

DEC 1, 2011 | VOL 31 | NO 22

Spotlight Article

Brothers Build Success with Eye on Environment

When Jeff and Alan Wuebker's father, Richard, started raising a few pigs in the back pasture in the 1970s, they didn't realize that the die was cast for a big part of their future. Today, the Buckeye brothers raise nearly 43,000 weaned pigs per year on their diversified farming operation that mixes livestock and crops in an eco-friendly way.

Set just outside of the west-central Ohio town of Versailles, Jeff and Alan, together with their families and employees, tend to not only the pigs, but to about 50 head of dairy beef cattle and more than 1,200 acres of corn, soybeans, wheat and alfalfa.

"I bought my first pigs when I was an eighth grader and have slowly worked my way up," Alan said. "I was in high school when I got my first equipment, so farming has been a passion of mine for many years."

Modernization Aids Environment

The Wuebkers' facilities have changed considerably from the early days, but not their ongoing respect for their animals, land and the people they work with.

After exiting the traditional farrow-to-finish world in the late 1990s, the brothers decided contract farrowing was the best way forward. From 550 sows in 2001 to 1,800 today, the Wuebkers brought their traditional farm into the 21st century in several ways, most notably with the construction of a new breeding, gestation and farrowing barn complex.

Jeff points to the environmental components of the new facility with great pride.

"The ability to keep the sows and workers in ideal conditions is very important to us," he said. "This facility allows us to do that by using cool cells in the summer and heat in the winter."

The new barn features 224 farrowing stalls in four rooms and a 1,200-head breeding-gestation room, all with power ventilation and evaporative cool cells. The complex is connected to their other barns, built in 1997.

To reduce electrical use, the Wuebkers designed the latest facility with translucent panels placed at strategic locations in the roof and sides of the building.

"This allows for a lot of natural light to come in, which is great for the employees and all of us," Jeff said.

When natural light is insufficient, the farm uses compact fluorescent light bulbs, which also reduce electrical costs and have a smaller carbon footprint. According to Jeff, the sunlight-spectrum bulbs use only 23 watts versus 100 for a typical incandescent bulb.

For water conservation, the brothers installed an energy efficient, constant-pressure water pump that ensures an adequate water supply to all the pigs. This is especially useful for reducing water wastage for the sows that are mwatered in long troughs.

Neighbor-Friendly Management

In Ohio, it's not uncommon to have neighbors within eyeshot of an operation, so managing their swine manure to minimize odor was second nature. Since Jeff and Alan both live within yards of the facilities themselves, they have another incentive to keep any odor at bay.

"Air quality is important both inside and outside of the buildings," Jeff said. "We keep things very clean in the barns and direct exhaust fans away from neighbors and at our own homes instead. If there's an odor, we'll be the first to know."

The manure from the sow farm is captured using several methods depending on the barn. Shallow- and deep-pit systems are used in combination with a 2-million-gallon storage pond, which gives the Wuebkers more than a year's worth of storage.

All liquid manure is applied to nearby crop fields using a drag-line system. According to Alan, they apply roughly 3.5 million to 4 million gallons of effluent per year to their own and neighbors' fields.

"It's eliminated our need to apply commercial phosphorous and potassium before corn," Jeff said.

No-till and minimum-till practices, coupled with cover crops, help the brothers ensure their local Stillwater

River watershed is protected.

Beyond the Farm Gate

Keeping a pristine farm image is paramount to the Wuebkers to help reduce disease transmission and for aesthetic reasons. They invested in building their own truck wash bay facility in 2009. Located next to Alan's house, the enclosed facility allows for thorough cleaning and drying of all transport trailers that leave their farm full of weaned pigs.

"We want to portray a professional image when our trucks are out on public roads," Jeff said. "It shows that we're serious about what we do and are willing to go the extra step to ensure animal health."

From hosting tours to making presentations at local civic organizations, the brothers and their families live the

We Care ethical principles as good ambassadors for the pork industry.

Jeff said, "We get involved at the local and state level to make sure that the general public and others who make critical decisions know that we're out here doing what's right."

Stewards safeguard the environment

Wuebker Farms is one of four 2011 Pork Industry Environmental Stewards. Other winners of the award, which is sponsored by the Pork Checkoff and National Hog Farmer magazine,

include:

- Golden Circle Pork, Woodward, Iowa
- Cleveland Pork, Elysburg, Pa.
- John M. Langdon Farms, Benson, N.C.

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Adding measurable value to U.S. Pork

China Helps Drive Export Pace

Editor's notes:

- *Export statistics refer to both muscle cuts and variety meat unless otherwise indicated.*
- *One metric ton = 2,204.622 pounds*

Led by a record-breaking month for pork exports to China, 2011 remains on pace to set new annual records for the value of pork exports, according to statistics released by the USDA and compiled by the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF).

U.S. Pork exports remain on a record-setting pace and are on track to eclipse \$5 billion in value for the year for the first time on record. For the month of September, the U.S. exported 183,495 metric tons of pork valued at \$537.6 million, which trails only March of 2011 as the second-highest monthly export value on record. September exports equated to 26 percent of total U.S. Pork and pork variety meat production and those exports were valued at \$56 per head - solid increases from September 2010 totals of 22 percent of pork and pork variety meat production and \$40.87 per head.

For the year, the U.S. has exported more than 1.6 million metric tons of pork valued at nearly \$4.4 billion, increases of 16 percent and 25 percent, respectively, over the first nine months of 2010.

Pork exports were led by China/Hong Kong, which bought 47,180 metric tons of product, up 64 percent from last year. The 39,020 metric tons purchased by China was a new monthly record, up 92 percent from last year. The value of the exports to China/Hong Kong was \$101.7 million, a 129 percent jump from last year.

Japan remains the leader in value of U.S. Pork exports. September's totals were 38,689 metric tons valued at \$166.2 million, increases of 23 percent in volume and 32 percent in value over last year.

Mexico continues to be the volume leader in pork, importing 41,666 metric tons (7 percent increase) valued at \$87 million (18 percent increase).

Pork exports to South Korea grew 82.3 percent in volume and 153.6 percent in value versus year-ago levels, although the pace has slowed somewhat from earlier in the year.

Japan and South Korea are two of the markets that USMEF, through Pork Checkoff funding, has aggressively targeted in a campaign to raise the visibility of the U.S. pork butt, a cut identified by U.S. exporters as one that has been undervalued.

Canada was another positive market for U.S. pork in September, reaching record-large volumes (20,034 metric tons) valued at \$75.6 million, increases of 31 percent in volume and 42.3 percent in value.

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Pork Reinvigorates Holiday Flavor Flashbacks

From trendy takes on classic comfort foods to stepped-up side dishes, pork is taking a new twist on holiday meals with a wide range of simple, sophisticated dishes.

Consumers are hungry for this information and inspiration, according to the National Pork Board's second annual Holiday Table Trends survey, which reveals that nine out of 10 Americans are looking to incorporate retro dishes into their holiday menus this year.

"Thanks to its versatility, pork has a starring role in any of these tasty trends," says Jill Silverman Hough, a food and wine expert and author of the 100 Perfect Pairings cookbook series.

The Pork Checkoff tapped Silverman Hough to create new recipes based on the trends uncovered by the Holiday Table Trends survey. The ["Pork's Perfect Pairings Report: 2011 Guide to the Holiday Table"](#) showcases six flavorful options from brunch to dinner with wine pairings to match, including:

- **Small plate showstoppers.** Popularized by restaurants, the small plate trend is making a big impact for at-home entertaining. Scaled-down servings mean freedom to experiment with crowd pleasers like [Buffalo Pork Skewers with Blue Cheese Sauce](#).
- **Global cuisines.** Of the 1,000 people who participated in the Pork Checkoff's holiday survey, 80 percent are especially intrigued by Italian flavors this year. In response, the "Pork's Perfect Pairings Report" features [Italian-Herbed Crown Roast of Pork](#) to bring global flavor and unmatched elegance to the holiday table. Consumers are also encouraged to visit [PorkBelnspired.com](#) to review [simple tips for preparing a crown roast](#), from assembly to a mouthwatering tableside presentation.
- **Stepped-up sides.** There's more to holiday entertaining than the centerpiece dish, and retro-inspired sides like [Shaved Brussels Sprouts with Frizzled Ham](#) offer extra center-of-the-table flair.
- **Benefits of brunch.** During the hectic holiday season, few things are as refreshing as a casual but generous midday feast with friends and family. Hearty dishes like [Pork Roast Strata with Green Chiles and Goat Cheese](#) cut down on the kitchen workload while repurposing last night's leftovers.
- **DIY 2.0. From jam to sausage,** Americans are savoring homemade edibles, including [Bacon and Sweet Potato Biscuits with Smoky Honey Butter](#).
- **Flavor flashbacks.** Almost 90 percent of people surveyed said they'd like to see some bygone bites on their end-of-year menus. To serve up a taste of nostalgia with a modern twist during holiday parties, the Pork Checkoff is featuring [Sausage and Deviled Egg Salad Sliders](#).

Pork inspires simple yet special meals

Silverman Hough is the perfect spokesperson to help promote these festive dishes, says Pamela Johnson, director of consumer communications for the Pork Checkoff.

"Jill's culinary creativity and love of pork are impressive, and she makes simple--yet special-

-meals totally accessible to home chefs."

To spread the word, the Pork Checkoff has distributed an electronic media kit, complete with holiday recipes, photos and the "Pork's Perfect Pairings Report," to traditional media outlets and the blogging community, including the popular KitchenPLAY site where a December Progressive Party menu will feature more pork- and trend-inspired recipes. The information encourages consumers to visit PorkBelInspired.com, where they can sign up for the Pork Checkoff's monthly Quick Bites e-newsletter to receive pork updates, recipe inspiration and more.

"We want to inspire consumers with new ideas and flavors, which can help families enjoy tasty pork and reconnect around the table, not only during the holidays, but throughout the year," Johnson says.

For more information, contact Pamela Johnson, PJohnson@pork.org, (515) 223-3528.

Educating the public about modern pork production

Busted: Pork Myths

Myth: You have to cook pork to well done because pigs often carry a parasite that can lead to a condition known as trichinosis in people if they eat undercooked pork.

Fact: While there is a historical basis for caution regarding trichinosis, it's no longer a threat that should concern U.S. pork consumers today. In fact, the odds of getting trichinosis from eating pork sold at retail stores is only 1 in 154 million.* Why? Because, the parasite responsible for this disease has been almost completely eliminated from modern pork production. That's thanks to the American farmers' adherence to strict production practices and the federal government's ongoing monitoring programs of farms and processing facilities.

These facts, coupled with properly cooking pork to USDA's recommended 145 degrees Fahrenheit, a three-minute rest time and proper storage techniques, mean that most of the handful of cases each year is caused by eating wild game meat, not pork. So, it all means eating pork in the 21st century is safer than ever.

For more information visit, pork.org.

*Calculation performed by the National Pork Board based on U.S. Bureau of the Census statistics, 2009.