



CLIPPINGS a weekly column from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

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For Immediate Release

A Tribute to Swine Producers

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Producing pork is more complicated and stressful than any other time in history. Pork producers face an abundance of challenges. First on their mind is prices. With the surplus of hogs coming to market this Fall breaking all kinds of records, the price for hogs has plummeted, especially the negotiated cash market. Surplus harvest numbers, limited packer shackle space and trade tariffs are issues producers have had to deal with this Fall, and add to that, the stressors of a late, wet harvest, low grain prices and the increase in mycotoxin mold potential.

These extra issues (low priced pork and a difficult Fall harvest) simply piled on top of the many ongoing management areas that swine producers already continuously address.

Today, more emphasis is being placed than ever before on environment sustainability, soil conservation and improving water quality. Swine producers play a key role in this. They work hard at developing a manure management plan so that valuable nutrients from swine manure are able to be utilized more fully by crops, minimizing runoff. Timing and rate of application are key for maximum crop yield with minimal nutrient loss, and swine producers know this.

The welfare of the pigs has always been - and will always be - a top priority, and as of recently, producers are asked to spend extra time keeping records for a possible animal welfare audit. They must know the answers to over ninety questions on the audit including proper euthanasia techniques, pig moving principals, timeliness of euthanasia, caretaker training, emergency plans and much more.

Keeping animals and people safe is an ongoing, extremely important priority. Slips and falls - especially when moving pigs - are one potential issue, but a more serious need is proper ventilation. Swine producers must manage hydrogen sulfide gas, especially during manure pump-out. The building must be ventilated between groups of pigs to prevent flash fires from pit gas while doing maintenance work. Related to that priority of safety, producers are also asked to attend a transport certification workshop to learn and implement approved practices when they load and haul pigs. This minimizes problems related to transporting the animals.

Swine producers are ever diligent in keeping pork safe to eat. Healthy pigs are key to producing high quality pork for consumers. When producers use medications to help sick pigs recover, they follow the label to ensure the pork is wholesome and safe. Producers even attend certification workshops to help them review important principals to keep pork safe and to stay up-to-date on the latest industry news.

Every day, we hear about different foreign animal diseases in other parts of the world. Our local swine producers are concerned about these too and are doing their diligence to prevent an outbreak. To prepare for the threat of a foreign animal disease potentially entering the United States, producers are enhancing their biosecurity and developing a secure pork supply plan.

Modern pork production is high tech and requires producers to master a variety of things - animal husbandry, biosecurity, recordkeeping and much more. Today's pork producers care about their pigs, their workers, the environment, and their community as they produce safe wholesome pork for consumer enjoyment.

As you celebrate the holidays, I encourage you to look at what is on your table at mealtime. See any ham or bacon? I tip my hat to those who work everyday to provide food for all of us and I encourage you to do the same. Happy Holidays!

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