

Addressing consumer demands for socially responsible pork production

Pork Producers Prepare for Emergencies, Checkoff Launches Emergency Action Plan Tool

The floods of 2008 are fresh in Iowa pork producers' memories less than a year after rising waters from the Mississippi and its tributaries flooded thousands of acres of crops and dozens of pig barns following heavy spring rains. Helping pork producers prepare for this and many other types of emergencies is the goal of the Pork Checkoff's new emergency action plan tool.

Officially introduced at the 2009 World Pork Expo, the emergency action plan tool guides producers through the planning and documenting of an emergency response plan. The tool is Web-based and can be found at <http://eap.pork.org>. Users are instructed to log in, describe their operations and consider various situations that can put a farm's employees, animals or facilities at risk. Additionally, users are required to think about and describe the resources, including people, equipment and locations, that can be of use in case disaster strikes.

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The Role of the Pork Checkoff in Today's Industry

The Pork Checkoff is helping U.S. pork producers as they work to earn the trust of their customers by demonstrating accountability and social responsibility in all they do.

"We know that many producers are struggling right now with a profitability challenge on top of the hit the markets took during the H1N1 outbreak," said Chris Novak, chief executive officer for the National Pork Board.

The Checkoff, together with the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC), the American Association of Swine Veterinarians, the U.S. Meat Export Federation and state pork associations worked together on the recent H1N1 outbreak.

"This team worked together to monitor and respond to issues that emerged during the outbreak," said Novak.

A few of the coordinated efforts included: consumer media relations; advertising; communications with food-chain partners and international markets; producer communications and on-farm disease surveillance.

"We are continuing to work with a focus on market recovery and biosecurity," said Novak. "We also continue to plan for the anticipated fall influenza season."

The Pork Checkoff also is focusing on domestic marketing by promoting pork at home. The Checkoff is in year two of The Other White Meat® Tour celebrating pork's benefits with consumers through cooking demonstrations, product sampling and one-on-one interactions. The tour integrates advertising, public relations and retail efforts.

"During the first two quarters of 2009, the Checkoff executed 47 retail promotions across the country," said Novak. "As a result, an estimated 250 million pounds of pork moved through the retail channel."

The Checkoff is working to demonstrate producers' commitment to meeting consumer and customer expectations through We Care. The Checkoff, together with NPPC, is encouraging producers to follow the ethical principles set forth in We Care. Through We Care, producers are demonstrating their commitment to:

- **Produce safe food**
- **Safeguard natural resources**
- **Provide a work environment that is safe and consistent with other ethical principles**
- **Contribute to a better quality of life in their communities**
- **Protect and promote animal well-being**
- **Protect public health**

Through the Pork Checkoff, producers are working together to build a stronger industry.

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PORK CHECKOFF IN THE SPOTLIGHT

National Pork Checkoff Board calls for action on We Care, PQA Plus®; pork producers, customers respond

The National Pork Board has adopted a resolution urging all U.S. pork producers to become certified in the Pork Quality Assurance Plus® program by June 30, 2010, and to achieve PQA Plus® site status by Dec. 31, 2010. Additionally, the board is recommending that producers embrace the ethical principles the industry adopted in 2008.

Steve Weaver, a California pork producer and president of the 15-member board that directs programs funded by the Pork Checkoff, announced the board's action during World Pork Expo in Des Moines.

Weaver said the board adopted the PQA Plus resolution to give additional momentum to the pork industry's burgeoning We Care initiative. That initiative, which includes the PQA Plus program as well as other programs, is part of the industry's desire to earn the trust of its customers, he said.

"We Care is important because it gives pork producers the opportunity to talk about what they do on their farms both in terms of the ethical principles that guide them and the practices they employ," Weaver said. "That's a conversation we want to have with as many people as we can."

"PQA Plus is important because it includes steps that allow us to demonstrate directly to our customers that we are raising animals and producing pork in a socially responsible way."

Weaver said the board "strongly recommends" that pork producers follow the lead of the thousands of producers who already are certified in PQA Plus and who have had their production operations assessed to receive PQA Plus site status.

"I also encourage them to join the producers from across the United States who have pledged their support for We Care," Weaver said. "It is a way for us to come together as an industry to celebrate what we do every day and to demonstrate that we are doing it the right way."

Support for the pork industry's initiative is evident by the rapidly increasing number of producers certified in the Pork Checkoff's PQA Plus program, Weaver said. In May, the number of pork producers certified in PQA Plus reached 30,000.

Pork industry stakeholders also continue to declare their support for these initiatives. At World Pork Expo, Tyson Foods publicly endorsed We Care. Gary Machan, vice president of pork procurement for Tyson Foods, stated that the program mirrors Tyson's own core values. Machan also announced that Tyson will ask all of its U.S. suppliers of pork to become PQA Plus certified by June 30, 2010, and to have pork production sites assessed by the end of that year.

In May, JBS USA, LLC (formerly known as Swift & Company) reiterated its company's support for PQA Plus. In a letter, JBS requested that all of its U.S. suppliers of pigs be certified in the industry's judicious antimicrobial use, pork safety and animal well-being certification program by Dec. 31, 2009.

Seaboard Foods also has expressed its support and has said all of its farms will have PQA Plus site assessment by the end of 2010.

Specifically, We Care is aimed at spreading the industry's message of social responsibility with audiences within and outside the industry. The We Care message was developed by producers and encourages other producers to live and to operate their businesses with care and respect for: The public's health; producer health and safety; the communities that host pork production; the well-being of the animals; and the environment.

PQA Plus is an education and certification program for pork producers. PQA Plus' content incorporates animal care and well-being principles and judicious antimicrobial use guidelines to the pork industry food safety and residue avoidance practices established in earlier versions of the PQA program. Pork producers can receive PQA Plus certification by attending a training session with a National Pork Board-certified PQA Plus advisor. PQA Plus-certified pork producers can receive PQA Plus site status for their production operations by having an advisor conduct an on-farm assessment of animal care practices on their farms.

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