

Addressing consumer demands for socially responsible pork production

Voluntary 14-day Withdrawal Period for all Tetracycline, Oxytetracycline and Chlortetracycline Products

Pork producers are being reminded to review their use of feed/water tetracycline-class antibiotics (tetracycline, oxytetracycline or chlortetracycline) to make sure their use meets standards set by some export markets for U.S. Pork.

All U.S. pork producers are required to adhere to animal health-product withdrawal standards that meet 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 may 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, said Steve Larsen, director of food safety for the Pork Checkoff.

Export markets are important to the U.S. pork industry. According to the annual study conducted by University of Missouri economists Ron Plain and Glenn Grimes, exports contributed \$40.56 for every pig sold in the United States during 2008. Exports for 2009 are expected to fall below the record levels of 2008, but the economists say exports continue to make a positive contribution to hog prices.

With the added pressure on U.S. Pork exports in 2009, producers who sell to packers that market globally should take steps to help keep those markets open, Larsen said.

Specifically, he said, producers are reminded to follow the voluntary 14-day withdrawal period for all feed/water tetracycline class antibiotics. However, producers should follow the labeled directions for injectable tetracycline class antibiotic products. 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.

Larsen urged producers to talk with their packer to understand the packer's policy if a residue greater than the tolerance for the international market is detected. Producers also should work with their veterinarian to consider product choices in the finisher phase and to develop appropriate treatment and withdrawal protocols, he said.

For more information, contact Steve Larsen, SLarsen@pork.org, 515-223-2754.

U.S. Hog Inventory Declines 2 Percent

The need to downsize the U.S. hog herd remains, according to market analysts who note that producers' efforts to cut back on sow numbers are being offset by an increase in productivity and litter sizes. In fact, the average number of pigs saved per litter reached a record high 9.61 for the March-May 2009 period, compared to 9.38 last year, according to the latest USDA Hogs and Pigs Report.

"We are cutting back, but it's at an awfully slow rate," says Ron Plain, a University of Missouri professor of agricultural economics who participated in the Pork Checkoff's recent ag media teleconference to discuss the report. "I think it will take a 10 percent reduction in the sow herd to make a difference."

The U.S. inventory of all hogs and pigs on June 1, 2009 was 66.1 million head, down 2 percent from June 1, 2008, but up 1 percent from March 1. The breeding inventory, at 5.97 million head, was down 3 percent from last year and down slightly from the previous quarter.

The market hog inventory, at 60.1 million head, was down 2 percent from last year but up 1 percent from last quarter. The March-May 2009 pig crop, at 28.5 million head, was down slightly from 2008 but up 2 percent from 2007.

U.S. hog producers intend to have 2.97 million sows farrow during the June-August 2009 quarter, down 3 percent from the actual farrowings during the same period in 2008 and down 5 percent from 2007.

While the pork industry has struggled with red ink for 18 of the last 20 months, largely due to high feed costs, the market may be bottoming now from the hit it took this spring from the H1N1 virus scare in April and May, says Bob Brown, an independent market analyst from Edmond, Okla.

“It appears that the flu scare damaged domestic and export demand. However, when you look back to December of 2003 when the first mad cow case occurred in the United States, the market rebounded two months later to the point where it was before the mad cow case was announced.”

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PORK CHECKOFF IN THE SPOTLIGHT

U.S. Pork Industry Seeks Producer Input on New Direction - Crafting a New Strategic Plan

With a wide array of challenges facing pork producers today, the National Pork Board is seeking input from pork producers across the country for a new plan to shape the future of the U.S. pork industry. The objective of the planning process is to find new solutions to the economic, social, and scientific challenges facing the pork industry. To ensure the plan is focused on critical day-to-day needs of pork producers, a series of regional meetings is planned for July to get pork producer input from three distinct geographic areas of the country.

The meetings are open to all pork producers and to others with an interest in the future of the pork industry and the role of the Pork Checkoff. The meetings will be from 9 A.M. to 2 P.M. on:

- Thursday, July 23-Omaha, Nebraska (Holiday Inn Convention Center-3321 South 72ndSt).
- Friday, July 24-Indianapolis, Indiana (Indiana Pork Producers Office-5722 W. 74thStreet).

And from 10 A.M. to 3 P.M. on:

- Monday, July 27-Clinton, N.C. (Sampson Community College-1801 Sunset Avenue).

During 2010, the National Pork Board will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the creation of the national Pork Checkoff. The strategic planning process is motivated in part by a desire to look at the role of the Pork Checkoff with fresh eyes, just as the pioneering producers who created the Checkoff did 25 years ago, said National Pork Board Chief Executive Chris Novak.

The big questions, Novak said, are, “What are the industry’s needs, concerns and priorities now, and what will they be five years from now and even 25 years from now? And what should the National Pork Board be doing to address these needs through the Pork Checkoff?”

At the regional meetings, producers will hear a brief overview of the National Pork Board, its role in the industry and its statutory obligations. There will be a progress report on the planning process to date. And then producers will have the opportunity to provide their own ideas and to discuss others’ ideas. The best of those ideas will go to the task force of producer leaders who are working with the farmer-leaders of the National Pork Board to craft a new plan for the future. The board is expected to approve a new strategic plan by the end of 2009.

Producers unable to attend one of the regional meetings can still participate in several ways, Novak said. They can provide their ideas to their state office or to state leaders who will attend the meetings. They also will have the opportunity to participate in an online survey that will be available on Pork.org.

Lunch will be provided at the regional meetings. To assist with meal planning, anyone planning to attend one of the regional meetings is asked to call (toll-free) the Producer Service Center at the National Pork Board - 800-456-PORK **before July 17, 2009**. Customer service representatives will have details and directions to the meetings in each of the three cities.