

To my fellow pork producers,

Because of the importance of our export markets, especially in this difficult time for all of us, I am writing to encourage you to join me in reviewing our use of feed or water tetracycline-class antibiotics (tetracycline, oxytetracycline or chlortetracycline). It is important that we are meeting not just the U.S. standards for these antibiotics but also the standards established by our trading partners.

I think we all are aware of the requirements for animal health-product use that enable us to comply with U.S. maximum residue limits. These standards were determined through science-based testing by the Food and Drug Administration to ensure the safety of all products entering the national food chain.

However, some countries that purchase U.S. pork products have withdrawal requirements that exceed those on the product label. Individual countries determine their own tissue residue limits. Not all countries agree with the maximum tissue residue limits set by the U.S. government, even though U.S. limits are based on scientifically sound food-safety data.

I think all of us also are aware of how important export markets have become to our industry. University of Missouri economists Ron Plain and Glenn Grimes report in their annual survey that exports contributed \$40.56 for every pig sold in the United States during 2008. They and other economists expect exports for 2009 to fall below the record levels of 2008, but they agree that exports continue to make a positive contribution to hog prices.

With the added pressure on U.S. Pork exports in 2009, those of us who sell to packers that market globally need to take every step we can to help keep those markets open.

Specifically, we need to follow the voluntary 14-day withdrawal period for all feed or water tetracycline class antibiotics. Based on currently available information, a withdrawal of 14 days when using feed or water forms of tetracycline class antibiotics should meet the residue limits of international markets for U.S. pork.

I also encourage you to visit with your packer to understand the packer's policy if a residue greater than the tolerance for the international market is detected. And as always, work with your veterinarian to consider product choices in the finisher phase and to develop appropriate treatment and withdrawal protocols.

I am always encouraged by the commitment of pork producers to doing things the right way. That commitment is the core of our ethical principles, and it is a strong, positive message for our trading partners, as well as for U.S. consumers. Thank you for your attention to this reminder about our food safety practices.

Sincerely,

Steve Weaver,  
President, National Pork Board