Dave Stender, Swine Program Specialist

According to the National Pork Board, the overarching goal of the common audit process is to provide consumers greater assurance of the care taken by farmers and pork processors to improve animal well-being and food safety. The audit tool builds on the existing Pork Quality Assurance Plus (PQA Plus) program and expands it to serve as a single, common audit platform for the pork industry.

Documentation is necessary to pass a common audit. First, the producer must develop a set of standard operating procedures (SOP) for their operation. Webster defines SOPs as “established or prescribed methods to be followed routinely for the performance of designated operations or in designated situations”.

Each SOP must list the person in charge of maintaining and modifying the SOP. There are five main components of each SOP with some topics requiring more documentation and some less:

1. **Introduction:** talks about background and scope; should have a need statement that discusses why the requirements are being introduced and goals.
2. **Safety:** Detail any potential hazards and address personal protective equipment if needed.
3. **Preparation:** Include a list of needed tools and supplies.
4. **Procedure:** The procedure of each SOP must be described in chronological order. Resources should also be listed here.
5. **Follow-up:** A follow-up section contains contact information for help and questions about the SOP content or procedure. This may or may not be the same person in charge of maintaining the SOP.

### Topics requiring an SOP include:

- Euthanasia
- Daily observations
- Treatment Management
- Caretaker training
- Animal handling procedures
- Feeding and watering animals
- Biosecurity
- Rodent control
- Needle Usage and process for dealing with broken needle
- Piglet processing (tail docking and castration)

Additionally, the producer will be asked to provide written records for the following areas:

1. Twelve months of daily observation logs
2. Compliant feed and treatment medication records (12 months of records after pigs are sold)
3. Copy of PQA Plus certification (within 6 months for new employee)
4. Copy of TQA certification for transporters
5. Copy of annual training of caretakers based on their daily duties
6. A valid veterinarian client patient relationship document
7. Internal audit reports – quarterly for sow herd, biannual for finishers
8. Written policy for zero tolerance for animal abuse (have a mechanism for farm employees to report animal abuse)
9. Records of testing of emergency backup equipment
10. Site records of recorded mortalities
11. If applicable, compliant VFD records
12. Euthanasia plan
13. Euthanasia equipment in working order
14. Rodent control evidence
15. Written emergency action plan copy which must be posted.

It is evident from the preceding list that swine producers are being asked to document the good work they are doing on the farm as they care for their animals.

Many producers are asking for help setting up and organizing SOPs and their record keeping systems. ISU Extension and Outreach is conducting meetings and workshops designed to help swine producers prepare for the common audit. I have developed a template including all of the documentation listed above based on materials from the PQA Plus materials. Once each producer has completed their own SOPs, material is organized in a three-ring binder with tabs for easy documentation.

Watch for more workshops announced soon. Contact me for more information at the ISU Extension and Outreach office in Cherokee, 712-225-6196 or email dstender@iastate.edu.

The Northwest Iowa Research Farms
Joel DeJong, Field Agronomist

Recently, I have had the opportunity to meet with the boards of the Northwest and Western Research and Demonstration Farms in our region. These meetings reminded me of the value these farms have brought to agriculture in our region.

Both of these associations were formed to supply acres for agricultural research conducted by researchers from Iowa State University (ISU). I am always astounded by the wisdom of our predecessors who understood having research conducted in our area is important because soils and climates are different across Iowa. These groups organized, sold memberships, and raised funds to purchase farms where research could be done locally. The challenge our boards face today is seeing into the future and identifying what we need to focus on to help the next generation.

What information collected at these farms is used? I get lots of questions on how much fertilizer to apply, what is the correct crop seeding rate, what row spacing is right, does fungicide application pay, and more. My role as a field agronomist is to answer those questions by summarizing what replicated research plots have shown over time. I have confidence in those answers because the treatments have usually been tried many times in our local region. I often think farming is like gambling; knowing the odds of a certain response prepares us better to be successful. These research farms supply us the opportunity to learn what the odds of a certain outcome is likely to be – without having to do that kind of experimenting on our own farms.

The Northwest Research Farm board is always trying to figure out what projects can be added to the agenda with a look to the future. Several years ago they partnered with ISU Extension and Outreach to start on-farm replicated trials in the northwest corner of the state to supplement the work that occurs on the research farm sites. That has grown nearly state-wide since then giving us more data to help us make decisions. They are working on how to utilize UAV’s (unmanned aerial vehicles) as a profitable tool for crop producers by trying to calibrate what the pictures say for making good management decisions. In recent years, this group has made an investment into water quality research – particularly important in a time when there is public doubt about stewardship practices in agriculture. All industries strive to improve, the Research Farm Association in conjunction with ISU are working to do that.

Research farm annual progress reports since the year 2000 are available by farm at this ISU website: www.ag.iastate.edu/farms/progress_report.php. New for 2014’s report is the inclusion of the on-farm projects for the region of each experimental farm. However, as of the date of this writing, the 2014 reports are not yet available on this page. They will be soon.

Heartbeat of the Farm starts April 7
Melissa O’Rourke, Farm & Agribusiness Management Specialist

A new farm human resource management program—Heartbeat of the Farm— is designed to provide strategies for effectively working with farm family members and employees.

The heartbeat of every farm business is the people involved. We often think first about the production aspects—crops, soil, nutrient management and livestock operations. However, it is the people involved—family members and non-family employees—who make the difference in how the farm functions and whether it prospers or goes into stagnation or decline.

Farm women frequently find themselves in the position of human resource managers.

Heartbeat of the Farm—Effective Human Resource Management is a new course designed to empower farm women to better manage both family and non-family partners and employees.
Women will learn effective strategies to manage human resources in the areas of employee laws, business communications, supervision and retention, and health, safety, and well-being.

At the end of four weeks, participants will know more about employee supply, recruitment and legal issues; interpersonal, family, and business communications; employee supervision and retention; and health, stress, and well-being. Each session includes brief presentation and extended discussion and activities:

Session 1—Employee Supply, Recruitment, and Law: Strategies for identifying labor needs; hiring and terminating; legal, tax and accounting requirements.

Session 2—Family and Business Communication: Strategies for sharing farm business goals; managing interpersonal conflict; conducting farm business meetings.

Session 3—Employee Supervision and Retention: Strategies for clarifying expectations; training family or non-family on job tasks; evaluating employees and increasing job satisfaction.

Session 4—Health, Stress, and Well-being: Strategies for balancing personal and work energy; increasing farm safety; planning for continuity if one or more key persons is lost.

Modeled after the successful Annie’s Project program, “Heartbeat of the Farm” is targeted toward farm women as they learn in a comfortable and supportive learning environment.

The four-week course will be held on Tuesdays starting April 7 from 11 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., with a noon meal included. Classes will be held at the ISU Extension and Outreach Sioux County office in Orange City. Course meeting dates are April 7, 14, 28 and May 5.

Advance registration and payment of $75 is required for this course as enrollment is limited. The registration fee includes all materials for the 4-week course plus a light lunch.

Registration forms can be obtained by calling the ISU Extension and Outreach Sioux County office, 712-737-4230 or emailing Melissa O’Rourke at morourke@iastate.edu. Online registration is available at www.aep.iastate.edu/annie. Registration is due by March 31.

Des Moines Water Works Notice of Pending Lawsuit

Kris Kohl, Ag Engineer

The Des Moines Water Works has received front page news coverage by voting to send a notice of intent to file a lawsuit against the county supervisors in Buena Vista, Calhoun, and Sac counties on Jan. 8, 2015. Many politicians from the Governor to the Secretary of Agriculture have voiced their disappointment in the Des Moines Water Works. What are the facts and how could this affect farming in Iowa?

Nitrogen

1. The air we breathe is 78% nitrogen gas and there are about 73 million lbs. in the air above one acre all over the world.
2. Nitrogen is the core element of all protein and is essential for all life, plants, and animals.
3. Lightning storms in the summer will chemically change the non-reactive nitrogen gas into nitrate.
4. Legume plants (like soybeans and alfalfa) have a symbiotic bacteria that produces nitrates from the air to feed the plant protein that it needs.
5. Nitrogen is in all living things and degrades to nitrate, it is almost impossible to trace back to source like, organic matter in soil, commercial fertilizer, manure, or lightning.

Research shows that nitrate levels in the soil water where corn is grown needs to be at about 25 parts per million (ppm) which is 2½ times the drinking water standard, of 10 ppm. Unlike most other plant nutrients which have a positive charge and are held to the soil particles, nitrate is repelled into the water and moves with the water.

The Des Moines Water Works interview talks about runoff water and farmers pouring on the nitrates that the water works must remove. Runoff water is very low in nitrates while drainage water is high. Farmers apply nitrogen fertilizer but most is a gas or a solid which will degrade to nitrate over time.

It is an expensive nutrient and farmers apply what is needed and in forms that are the most stable. High levels often accumulate in the soil during times of drought and will come out of drainage tile in the first flush through the profile.

The Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy developed by Iowa State University, the Iowa Department of Land Stewardship, corn growers, soybean growers, and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) have prepared practices proven to reduce nutrients that are leaving our fields. There are 20 options that have proven results to reduce the loss of nitrate to the water.

Currently some of the practices have the potential to reduce cost and provide water quality improvement such as using a manure source which is more stable than commercial sources.

Other practices that are very effective will require public assistance because they are expensive plus land. The only benefit is high quality water exiting the system. To make a real difference each farmer needs to determine what practices would work on their farms and work together. To download the publication, https://Store.extension.iastate.edu/Product/Reducing-Nutrient-Loss-Science-Shows-what-works.
Hotlines Available For All
Iowa Concern (800-447-1985)
Farm On (877-BFC-1999)
Teen Line (800-443-8336)
BETS OFF (800-BETS-OFF) (800-238-7633)

Hotlines Available to Iowa Residents Only
Families Answer Line (800-262-3804)
Hortline (515) 294-3108
Iowa Healthy Families (800-369-2229)
PORKLine (800-808-7675)

Mark Your Calendars:
March 11-13  Youth Animal Science Field Days • Sheldon
March 14   Youth Beginning Sewing Workshop • Primghar
March 19   Swine Production Seminar • Okoboji
March 20  Chamber Coffee Celebrating Extension Week
          Orange City (Watch for other celebrations!)
March 24  Certified Handlers CIC Pesticide Safety Education Program • All county offices
March 26  Northwest Iowa Young Farmers • Orange City
March 30  Emerald Ash Borer Meeting • Sheldon

Private Pesticide Applicator Training Dates:
March 12—Primghar • March 17—George & Sibley

See you at these area HOME SHOWS! Play trivia game and win a candy bar!
March 12—Rock Rapids • March 14—Sibley • March 18 & 19—Sioux Center
March 24 & 25—Orange City • March 28—Sheldon

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