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Kyla Ripley, General Manager

When asked about the role of AI Centres in the swine industry, **Kyla Ripley, General Manager** replied, "Artificial Insemination with quality doses produced from top indexing animals has driven the global production capabilities of the hog industry to new heights. This continues as advances in scientific methodology and understanding of quality variables move forward. To be within the beating heart of the industry at this level is hugely exciting and a great responsibility."

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The New and the Old in Raising Hogs in Manitoba

The first new hog barn in the last seven years held an Open House on March 4, 2016, at the Suncrest Colony just off the intersection of highways 59 and 52 near Steinbach, MB.

Colony Hog Boss Bob Kleinsasser described it as an 800 sow farrow to 80 pounds using open group housing with 125 sows per group at 28 square feet per sow.

Then in February 2017, on a tour of the new facility and walking among hundreds of sows Kleinsasser said the new barn houses 850 sows and the old barn 500 sows.

Then in September, in another meeting, Kleinsasser said things are going fairly well.

"We're very, very impressed with the loose housing. There are challenges, but all around I think we're not looking back," Kleinsasser said.

When walking into a group pen of 140 plus pregnant sows and talking about the training of those sows, only a few even lifted their heads to acknowledge the human intrusion.

Since that day in February Kleinsasser hasn't changed much except tweaking what he's doing, to hopefully make it even better.

"I think it took a year for us to figure things out and I think we pretty much got it to where we want it," said the Suncrest hog boss. "The training, well that's automatic now, we don't have to do big groups anymore so now it's just basically one every week. We need 10 to 12 new animals, and it's way easier to do smaller groups."

Were there some things that Kleinsasser thought would be more difficult and some things not as difficult?

"For sure the training, we thought, man, we're going to have some that are just ... not going to be able to train. We all know animals and especially the pigs, they're always challenging, almost human. Yes, that's going way easier than we figured," he said.

The key to training sows successfully?

— continued on page 23

Rolf Penner



The New and the Old in Raising Hogs in Manitoba, cont'd

— continued from page 22

“Smaller pigs don't train as well so make sure they're mature animals. We tried doing 150 to 170 pounds, and that just didn't work so now we're back to the 100 kg, that's about when you start, and it looks like it works a lot better,” Kleinsasser said.

On the economic side, with interest rates slowly climbing and the U.S. dollar dropping, they've probably lost \$50 per pig in the last six or seven months.

“We have price protection, having forward sold about 70 per cent of our product Hams Marketing and Maple Leaf Foods. We're fortunate for that,” he said.

Rolf Penner of Morris, MB at one point a full-fledged hog producer made some changes on his farm after the sudden and tragic death of his father in July 2016.

“The hog business has changed a little bit over the last year. I'm focusing far more on



When walking into a group pen of 140 plus pregnant sows and talking about the training of those sows, only a few even lifted their heads to acknowledge the human intrusion.

my grain at this point,” said Penner. “Now I've still got my barns; they're still in reasonable shape. I'm not in the hog business so much. I'm renting those barns out to a third party and trying to make some extra income that way. So I've shifted over. It has a little to do with my father passing away last year

and running a little lean now with hired help year round. So I've now rented out my barn, and there's some optimism there. I mean those guys that have my barn think there are still good opportunities in the hog business.”

— continued on page 24

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The New and the Old in Raising Hogs in Manitoba, cont'd



Rolf Penner of Morris, MB at one point a full-fledged hog producer made some changes on his farm, currently focusing more on grain. His farm yard and machinery.

— continued from page 23

He said the arrangement with his renters is similar to owning a rental house or an apartment building in town.

"I still own the building, I'm still responsible for maintenance, and upkeep, and repairs for the equipment and all that kind of thing," said Penner. "So the other folks their

responsibility is the animals and the feed, and the vet bills, and the labour. So that's kind of the general split how it works. So it's not entirely risk-free on my part. My biggest thing is, especially with an older facility like mine, are what are those potential repairs going to be?"

When it comes to a possible PED virus

outbreak, Heaven forbid, what is their plan?

"That's a real question. It is more the responsibility of the people in my barn to keep the PED out. I mean I've got some responsibility too I suppose with obviously doing the maintenance, I have to follow the biosecurity protocols. And if I'm hiring people they have to

follow the biosecurity protocols," he said. "Thankfully I've been in the business long enough that I know exactly what those are and how to handle that stuff, which probably gives the people I'm renting to a little bit of peace of mind, too." •

— By Harry Siemens

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