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Spotlight Article

Pennsylvania Family Exemplifies Eco-Friendly Pork Production

For the Knoebel family, agriculture must focus on both the environment and the economics of pork production to truly be sustainable.

"When my wife, Sarah, and I decided to create Cleveland Pork in 2008, we wanted to make sure it was something sustainable for us as a family and for the environment," says Joel Knoebel, who farms near Elysburg, Pa. "Being in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed makes this even more important, so we have an ongoing duty to keep this facility an eco-friendly one."

On the Knoebel's northeast Pennsylvania farm, these efforts start at their 4,400-head, tunnel-ventilated building, which houses 1,100 grow-finish pigs in four separate rooms. Manure is pumped out from the pits primarily in the spring so the nutrients can help nourish the crops. Cleveland Pork's state-approved nutrient management plan emphasizes environmental protection, while providing for optimal application rates for crops.

This system reduced the Knoebel's crop input costs by \$108 per acre in 2010, and Joel predicts even greater savings this year.

"Part of sustainability of any operation is the economics involved," says Joel, who adds that his manure application records are reviewed annually by the local conservation district and are subject to inspection by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. "Thanks to the nutrient-rich manure we have from our pigs, we have a high-quality fertilizer that enhances our soil profile and provides us a greater return per acre."

Barns keep pigs comfortable

Careful management at Cleveland Pork's state-of-the-art facility also helps maintain a good environment for the pigs and people.

"By pulling air through the central hallway of each barn, we create excellent air quality, which is important to keep pigs healthy and growing as efficiently as possible," says Joel, who adds that a computerized system maintains a consistent temperature, which also enhances pig comfort.

Knoebels support the next generation of ag leaders

While Joel's work keeps him very busy, he makes time to work with 4-H members and regularly speaks to students at his alma mater of Penn State University about career opportunities in agriculture. He and Sarah also host local high school students at their farm to educate ecology class members about modern pork production's role in environmental

stewardship.

In addition, the Knoebels offer a scholarship at the high school they attended for students interested in pursuing an agricultural career. These outreach efforts reflect the Knoebel's sincere love of the land and commitment to excellence.

"For us, it's about continuous improvement," Joel says. "We need to learn from today so we can be better tomorrow."

Stewards safeguard the environment

Cleveland Pork is one of four 2011 Pork Industry Environmental Stewards. Other winners of this honor, which is sponsored by the Pork Checkoff and National Hog Farmer magazine, include:

- John M. Langdon Farms, Benson, N.C.
- Wuebker Farms, Versailles, Ohio
- Golden Circle Pork, Woodward, Iowa

The operations were evaluated on their manure management systems, water and soil conservation practices, odor-control strategies, farm aesthetics and neighbor relations, wildlife habitat promotion, innovative ideas used to protect the environment, notes Lynn Harrison, former president of the National Pork Board.

"The 2011 Stewards are real-world examples of how producers demonstrate the We Care principles every day as natural protectors of the environment and as good neighbors in their communities."

To read more about the Environmental Stewards, go to the [2011 fall issue of Pork Checkoff Report](#).

For more information, contact Mike King, MKing@pork.org, (515) 223-3532.

Addressing consumer demands for socially responsible pork production

Pork Checkoff Offers Insight, Tips on Manure Pit Foaming

Reports of pit foaming are by no means a new phenomenon, but fall tends to see more incidences than other times of the year. For that reason, it's prudent for producers and others working around deep-pit manure systems to know how to keep safety as the No. 1 priority when conditions produce foaming.

"Whenever you are about to agitate or remove manure from a deep pit, you need to remove the pigs first, if at all possible, and make sure no one is in the building," says Allan Stokes, Pork Checkoff's director of environmental programs. "It's best to clearly mark entryways to buildings where manure agitation or pump-out is going on by using door tags, such as the free ones offered by the Checkoff through the [Pork Store](#)."

As Stokes makes clear, "Safety must be the first concern for people and animals." With that goal in mind, he offers some additional key steps to help foster safety, including: Maintaining maximum ventilation rates for a period prior to and during agitation and pump-out to help to avoid gas build-up in the building; and shutting off equipment not necessary for manure removal, such as heaters and automatic feed systems, which could provide

ignition sources for any gas pockets in the building.

Stokes also advises producers to be wary of products that claim to "de-foam" pits or make them safer to work around. The Pork Checkoff and others are funding ongoing research into what causes pits to foam. Until the causes are clearly known, it is difficult to determine what will actually work to eliminate pit foaming.

In 2009, the Pork Checkoff funded Iowa State University researchers to investigate the causes of pit foaming and the steps producers could take to ensure human and animal safety. Their findings are in the report titled, [Deep Pit Swine Facility Flash Fires and Explosions: Sources, Occurrences, Factors, and Management](#).

Producers also can download the Checkoff's fact sheet, [Safe Manure Removal Policies](#), or order it through the [Pork Store](#) at no cost.

Promoting teamwork within the pork industry

Hog Thefts Highlight Need for Farm Security

Swine barns in southern Minnesota have recently become a target for thieves who have stolen hundreds of pigs from at least two farms in Nicollet County and Kandiyohi County. Minnesota law enforcement officials are urging pork producers across the country to step up security measures at their own farms.

"We haven't had much trouble with situations like this before," says Marc Chadderdon, a criminal investigator with the Nicollet County Sheriff's Department, who noted that many of the thefts in his area occurred from Aug. 14 to Sept. 17. "These cases can be tough to investigate, because they often aren't reported right away."

Investigators are attempting to learn the whereabouts of 150 pigs, which were stolen from a farm near Lafayette, Minn. The farm owner told deputies that he had gone in to cull all the market-ready pigs from his barns and found 150 animals missing.

Nicollet County investigators also are working with deputies from Kandiyohi County, where 590 pigs were stolen from a large livestock operation near Lake Lillian on Aug. 15. The value of those pigs is estimated at more than \$100,000.

Investigators analyze the crimes

There are a number of similarities in these thefts, said Chadderdon, who notes that the perpetrators appear to be:

- **Conducting surveillance.** Anyone can go online to Google Earth and pinpoint the location of swine facilities. They also can identify the operations that are the most isolated, says Chadderdon, who also has been in contact with law enforcement officials in Lyon County, Iowa, who alerted him to this possibility.
- **Thwarting alarm systems.** In the Minnesota break-ins, the vandals cut through the ventilation curtain and bird netting on the side of the barns. "They cut near a post so the entry point wasn't obvious," Chadderdon says. While the Nicollet County farm had an alarm system, it wasn't triggered by this style of break-in.
- **Stealing animals that aren't marked or tattooed.** In addition, prime targets have been 250- to 275-pound animals that are ready for market. "Whoever is stealing the hogs appears to have some knowledge of the hog industry," Chadderdon says.
- **Selling the hogs as quickly as possible.** Law enforcement officials suspect that the thieves are probably selling the stolen hogs at auction barns and may be

moving 30 to 40 hogs at a time.

Protect yourself

Since producers make a large investment in their livestock and their farms, it's important to take some simple steps to protect these assets. Specifically, Chadderdon encourages pork producers to:

- **Conduct animal counts.** Accurate numbers are key. "I know farmers don't like to take the time to do this, but it's the only way to know for sure if you're missing any livestock," Chadderdon says.
- **Report suspicious activity.** Don't be afraid to contact local law enforcement officials if something seems amiss at your farm. "Also, if someone doesn't normally sell hogs to your auction barn or packing plant, or an existing customer is suddenly selling a lot more hogs than normal, don't be afraid to report it," Chadderdon says. "You can remain anonymous when you call the authorities."

Also, check Pork.org for more farm security tips.

Adding measurable value to U.S. Pork

August Pork Exports Soar to New Heights

Editor's notes:

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

August was another outstanding month for U.S. Pork exports, according to statistics released by USDA and compiled by the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF). Pork exports reached their highest monthly volume of the year at 186,068 metric tons, and the second-highest value total of all time at \$531.2 million. Pork exports are on pace to set new value records in 2011.

Pork exports surge in Asia, Canada, Russia, Southern Hemisphere markets

August pork exports were 27 percent higher than a year ago in terms of volume and 44 percent higher in value (surpassed only by the record \$553.6 million, set in March 2011). This performance pushed year-to-date exports to nearly 1.44 million metric tons valued at \$3.82 billion - an increase of 16 percent in volume and 23 percent in value over last year's pace. August exports equated to 27.3 percent of production with a value of \$56.27 per head, compared to 22.4 percent and \$40.87 in August 2010. For the year, pork exports equated to 27.3 percent of production with a per head value of \$53.98.

August exports to Japan, the leading value market for U.S. Pork, were 28 percent higher than a year ago in volume at 40,887 metric tons and 37 percent higher in value at \$168.4 million. For the year, exports to Japan were 13 percent ahead of last year's record pace in terms of volume at 328,353 metric tons and 16 percent higher in value at \$1.27 billion.

South Korea continues to be a bright spot for U.S. Pork as August exports more than doubled last year's volume total at 10,268 metric tons and more than tripled the value at \$31.2 million. For the year, exports to Korea were 142 percent higher in volume at 146,627 metric tons and 192 percent higher in value at \$374.5 million. These totals have already set new full-year records for Korea, topping the previous highs set in 2008 of 133,532 metric tons valued at \$284 million.

Exports to China also continued to surge, with a record August volume at 35,636 metric tons pushing this year's volume up 336 percent at 188,622 metric tons to go along with a 237 percent increase in value at \$316.8 million. Exports to Canada were up 9 percent in volume at 131,004 metric tons and 14 percent in value at \$464.2 million. August export volume to Russia was the second-highest of the year at 8,213 metric tons. Though export volume to Russia at 49,143 metric tons was down about 12 percent for the year, value was up 22 percent to \$149.4 million. Another market showing exceptional growth was Australia, up 18 percent for the year in volume at 45,865 metric tons and 39 percent in value to \$147.4 million (less than \$1 million short of the full-year value record established last year). Exports to Central-South America were up 22 percent to 44,980 metric tons with volume up 33 percent to \$113.4 million. Existing trade agreements have assisted exports to this region and ratification of the Colombia and Panama FTAs will foster further growth.

Mexico continues to be the top volume destination for U.S. pork at 344,875 metric tons down 3 percent from last year's record pace. August volume of 44,641 metric tons was steady with last year but up 13 percent from July, and the value of August's exports to Mexico rose more than 10 percent. For the year, export value to Mexico was up 2 percent to just under \$654 million.

For more information, contact Jim Herlihy at jherlihy@usmef.org.

Pork Producers Seek America's Next "Crock-Stars"

Nothing brings families together like a favorite meal, and slow cookers are ideal for preparing hearty, one-pot wonders. To inspire culinary creativity, America's Pork Producers and *Good Housekeeping* are inviting home cooks to show off their unique twists on classic slow-cooker recipes for a chance to win \$2,000 and a six-month supply of pork.

"With the slow cooker and pork, it's so easy to prepare family favorites that get everyone around the table," says *Good Housekeeping* Food Director Susan Westmoreland, who manages the magazine's test kitchen. "Since pork pairs well with so many flavors, home cooks can experiment with different ingredient combinations to find the next family favorite."

To ignite inspiration for the 2011 slow cooking season, the Pork Checkoff is hosting the second annual "America's Next Pork Crock-Stars" contest. Consumers submitted recipes in one of four categories, including Pork Chili, Soups and Stews; Pulled and Barbeque Pork; Pork Roast; and Pork Inspiration (miscellaneous category).

Pork fans are voting online to determine the 20 finalists, five in each of the four categories. One finalist in each category will ultimately be crowned one of "America's Next Pork Crock-Stars" by a panel of judges, including Westmoreland and the 2010 Pork Crock-Star winner, Linda Cifuentes.

Contest inspires culinary creativity

To help spread the word about the contest, Westmoreland participated in an integrated media tour with television broadcasters and online journalists and bloggers. During the media tour, Westmoreland showcased the surprisingly simple, [Asian-style Simmering Pork Shoulder recipe](#) featured in the new *Good Housekeeping Test Kitchen Cookbook: Essential Recipes for Every Home Cook*.

This irresistible dish, which is cooked in a fragrant combination of soy sauce, dry sherry, fresh ginger and orange peel, includes pork shoulder, one of many juicy, flavorful pork cuts that can be easily prepared in a slow cooker. "While slow-cooker pork recipes are perfect

for any season, they fit exceptionally well during this busy time of year," says Pamela Johnson, director of consumer communication for the Pork Checkoff, who adds that the Pork Checkoff served up even more time-saving pork recipes during [National Eat Together Week](#).

Win free pork via social media

To celebrate the "America's Next Pork Crock-Stars" contest, the Pork Checkoff is giving away a free slow cooker and \$25 worth of pork every day throughout the month of October. Be sure to "like" [Facebook.com/PorkBeInspired](#) and follow @AllAboutPork on Twitter for your chance to be one of the lucky daily winners.

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

