because it was never designed to be built that way," said Fitzgerald. "There's good and bad in both systems, but if you're not ready for group housing, and if you're not ready for the management of it, and how it has to flow, then really, should you be operating one?"

Many producers are struggling to keep their head above water, and cannot afford any significant investment in infrastructure. Should the requirements in the draft code become final, it could drive some family farms right out of business. Fitzgerald

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22



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The proposed code details acceptable methods of euthanasia categorized by method and age of the animal

	Suckling Piglets	Nursery Pig <10 weeks [<32 kg (70 lbs.)]	Grower Pig <68 kg (150 lbs.)	Pigs 68 kg to 200 kg (150 lbs. to 400 lbs.)	Mature Pigs >200 kg (440 lbs.)
Anesthetic Overdose	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Blunt Trauma	Acceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable
Electrocution	Conditional for piglets ≥ 2.3 kg (5 lbs.) Unacceptable for piglets < 2.3 kg (5 lbs.)	Conditional	Conditional	Unacceptable	Unacceptable
CO ₂ and/or Argon Inhalation	Conditional	Conditional	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable
Gunshot to the Head	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Non-Penetrating Captive Bolt	Acceptable	Conditional Acceptable for piglets < 9 kg (19.8 lbs.)	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable
Penetrating Captive Bolt	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable for pigs < 120 kg (264 lbs.) Conditional for pigs ≥ 120 kg (264 lbs.)	Conditional

says existing barns should be exempt from switching over until the end of their natural lifespan.

“While it should be about choice and market demand, producers may be more willing to accept loose housing demands for new barns after January 1, 2014. However, grandfathering existing operations would place the burden of change value chain, and not just the producer,” he commented.

The Canadian Pork Council (CPC) issued a statement on its position on the draft code only to say it doesn’t actually have a position.

“The CPC recognizes there are different opinions on the key elements requiring change in the draft code. We look forward to the public comment period as it will provide the opportunity to reach all producers and hear their views on how the code will impact the animals in their care and their farm operations,” stated the release.

Fitzgerald says industry is going to have to tackle this challenge together.

“It really is a value chain issue. It’s easy for some consumers, or the Retail Council of Canada, or even the packer to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

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New size guidelines for the temporary (28-day) gestation stalls.

Minimum widths of individual holding units for gestating gilts and sows of various sizes

Interior Width of Individual Holding Units		Weight (at breeding) of Sow housed individually for majority of gestation		Weight (at breeding) of Sow housed individually for first trimester only (~ 1 month)	
cm	In.	Kg.	lb.	Kg.	lb.
60	24	<150	<330	<120	<465
65	26	150-200	330-440	210-260	465-475
70	28	200-260	440-575	260-320	575-705
75	30	260-340	575-750	>320	>705
80	32	>340	>750	N/A	N/A

set the timeline and say, 'After this date, we're not going to accept any pigs from sow stalls.' But how will that be accomplished?" he asked.

If producers don't speak out and accept the timeline without any grandfathering clause, Fitzgerald is concerned the rest of the value chain will take that as implied consent. And if existing structures aren't grandfathered, producers are going to need some kind of assistance from industry partners to absorb the cost.

"If we volunteer to do all of this by a certain date, nobody has to negotiate with us because we just said we are going to bear all the cost ourselves. We have been doing this for years, the producers bear all of the costs, and yet in western Canada we are receiving the lowest prices in the world. Why would we

want to bear some more costs just to drive ourselves out of business?" asked Fitzgerald.

Other industry concerns revolve around imported pork. For instance, American pork is commonly found in Canadian grocery stores. If the cost of production goes up for Canadian producers because of new requirements in the Code, will retailers line their shelves with a cheaper imported product still using sow stalls?

"Is the retailer not going to accept any product from any country that does any of those things? We're always trying to be the boy scout, but coming through the back door is all this other product, and we don't know how it was looked after, or what was done to it," said Fitzgerald. "Any product that comes from anywhere in the world should have to meet all of the requirements Canadian producers abide by."

Earlier this year, eight major grocery chains in the Retail Council of Canada announced they would no longer source pork from facilities using sow stalls by 2022, which may serve to further complicate the timeline.

The code was developed by people representing all segments of the industry, as well as representatives from government and animal welfare advocates. It will be open to comment until August 3. It's important that every producer comment individually, as the comment period is also open to animal rights activists and the general public. Comments should be based upon experience, good management and science. Comments will be accepted online at www.surveymonkey.com/s/nfaccpigcode and the draft is available for viewing at www.nfacc.ca/resources/codes-of-practice/pig/pcp/Pig_Code_DRAFT_May2013.pdf

"We're really encouraging all producers to respond. Go online and have a look, and if you're having trouble, we'll help you," said Fitzgerald.

The finalized code is expected to be completed by the end of the year. ■

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Animal welfare was the reason for gestation stalls

The public doesn't know this, but not very long ago, sow stalls were introduced to improve animal welfare

By Sheri Monk

There is little doubt now that gestation stalls are on their way out in Canada, but it's worth remembering why they were brought in.

"They probably became fairly common in the 1980s. In Manitoba, there were a lot of hog barns built in the mid-to-late 90s and so a lot of stall systems were put in at that point," said Mark Fynn, animal care specialist for Manitoba Pork.

Before the stalls were introduced, producers often kept the sows in a basic pen system, similar to a finisher pen. So why the change? Mostly because at the time, the industry believed it would be better for the animals – a fact the public and the mainstream media is largely unaware of.

The general assumption about gestation stalls is that greedy farmers implemented them to make more money, at the animal's expense. In some ways, that perception is forgivable – most business models are all about increasing profit and efficiency, while reducing overhead and input costs.

As an example, imagine a fully automated factory that makes pencils, and imagine that the machinery that makes the pencils has a lifetime of approximately seven years before it needs to be replaced. The factory owner will do whatever he or she can to speed up the production line while decreasing the cost of production. Machinery will be maintained, but not invested in heavily, and replaced as needed. That's the type of business model most people are familiar with, but it doesn't work in animal husbandry for one simple reason – the machinery in a pig barn is alive.

"The economics – I don't think that was a huge factor for moving to stalls from the pen system, because you were still raising pigs in the relatively same amount of space, but you could control things a lot better," said Fynn. "You could control individual intake of feed to ensure the animals were getting proper nutrition. The aggression and the bullying we talk about, that's something that not only stresses the animal, but causes them to get inadequate nutrition, so that was a big push for farmers to use the new system."

Unlike the machinery in the pencil factory, the machinery in the pig factory is a dynamic, ever-changing factor. And if the pigs aren't healthy and happy, the factory doesn't just risk losing profit and productivity – he can risk losing genetic investments, illness can spread between the "machines" – there's simply much more to manage. That's a really hard concept to convey to an urban public disconnected from the farm.

"There was a strong animal care component to it, and it's hard – they moved to these systems because they believed it would help with animal care, not just with economics. At the time it was the right decision and it was supported by groups like the veterinarians because of those reasons," said Fynn.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26



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There are few other industries that can be as dramatically affected by science-based discovery as the livestock industries. There are no lobby groups pressuring retailers to no longer accept pencils from certain kinds of factories, and regulation changes introduced by government are at least subject to robust debate and (usually) realistic timelines. But often changes in animal husbandry are the result of special interest groups that have successfully hijacked what should be a scientific discussion, and changed it into an emotion-fueled runaway train. It's difficult to imagine another scenario where a small group of people who will never buy an industry's product can force it to alter how it produces that unwanted product, but that's exactly what happens in the animal rights movement.

"I think there was a general push towards a more romantic view of agriculture, really pushing for that pastoral vision of agriculture. Especially in Manitoba, that pastoral view doesn't really work for pigs. A pig is pretty much like us being naked outdoors," Fynn explained.

The case could be made that while livestock producers are subject to game-changing market forces that other industries are not, farmers have a greater responsibility because the wares they are selling are alive. Most producers would agree with that sentiment, and most want to do right by the animal. The jury is still out, but by and large, most recent studies seem to indicate that group housing – properly managed and administered group housing – is better for the animal. But there are a lot of unknowns and uncertainties when it comes to management and administration, and those have left producers feeling anxious.

"Harold Gonyou from Prairie Swine Centre said there are 72 different options for group housing systems depending on how you set up the feeding, how you group your animals, and that sort of thing. And I think that's a big underestimate," said Fynn. "I think there are really infinite options for how you set up a group housing system and we just don't have the knowledge of what an optimal system is, and I don't think there is a perfect system."

That's one of the reasons why producers are reluctant to adopt another new way of doing things. It's scary to make a significant investment in something you don't have confidence in yet.

"There are a lot of group housing systems out there that could be worse for the animals than stalls, and there might be some

out there that are better for the animals. We're investing fairly heavily in research to be able to implement some of the knowledge that we have to try and create some systems that are relatively optimal," said Fynn, who added they are trying to get a system in place to measure data pertaining to both production and welfare which compared stall systems and group housing.

In some respects, Canadian producers may be more fortunate than when compared to some peers. The timeline is considered generous – the new proposed Code of Practice allows producers until 2024 to convert existing facilities, while some major members of the Retail Council of Canada have given industry until 2022 to switch over. The UK banned sow stalls in 1999, and their learning curve could prove beneficial for producers in Canada.

"From what I gather in Europe, a number of the new systems had to be changed over again because they just weren't working. I think they are getting closer to a stage where they understand group housing more and more, but they're still in that initial trial and error phase. We would really like to learn from the European experience before we jump headfirst into this one," Fynn said. (See our coverage of the UK experience on page 28.)

The current state of the pork industry really changes the situation from a complex problem into a potential tragedy.

"Guys just don't have the cash flow to be able to afford this kind of investment right now, and banks don't have the assurance to be able to provide the credit," explained Fynn. "Whenever there's a forced regulation or change, there's no doubt in my mind that it's the smaller producers that are the first ones affected by it. They're less immune to that sort of change."

The pastoral expectation of agriculture often comes from a segment of the populace consider themselves ethical meat consumers, who desire to be more connected to their food, and the producers making it. That same market tends to support independent producers, bucking against corporate agriculture. However, sometimes those desires collide with reality, and can result in fewer producers growing more of the meat, or even in increasing foreign meat imports.

One thing is clear – big changes are coming to an industry that can't currently afford to change, no matter how much they love the business or care for their animals. ■

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5	1.5	1.0	0.6
5.5	1.4	0.9	0.6
6	1.3	0.8	0.5
6.5	1.2	0.7	0.4
7	1.1	0.7	0.4
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What can Canada learn from the UK group sow experience?

By Stuart Lumb

At any industry conference these days, or on any animal rights or even pork industry websites, there's bound to be something about pig welfare. Many would argue that pigs are not like humans, and that what might be considered cruel through human eyes is not the same for the porcine fraternity. Many of the welfare groups have put human guinea pigs in gestation stalls to see how they react, and the main complaint has been that they can't turn around, leading to the assessment of how cruel it must be for an intelligent animal like a sow or gilt to be confined.

What many fail to recognize is that when sow stalls were developed, they were introduced for sound reasons, with animal welfare in mind. However, as with all industries, knowledge and practices change. Currently, free access stall systems are popular in Europe. A sow will probably spend 95 per cent of her time inside her stall, however the key factor is that she has the *choice* to lie outside in the circulation area if she so wishes.

Sow gestation stalls and tether systems came into being in the UK in the early 1970s. The tether was either a chain yoke around the sow's neck fastened to the floor, or a girth tether, which was a webbing strap secured round the sow, just behind her shoulders and secured to the floor with a short length of chain. The tethers were supposed to be adjusted on a regular basis, but often weren't, subsequently causing injury to the sow.

In the UK government, individual members of parliament can put forward a "Private Member's Bill". These are selected at random, so largely by chance, a bill by MP and an organic farmer by the name Sir Richard Body was brought forward. In it, Body made sow stalls and tethers illegal in 1991, although the actual ban came into force in 1999. UK pig farmers naturally objected to the legislation as it involved considerable expenditure on new housing, and they argued it disadvantaged them compared to pig farmers in mainland Europe. Some producers couldn't afford to change their infrastructure and either just went into finishing, or packed it in entirely.

Today welfare laws are Europe-wide, with the partial stall ban becoming law in the EU effective January 1, 2013. However, any country can still pass its own independent



Gestating sows in a group housing setting in West Yorkshire, UK. Photo by Stuart Lumb.

welfare laws if it's thought that the EU laws are not tough enough. The UK stall ban is much more strict than the EU one, in that in the UK sows must be group housed immediately after service, whereas most EU farmers are allowed to keep sows in stalls for the first four weeks of pregnancy, (although Dutch producers can only keep their served sows 4 days in stalls).

Unfortunately, in 1990 the UK industry was slow in lobbying MPs to limit the legislation to a partial stall ban. The significance of sows being in stalls for four weeks means that by implantation at day 12 – 14, she is not being knocked about by other sows, which could cause failed implantation. UK pig producers are proud of their stock skills and some saw the stall ban as a challenge. The data below shows that in fact the numbers of young born alive were actually slightly higher in yards than in stalls. Yarded sows get far more exercise and this helps muscle tone which helps at farrowing, which is a production bonus for the farmer.

Performance of herds with sows kept loose in yards versus sows in stalls

	Yards	Stalls
Av. No of sows	286	430
No. Herds	96	39
Av.no pigs born alive/litter	11.09	10.82
Av.no litters / sow/ yr	2.29	2.29

Source : PIC UK Pig Management Year Book 1996/97



Sows in group housing on solid floor, with straw bedding in East Riding Yorkshire, UK. Photo by Stuart Lumb

In one respect, Canadian producers are fortunate because they can learn from the UK experience of housing pregnant sows within group systems for the last 13 years. As well, the equipment available has been refined over these years, which helps productivity, and there is far more known about managing

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Free access stalls in Denmark. Photo courtesy of Danish Research.

sows in groups than there was when the UK embarked on the journey. A key factor affecting the success of group housing is sow temperament, and producers quickly learned which genotypes were suited to group housing. In other words, learning which would mix easily and those which didn't. Tricks like having a big boar in at mixing time to keep the peace is one to remember. Also, with many UK systems being

deep straw-bedded, a big bale in the pen works wonders as sows are far more interested in chewing the straw as opposed to fighting, plus the bale or bales provides a hiding place for timid sows.

The author had personal experience of a dynamic group system, with sows on ESFs. This was in the late 1980s and the unit size was quite small by today's standards – just 300 sows – and so a static group system would not have worked. Today, with far bigger units plus batch farrowing, it's possible to have the batch size match the feeder capacity so that sows only get mixed once during the time they are in the gestation groups.

In view of the changes facing Canadian producers, it might help to know that sows which have been in stalls and which are moved into new housing with ESF systems have to learn to use the feeders. In the 1980s, approximately 10 per cent of sows had to be culled because they were simply too frightened of the technology to adapt to it.

Free access stalls are a very popular option, particularly in Denmark. Timid sows and gilts quickly learn that they can stay in their stall around the clock if they desire. Opponents of group housing point to the fact that sows in free access systems may well spend most of their time as just pointed out, in their stalls, so therefore why get rid of gestation stalls at all? Again, the key difference is that the sow has the choice to stay in it or come out.

When sows are kept in small groups and fed by a trough or a trickle feed system, it's vital to ensure sows are matched by size in order to avoid bullying. Pay close attention to quality – the rule, 'you get what you pay for' also applies to group housing systems. Considering current financial pressures, it's easy to understand why producers would be tempted to invest in the least expensive systems, but this may end up a costly mistake in the long-run. There are management implications and if productivity drops, then the cheap conversion will turn out to be the expensive one. Removing



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the back of the stall and cutting down the sow stall sides is an option, but the dimensions and layout of a gestation stall house may not convert sensibly into group housing. Also, stocking density will be reduced, and insulation and heating may need to be beefed up.

With regard to the EU partial stall ban, all sorts of figures were bandied about last year, in terms of compliance. The European commission merely oversees things, leaving enforcement to each member country. Even today it's very hard to know exactly what the situation is in every country regarding compliance. Suffice to say that the UK's NPA (National Pig Association) has done a great job in getting the supermarkets and other pork users to publicly state in writing that they will only source imported pig meat from compliant units, and the NPA is carrying out random traceability checks to ensure this is happening. The EU legal system is not the quickest and undoubtedly some farmers in mainland Europe will carry on using their stalls until they are threatened with court action. Compliant farmers who have spent a lot of money obeying the law are hopeful the legislation will reduce



Gestating sows using the Schauer ESF system in a Spanish pig unit. Photo by Stuart Lumb

EU sow numbers leading to an increase in pig prices, but the correction may take longer to work than they envisioned.

Change is never easy, but it is inevitable, and Canadian producers have a slight advantage in transitioning if they leverage the knowledge available from the experiences of other nations. ■

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