

*Building leadership for Pork Checkoff's future***USDA Announces National Pork Board Appointments**

The U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has announced five appointments to the 15-member board of the National Pork Board. The five were chosen from among eight pork producers nominated by the National Pork Producers Delegate Body during its meeting in Dallas, Texas, last March.

The newly appointed Board members are:

- Bradley S. Greenway, Mitchell, S.D.
- Dale N. Norton, Bronson, Mich.
- Lisa D. Colby, Newbury, Mass.

The reappointed Board members are:

- Eugene C. Nemechek, Springdale, Ark.
- W. Randall Brown, Nevada, Ohio.

Established under the Pork Promotion, Research, and Consumer Information Act of 1985, the Board develops budgets and awards contracts to carry out a coordinated program designed to strengthen the position of pork in the marketplace. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service oversees the operation of the Board.

For more information, contact Jim Meimann, JMeimann@pork.org, 515-223-2634.

*Managing Checkoff funds for optimum return***National Pork Board Approves 2010 Budget**

The National Pork Board approved the 2010 budget during its regular fall session held in Des Moines this week. The \$44.1 million budget is approximately 25 percent less than the 2009 budget, which reflects the current industry economic situation.

Tim Bierman, president of the National Pork Board, says producers can rest assured that the Checkoff, even with a reduced budget, will continue to invest significant amounts of revenue toward making sure more pork moves through the chain.

*Protecting industry image with science-based facts***New Message Points Dispel Myths on H1N1 Origin, Impact of Modern Agriculture**

Although there's no scientific certainty about the exact origin of novel 2009 H1N1 virus, some in the media have erroneously claimed that it emanated in North Carolina in the 1990s. Still others contend that modern production practices help foster the development of novel viruses.

Dr. Liz Wagstrom at the Pork Checkoff offers these fact-based messages to refute these allegations:

- The claim made by some that the novel 2009 H1N1 virus originally came from swine farms in North Carolina starting back in the 1990s is erroneous. Researchers at that time did find an H3N2 flu virus in pigs there, but it was not the current H1N1 pandemic virus circulating around the world. That virus had a different genetic architecture because it only had components from two species, (people and pigs) not three like novel H1N1. In addition, that virus was found to have died out years ago.
- Assertions that modern swine facilities are most likely to blame for viruses reassorting and changing into novel ones are not correct. This biological process can occur in humans, birds or animals. Modern swine facilities actually help protect pigs from coming into contact with other species such as birds that may carry the genetic component needed to create a novel virus. Pigs in these facilities also are protected from many environmental stresses and disease-carrying vectors, thereby limiting the genetic ability of viruses to alter themselves into novel forms.

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*Cooperating with government partners to ensure success***USDA Official Visits National Pork Board Office**

Rayne Pegg, the new administrator of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) met with members of the National Pork Board on Nov. 9, during the board's fall meeting in Des Moines. AMS oversees the work of the National Pork Board.

Pegg told the board members and staff that the USDA is continuing to look for ways to increase exports of U.S. Pork by keeping all communication channels open with existing and potential customers. She specifically mentioned the Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack's recent visit to China, as another example of what the agency is doing to improve international pork demand.

In other remarks, Pegg cited ongoing work in areas such as animal well-being, the environment and nutrition. “The USDA is focused on making the connection between producers and consumers so that U.S. producers remain competitive in the marketplace.”

Pegg’s appointment to the AMS position was announced earlier this year by Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack. She had been deputy secretary of legislation and policy for the California Department of Food and Agriculture, where she advised the department secretary and the governor’s cabinet on legislative and policy issues. She also worked with growers and the public on issues such as invasive species, organic production, food safety, farmers markets, government oversight and trade barriers.

“This was a great opportunity for us to get acquainted and to help the new administrator better understand how the National Pork Board uses the Pork Checkoff to address issues of importance to U.S. pork producers,” said Tim Bierman, an Iowa pork producer who is president of the board. “It was especially important that we help her understand how we’re using the Checkoff right now to market pork to help producers get through the current economic crisis.”

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PORK CHECKOFF IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Operation Main Street Celebrates Five Years of Setting the Record Straight.

It has taken Mary Kelpinski, the executive director of the Michigan Pork Producers Association, just over one year to tell one million people about modern pork production. She did it by becoming a speaker for Operation Main Street (OMS), the Pork-Checkoff funded program that connects pork producers with community leaders and with the general public.

Since completing a two-day training 14 months ago, Kelpinski has delivered 29 presentations about the pork industry to community civic and business groups; done interviews with three Michigan television stations; appeared on the Michigan Farm Radio Network and received coverage in at least two newspapers. Total audience: 1,174,205.

This week, Kelpinski and 757 of her fellow OMS speakers celebrate the fifth anniversary of one of the most successful outreach programs in American agriculture. Together, the OMS speakers—most of them pork producers—have made more than 3,500 presentations and have reached more than 10 million people all across the country through their presentations and subsequent coverage of those presentations in newspapers and on radio and television. And they have accomplished that for less than what a major advertiser will spend on a 30-second television commercial at the 2010 Super Bowl.

“The success of this program is just phenomenal,” said Steve Weaver, a California pork producer who has given 115 presentations, more than any other OMS speaker. Weaver, also a member of the National Pork Board and a past president of the board, said there is a big difference between OMS and the speaker programs he has seen elsewhere within the agriculture community. “I think a lot of groups have gone to the trouble of training some of their members to speak to consumers, who we all know need help understanding where their food comes from. The problem is that farmers are busy and that once they get home from the training, finding the time to schedule speeches tends to slide to the back burner.”

The relationship between the schedulers and the producer volunteers is so important, said Al Eidson, whose Kansas City company, Eidson & Partners, has worked with the OMS speakers since the beginning in 2004. “We learned a lot about working with volunteers when we developed a similar program for the Missouri Trial Lawyers Association,” he said. “We’ve taken what we learned from the lawyers, who were looking for ways to improve the image of the legal profession, applied it to pork production, added some new wrinkles and the results have been spectacular.”

To offer some training for OMS speakers, Charlie Arnot of CMA Consulting provides some hands-on practice in making presentations and answering media questions. He says speakers typically start their presentations discussing their own operations and how farming has changed. They often will talk about how pork has become leaner and more nutritious. And they’ll take on current topics on the minds of their audiences. When the H1N1 flu broke out, OMS speakers were quickly on the front lines getting out the message that pork remains safe to eat.

Eidson figures that the producer speakers have driven thousands of miles and have given 22,812 hours of their time to OMS over the five years. That is the equivalent of having more than two full-time employees doing nothing but telling a positive story about pork production for 40 hours a week, 50 weeks a year over five years.

“We also know from audience surveys that 79 percent of those who hear an OMS presentation leave with a positive opinion of pork production,” Eidson said. “Like a lot of successful people, the most active OMS speakers are often looking for a new challenge,” he added. “That led to the development of an advanced training program we’re calling OMS 2.0 to reach higher-value audiences. In recent months, the 34 OMS 2.0 speakers have been able to address influential groups of county commissioners, township officials, dieticians and nutritionists, veterinarians and veterinary medicine students, economic development groups and others. We have one producer who gave his entire presentation online to an Internet community.”

In preparing for the fifth anniversary, Eidson said he went back and looked at the National Pork Board’s criteria as it looked for a partner to implement OMS. It said, “Operation Main Street is intended to inspire producers to inform, educate and respond to issues facing the pork industry.” In retrospect, that sentence is very powerful and has proven to be timeless.”

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