

## SWINE

## WELFARE

## FACT SHEET


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## Facts on Animal Welfare

### A guide for pork industry customers

#### What is animal welfare?

Managing animals to reduce or eliminate stress is an important part of animal welfare. Welfare refers to the state of an individual in relation to its environment (Broom, 1991). For example, if pigs become too hot they find ways to cool themselves, like panting, drinking water, or lying in water to evaporate their body heat. If pigs become too cold they will huddle together with other pigs, cover themselves in bedding or lay near a heater. Pigs that are well cared for will grow faster and be healthier; therefore a pig that receives good care from their caretaker will have improved welfare.

#### Why is sound science important to welfare?

Because animal welfare can easily become an emotional issue, it's important to base decisions around sound science. Otherwise, changing the dynamics of the farm may impair rather than enhance welfare. Pork producers recognize the need to use sound science. Sound science is research, conducted properly from accredited institutions. Pork producers seek this to help them answer questions about animal welfare on the farm. The National Pork Board has in place the Pork Checkoff Animal Welfare Committee, a group of producers and scientists, which works to move the industry forward. The committee provides information on a variety of prioritized research areas for producers, including:

1. Sow Gestation Housing
2. Sow Longevity
3. Space Requirements for Swine
4. Handling / Transport
5. Production Practices
6. On Farm Euthanasia

#### How is science applied on the farm?

Because animal agriculture is constantly improving, producers continually apply new technologies and practices on their farm. Sound science is formed into programs that pork producers can use on their farm. Information is delivered in vehicles such as:

- Pork Quality Assurance™ (PQA™), an industry-wide program to help producers strive for a higher standard in pork quality and safety and to instill consumer confidence in a safe and nutritious pork product. More than 75,000 pork producers are certified in PQA. This program helps producers address swine health and welfare comprehensively through the proper use of animal health products.
- Trucker Quality Assurance™, a program to teach truckers about proper handling and transportation of pigs. More than 7,000 transporters are certified in this program.
- Fact Sheets, which provide producers a summary on a variety of topics. The Pork Checkoff has nearly 100 fact sheets available, anywhere from animal ethics to meat quality.
- The Swine Care Handbook, which provides guidelines for all U.S. pork producers on swine care practices, incorporating the latest science-based information.
- Swine Welfare Assurance Program<sup>SM</sup> (SWAP<sup>SM</sup>), a program to maintain and promote the pork industry tradition of responsible animal care through the application of scientifically sound animal care practices.

## What is the Swine Welfare Assurance Program<sup>SM</sup> (SWAP<sup>SM</sup>)?

The Swine Welfare Assurance Program is a science-based tool for pork producers to benchmark and track welfare on their farm. This means that pork producers can take science-based principles and use them to evaluate the welfare of their animals. The program works in any phase of production, from newborns to mature animals (sows and boars). It also fits any farm, regardless of size, type, or geographical location.

SWAP was developed with oversight from the National Pork Board's Animal Welfare Committee. They collaborated with a panel of national and international experts in animal behavior, physiology, veterinary medicine, production, housing, handling and stockmanship.

The function of SWAP is two-fold. SWAP is an on-farm assessment *and* an educational tool. Before, during and after an assessment, a producer can learn and sharpen skills that will benefit the farm and the animals. A Certified SWAP Educator will walk through a farm, evaluating and assessing the nine Care and Well-Being Principles. These principles evaluate three areas of the farm: animal observation, facilities and record keeping.

### The nine Care and Well-Being Principles are:

- |                              |                          |  |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| 1. Herd Health and Nutrition | 4. Body Condition Score  | 7. Facilities                          |
| 2. Caretaker Training        | 5. Euthanasia            | 8. Emergency Support                   |
| 3. Animal Observation        | 6. Handling and Movement | 9. Continuing Assessment and Education |

### How is SWAP recognized?

The National Pork Board has adopted a resolution, which states:

"The Swine Welfare Assurance Program is the science-based, implementable and sustainable industry standard for assuring the welfare of pigs of all ages on the farm. The National Pork Board calls on all producers to continue to address the welfare needs of their animals by participating in the Swine Welfare Assurance Program. The National Pork Board is committed to the continued refinement of SWAP as a tool for providing customers with a credible, science-based assurance that U.S. pork producers are addressing the welfare needs of their animals."

The American Association of Swine Veterinarians (AASV) endorses SWAP.

The American Association of Swine Veterinarians (AASV), comprised of veterinarians who specialize in swine care, health and production, has officially endorsed SWAP as a "valuable on-farm education and assessment tool that will continue the pork industry's commitment to responsible and humane swine care." According to AASV, SWAP continues the legacy of balanced, science-based programs that the AASV encourages and endorses. It continues the AASV efforts to advise swine producers about the best care practices for swine health and production.

### How can SWAP answer welfare questions?

SWAP gives an objective on-farm assessment of animal welfare and can answer concerns about welfare from customers throughout the pork chain. SWAP is practical for producers to implement, and also serves as a valid, defensible and cost-effective alternative to third-party audits that could be developed and imposed on producers by those not familiar with pork production. Although SWAP is an assessment and not an audit, it gives the producer an objective, implementable program that could satisfy the retailers and foodservice requirements.

SWAP is an extension of the pork industry tradition of responsible animal care through scientifically sound principles. Producers' assessment of welfare on the farm sends a message that America's pork producers do the right thing for their animals through the application of husbandry skills and sound scientific principles.

### Reference

Broom, D.M. 1991. Animal welfare: Concepts and measurement. J. of Anim. Sci. 69:4167-4175.