

Washington Pork Producers Newsletter

Summer 2008

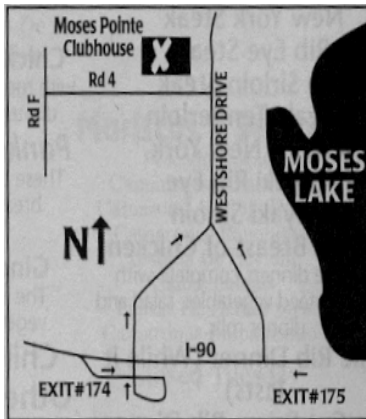
MARK YOUR CALENDAR

WPP SUMMER MEETING

Date: July 11th, 2008
Time: 3:00-5:00 PM, hosted dinner to follow
Location: Moses Pointe Steak House
4524 Westshore Drive
Moses Lake, WA

Topics will include: the budget, delegate selection for the 2008 Pork Forum, and Swine Information Day 2009

All Washington Pork Producers members are welcome and encouraged to attend



Congress Approves 2008 Farm Bill Favorable To U.S. Pork Industry

Following veto override votes of 316-106 in the House and 82-13 in the Senate, The 2008 Farm Bill – officially known as the Farm, Nutrition and Bioenergy Act – was enacted into law on May 22nd, with the exception of the bill's trade title. Programs included in the \$289 billion, five-year Farm Bill that will be beneficial to the U.S. pork industry, according to the National Pork Producers Council:

- Change the Mandatory Country-of-Origin Labeling law to include four new label categories for meat, including one to address Canadian feeder pigs by allowing flexibility in labeling so that producers and packers can reduce sorting costs. The law also was changed to ease recordkeeping for verifying an animal's country of origin by allowing the use of existing records, such as normal business records, animal health papers, and import or customs documents.
- Require a study that looks at the costs and impacts on pork producers and consumers of requiring packers to report wholesale pork cut prices and volumes.
- Authorize a voluntary national trichinae certification program, which will certify that exported pork is trichinae-free thus further increasing export opportunities.
- Authorize the U.S. Pork Center of Excellence, which coordinates research, teaching, and extension for the pork industry on a national scale.
- Authorize research grants for mapping the swine

genome.

- Authorize research and education grants for the study of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, including the movement of antibiotic-resistant bacteria into ground and surface water, and for the study of judicious use of antibiotics in veterinary and human medicine.
- Increase funds for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and make it easier for pork producers to qualify for the cost-share conservation program.
- Increase funds for the Conservation Security Program to allow more acres to be enrolled and restructure the program to provide conservation stewardship payments that encourage producers to implement additional conservation practices.
- Allow the use of manure and manure biogas for advanced biofuel and renewable biomass production.
- Provide incentives for expanding production of advanced biofuels made from agricultural and forestry crops and associated waste materials, including animal manure and livestock and food processing waste.
- Give producers the right to cancel production contracts within three days of signing.
- Allow producers, at the time of signing a contract, to opt out of using arbitration – and instead use the courts – to settle contract disputes.
- Give producers the right to settle disputes involving production or marketing contracts in the federal court district in which production occurred.
- Allow contracts between entities in different states to specify which state's laws apply when disputes arise unless the laws in the state in which production occurs take precedent.
- Sense of Congress regarding the pseudorabies eradication program, recognizing the threat of feral swine to the domestic swine population and establishing continued support for the swine surveillance system.
- Increase funding for the export-promoting Market Access Program and for the Foreign Market Development program.
- Direct the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration to provide Congress an annual report on the number and resolution of livestock cases brought under the Packers and Stockyards Act.
- Allow interstate shipment of state-inspected meat and poultry from packing plants that have state inspection programs that are identical to the federal program.

Your WPP Board Members

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Farm Bill Con't from page 1

The bill also lowers the ethanol blender's credit from 51 cents per gallon to 45 cents and extends the import tariff on ethanol to Dec. 31, 2010, from Dec. 31, 2009.

NPPC, which first raised concerns about the rapid rise of corn-based ethanol production in September 2006, said extending the 54-cent import tariff will further inflate the high feed costs currently affecting pork producers.

"NPPC supports ethanol production," said NPPC's Black. "But pork producers still have concerns about corn costs and availability, both of which are affected by ethanol production, and about our ability to compete for corn on a level playing field with the subsidized ethanol industry."

Manure Can Be a Good Thing

Animal manure is considered an agricultural commodity that can be utilized as a fertilizer source for pastureland, cropland, and hay production. Manure is recognized as an excellent source of the plant nutrients nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and potassium (K). In addition, manure returns organic matter and other nutrients such as calcium, magnesium, and sulphur to the soil, building soil fertility and quality.

Any financial valuation of manure would be dependent on the market value of the N, P, K, and other plant nutrients that the manure is replacing, organic matter as a soil amendment, and the nutrient needs of the crops and fields receiving the litter.

The nutrient content of manure will vary depending on animal type and diet, type and amount of bedding, manure moisture content, and storage method.

Generally speaking, liquid manures will contain a lower nutrient content than solid manures, due to the dilution effect. Assuming all nutrients are needed by the crop, higher manure nutrient content corresponds to higher manure value. Higher values help to offset transportation and handling costs.

Manure Composition

Nitrogen in manure is found in the organic and inorganic forms. The organic form (slow release) slowly mineralizes providing plant-available N, while inorganic forms (fast release) consist primarily of NH₄-N and are immediately plant available. However, inorganic forms are also susceptible to loss through ammonia volatilization during storage and field application. Promptly incorporating the manure into the soil can reduce these N losses. Due to the slow release organic form and potential losses of the inorganic form, not all of the N is available to the crops during the year of application. Nitrogen that is expected to be available to the plant has value as a fertilizer. The N which is lost to the environment or which is not available to the crop in the year it is needed or subsequent years does not have value.

Phosphorus and Potassium in manure are mostly present in the inorganic form. This means that P and K are similar to commercial fertilizer in that they are readily available for plant uptake. Most nutrient management plans are based on a P-Index or P-threshold which may limit manure application on some fields. Therefore, the value of these nutrients is based on crop nutrient needs as determined by a soil test and yield goal.

Other nutrients such as calcium (Ca), magnesium (Mg) and sulfur (S) may be found in manure and are beneficial to the soil if a deficiency exists. Both Ca and Mg create an added value by

producing a liming effect when added to the soil.

Organic matter, primarily undigested feed and bacteria in the feces, increases infiltration of water, increases water holding capacity, enhances retention of nutrients, reduces wind and water erosion, and promotes the growth of beneficial organisms. Although the value of organic matter is hard to quantify, higher quality soils are associated with increased yields and higher economic returns.

Because manure is not a balanced fertilizer, some plant nutrient needs may be met while other nutrients may be under- or over-supplied. Any nutrient that is undersupplied by a manure application could incur a subsequent fertilizer application cost which would, in effect, lower the net value of the manure. Any nutrient that is oversupplied by a manure application would not have immediate value because it was not needed by the crop. www.extension.org

Hog Manure Treated With Borax Cuts Odor

Besides smelling unpleasant, the hydrogen sulfides, ammonia and other gases emitted by stored hog waste can damage air quality. Additionally, disagreeable odors can lead to tension between livestock producers and their neighbors.

Using molecular genetics tools, the team measured the treatment's effects on the manure's resident SR bacterial population, which produces hydrogen sulfide. The team's analyses of bacteria and air showed the borax treatments reduced SR populations by 99 percent after the first week, and hydrogen sulfide levels by 80 percent after six weeks.

Borax offers a promising addition for researchers evaluating manure-odor management because the mineral is naturally occurring, fairly safe to handle, and readily available.

www.pigprogress.net

New Pork Resources Available Online



The Pork Checkoff has created two new resources for pork producers that are available online at pork.org.

The first brochure is Alternative Feed Ingredients in Swine Diets. With increasing feed costs and a potential shortage of feed grains, producers must consider the use of alternative feedstuffs in their pigs' rations. This brochure lists ingredients that can cover animals' energy and protein needs when corn and soybeans are not easily available or when their use is not economically feasible. Special consideration for the alternative ingredients, including maximum inclusion rates in swine diets are included.

This brochure was edited by Mark Boggess of the Pork Checkoff, Joel DeRouchey of Kansas State University, and Hans H. Stein of the University of Illinois, and is available online at <http://www.pork.org/documents/PorkScience/Alternative%20Feed%20Brochure.pdf>.

The second brochure is Selenium Toxicity in the in the Western United States' Pork Industry. Cases of selenium toxicity have been confirmed in herds in some western states. This brochure will help producers identify selenium toxicity if it is a problem on their farm and take measures to correct it. The information was adapted from a report by Don Mahan of Ohio State University. The document is available at <http://www.pork.org/documents/PorkScience/Selenium%20Toxicity.pdf>.

NEWS FROM WSU...



Research in Pork Quality Benchmarking, and Use of Alternative Feedstuffs by Pigs

Collaborators: John P. McNamara, Scientist and Professor; Zhihua Jiang, Assistant Scientist; and Assistant Professor Jan Busboom, Extension Specialist

Brief Background

The WPP partially funded a study to determine the potential efficacy and/or cost savings in including garbanzo beans and canola seed meal in the diets of finishing pigs. The pork industry has been adapting in response to the economic and feed distribution issues generated by the bio-fuels industry and the global marketplace. Moreover, in the PNW we have some unique challenges and opportunities including: availability of alternative feeds such as Garbanzo beans, peas, and canola; medium sized processing plants that have unique product specifications and strong Canadian competition for those markets.

In addition to the differences in macronutrient concentrations, beans such as garbanzos and canola seeds may contain phytochemicals and other compounds which by themselves may increase health or efficiency of animals, or alter their product composition in ways that may improve the health of those consuming pork. It is possible that garbanzo beans may alter the gene expression of different lines of pigs in different ways that enhance or diminish their effectiveness. For example, constituents of garbanzos may alter the cellular development of adipose tissue to increase or decrease marbling or subcutaneous fat. The garbanzos may alter the composition of fat in ways beneficial to or detrimental to the value of the carcass.

Marketing issues are very important for the PNW pork industry. A recent industry-funded study tour of the PNW pork processing industry identified several competitive advantages including lower transportation costs than for Canadian or Montana pigs; the fact that they are American pigs and they are marketing some of their products as American and reasonably good animal health and freedom from injection site lesions and residues. At the same time, challenges identified included: perceived or actual variation in product quality and perceived unresponsiveness of the WPP to quality issues. We at WSU know that Washington producers are not only willing to respond but are seeking the means to meet the needs of their customers. What is lacking in the identification of the specific changes required to produce the desired result and in some cases even the desired result is a bit unclear.

In addition to helping to answer these questions, we wanted to ask whether or not these diets would elicit changes in gene expression in the key tissues of the pig (liver, muscle, fat). This will prove useful information by itself, and in the context of furthering support of research in the **PNW on pigs, may provide information that will attract further significant research funding from industry or governmental agencies.**

The first phase of this trial, including a feeding trial at WSU and a visit to collect data at Masami meats in Klamath Falls, has been completed. The

laboratory work continues and will take some time. In addition, the carcass quality work still needs to be done. This is our interim report on some of the production aspects of this trial.

Objectives:

- Determine the current quality status of individual producers (Benchmarking).
- Conduct a feeding trial on finishing pigs feed either the SWC control diet (corn, SBM and peas); garbanzo beans to replace some corn and peas; canola seed meal to replace SBM and some peas, or both.
- Determine production data such as feed composition, feed intake, and growth
- Determine carcass data—weights, tissue composition, and loin area, fat thickness, marbling, fat quality.
- Determine drip loss, fatty acid composition of fat and muscle, and taste panel.

Methods:

Benchmarking Study

Dr. Busboom and student Deepti Chadalavada visited the Masami Meats plant at Klamath Falls, OR. Prior to that we coordinated with three producers to get the information on the pigs they were sending. The pigs were those that were pooled at Seltice on March 6th and killed Monday March 10th. In addition to the producer pigs, several pigs from the WSU Swine Center were shipped and studied as well.

Pigs from each producer were, or will be evaluated for the following: smoothness of hide pulling, other carcass defects, hot and cold carcass weight, muscle score, 1st, 10th and last rib fat thickness, loin eye area, Masami marbling score, Masami color score, NPPC color score, NPPC marbling score, Minolta L* color value. We may also do pH, water holding capacity, Fat %, Warner Bratzler Shear Force on a subsample of animals.

Study in finishing pigs

This study consisted of feeding 182 pigs at the WSU Swine Center one of 4 diets:

- 1) *Control*: 61.5 % Corn, 31 % Peas, 4 % SBM
- 2) *Garbanzo Beans*: 62.5 % Corn, 30 % garbanzo beans, 4 % SBM
- 3) *Canola Seed Meal (CSM)*: 77.5 % Corn, 19 % CSM, no SBM
- 4) *Both garbanzos and CSM*: 71 % corn, 12.75 % garbanzo beans, 12.75 % CSM

The diets were balanced to be: 13.9 % CP; 0.7 % Lysine, 0.25 % Methionine; 3.45 Mc/kg DE, 3.2 Mc/kg ME (1.55 Mc/lb, 1.45 Mc/lb) according to NRC recommendations (Table 1).

Pigs were started at an average body weight (BW) of 127.7 lbs and were fed 9 weeks until the average BW was 240.7 lbs. An initial slaughter group of 26 pigs was killed for a comparison of body composition and gene expression changes.

Measurements:

Feed intake (including feed analysis of Crude Protein (CP), fiber, fat, starch, fatty acids, energy, calcium, phosphorous) daily. Body weight change weekly.

Carcass characteristics as usual-HCW, CCW, yield, 1st, 10th, last rib back fat (BF), Loin Eye Area (LEA), % lean, others as needed. Samples of subcutaneous adipose tissue, liver, and semitendinosus and longissimus muscles were taken and

	Control	Garb	CSM	Both
Dry Matter (%)	87.85	87.03	85.90	88.84
Crude Protein (%)	13.29	11.56	13.67	12.90
Crude Fat (%)	3.79	2.81	2.96	7.31
Crude Fiber (%)	3.52	3.55	4.46	4.09
Ash (%)	6.35	6.31	6.39	7.64
Phosphorus (%)	0.54	0.52	0.69	0.61
Calcium (%)	0.64	0.57	.055	0.57
Calculated TDN (%)	78.78	77.78	77.19	80.57
Calculated ME (MCal/lb)	2.85	2.81	2.79	2.97

immediately placed into Trizol solution for extraction of RNA for analysis of expression of genes critical to carcass growth and quality. Depending on available budget, samples will be prepared and analyzed on a gene array chip to determine the gene expression profile in response to diet.

Results

Dietary Compositions and Intakes

The dietary compositions, upon analysis, were close to but not as precisely the same as our original estimates (Table 1). There was slightly less CP in all diets as expected based on analysis of ingredients, likely due to less CP in the corn and peas than originally thought. For the Control and the Garbanzo diet, only 2 of the 4 control and 2 of the 6 batches tested were in fact low, if they are removed the average CP, % were 13.73, 12.7, 13.7 and 12.9 for the four diets, within expected ranges for variable commodities like garbanzo beans and canola seed meal.

Animals consumed all diets at rates expected for their age and weights. The average consumption was about 6 ½ lbs per day over the 49 day period (from about 120 to 250 lbs). Over that period, Control, Garbanzo, CSM and 'both' treatment groups ate 318, 311, 324 and 334 lbs of feed (6.5, 6.4, 6.6 and 6.8 lbs/

d). None of these will be significantly different.

Animal Performance

Body weights and growth were similar for all treatments. Animals started on feed at about 122 lbs, and after 63 days gained 99.6, 99.9, 95.7 and 101.7 lbs for control, garbanzos, CSM and 'both' treatments. At the end of the trial, the remaining pigs had gained 116, 106, 110, and 118 lbs for control, garbanzos, CSM and 'both' treatments.

The lbs BW gain to lbs feed ratios were 0.31, 0.32, 0.30 and 0.31 for the four treatments, not different (through 7 weeks). There was no difference in average body weight at slaughter (259, 258, 256, 254 lbs) for the 4 treatments.

Slaughter and Carcass Data

Slaughter and carcass data are shown in Table 1. There was no difference in BW, Hot Carcass Weight (HCW) or Cold Carcass Weight (CCW) among treatments. Weights of organs and visceral fat was not different.

The animals fed Canola Seed meal had slight more backfat (1.00 in and 1.03 in on CSM and Both) versus Control (0.96 in) and Garbanzos (0.98 in), but this will probably not be statistically different. Animals fed control diets or CSM diet had slightly large LEA (6.32 sq in and 6.27 sq in) versus 6.08 and 5.76 on the diets containing garbanzos. The garbanzo bean diet had about 1.8 % points less protein than control, and the 'both' diet had about 0.4 % less. The animals on the garbanzo diet did eat slightly less feed, and thus the difference in protein intake would likely explain the difference in LEA. However, there is no reason to think that a diet with garbanzo beans at the same protein concentration would have any affect.

Interestingly the animals eating the garbanzo diet had a slightly lower marbling score (2.23 versus 2.61) than control, CSM and 'both' were intermediate. Given that pigs consuming garbanzos had no difference in backfat and certainly no increase in marbling, the slightly smaller loin would most certainly be attributed to the lowered protein intake.

Summary

At this juncture, there is no reason to think that garbanzo beans or CSM at rates included here will affect performance or quality of market pigs fed properly balanced diets. This of course leaves the decision to use these products up to price and availability compared to classic grains and protein supplements.

We will be reporting shortly on the results from Masami meets, and later this summer on the gene expression analysis.

Treatment	BW lbs	HCW lbs	Dressing %	Back Fat In.	Lion Eye Area sq. in	Muscle Score	Lean Color	Lean Firmness	Marbling Color	Fat Color	Fat Firmness
Control	258.8	168.1	0.63	0.96	6.32	2.46	2.71	2.82	2.61	2.89	3.04
Garbonzo Beans	257.6	169.5	0.63	0.98	6.08	2.38	2.36	2.45	2.23	3.09	3.09
Canola Seed Meal	255.5	166.1	0.61	1.00	6.27	2.38	2.77	2.73	2.41	2.55	2.68
Garbs & CSM	254.0	163.7	0.62	1.03	5.76	2.43	2.63	2.50	2.58	2.92	2.88
Standard Deviation	14.63	11.38	0.02	0.25	0.80	0.25	0.49	0.53	0.60	0.67	0.70

Ethics in Youth Livestock Programs

Some say ethics is just knowing and doing the right thing. Knowing the difference between right and wrong is easy, but doing the right thing is much more difficult! Building our character traits of caring, trustworthiness, respect, fairness, responsibility, and citizenship helps to make doing the right thing a little easier.

Caring means showing concern for others, both to people you work with and to your animals. A caring youth will:

- help new exhibitors
- say “thank you” and express your appreciation for others
- congratulate other exhibitors
- avoid gossip, negative publicity, taunting, and teasing others
- provide daily feed and water
- provide a clean barn or stall
- treat the animal humanely

Caring for animals includes placing more importance on the health and safety of the animal than the opportunity to go to the big show!

Respect is treating people like you would like to be treated. Respectful youth will:

- speak kindly about leaders, fair committees, and fellow 4-H'ers and listen to others
- keep animals comfortable and clean, treat them humanely
- provide daily feeding and watering
- follow proper drug use to produce a safe, high quality product for consumers

Trustworthiness means doing what you say you will do. A trustworthy youth will:

- provide daily care for your animals or make arrangements for help
- follow the rules for animal ownership and registration
- consult with a veterinarian and read labels before administering any medication
- follow all food safety rules and withdrawal times, and use only approved drugs

Fairness means listening to others, playing by the rules, and treating everyone equally. A fair youth will:

- follow ownership and registration deadlines
- know and follow show rules
- be considerate of other exhibitors
- speak well of winners and resist the temptation to gossip

Responsibility means doing the right thing, considering the consequences of your actions, and being accountable for your decisions. Responsible youth will:

- care for animals daily
- train animals to be exhibited safely
- read, know, and abide by all rules
- follow entry deadlines
- read and follow all drug and medication rules and regulations
- take care of the property of others

Responsibility is also demonstrated by good sportsmanship, good herdsmanship, and good showmanship at ALL times, not just when the judge is watching.

Citizenship means helping others and obeying the law. Youth demonstrate citizenship when they:

- help others in need
- work with less experienced exhibitors to improve their skills and knowledge
- share resources with others
- follow quality assurance methods to produce a product safe for consumers

Over the past decade, scandals have affected both 4-H

and FFA shows nationwide due to the illegal use of drugs, physical alterations of animals, false ownership, and using professional fitters when the rules specified that it was not allowed. This has been damaging to the program and to consumer's confidence in the product we produce. It is time to place emphasis on learning rather than winning. Building your character traits can help accomplish this.

By exhibiting the six character traits of caring, respect, trustworthiness, fairness, responsibility, and citizenship, you will help to build the positive image of 4-H and FFA.

by Denise Schwab, Iowa State University

Pork Producer's Response to Seattle Post Intelligencer

The following letter to the editor was submitted by director and member, Mark Street, to the Seattle Post Intelligencer concerning pork production and safety.

Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to your article and blog (dated June 8 and June 4, respectively) on Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) in pigs. As a pork producer, I take great pride in producing a safe product and I appreciate this opportunity to clarify some of the misconceptions your readers may form after reading your articles.

Two points resounded with me from your article. First, your paper's discussion of the number of pigs with MRSA in the United States; and second, your author's discussion about the risk of disease from handling and consuming food products.

Tara Smith, the University of Iowa researcher, is conducting important studies to find the occurrence of MRSA in pig populations. As you note, she has found that in some farms many pigs carry the bacteria, but you omitted saying that she also has found that in some farms no MRSA is found in any of the pigs. She has discussed her research in several forums and I have followed with interest, including when she has noted that although people in close contact with pigs may carry the bacteria in their noses or skin, none of these people –nor the pigs, for that matter, appear to exhibit any kind of disease.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC, has noted in a public document sent to the United States Congress that, “all U.S. outbreaks of community-associated MRSA have been traced to conditions that facilitate human to human transmission” and not from any kind of animal. They have also noted that 80 percent of life-threatening MRSA infections occur from patient-to-patient contact in healthcare facilities.

Similarly, the CDC also has stated that there is no documented role for meat consumption or handling in MRSA transmission, emphasizing what other international public health authorities (such as the Dutch food safety authority) have said on the subject: eating pork is not a risk factor for MRSA.

I am rewarded for my efforts as a pork producer, as I track the safety record of the product I provide. Pork is seldom associated with outbreaks of foodborne illness and I am comforted to know that common sense food handling and cooking practices such as hand washing after handling raw product and cooking to the appropriate temperature will ensure the safety of pork products.

I believe that my practices, as well as those of other pork producers, are deliberate and designed to reduce potential threats to the safety of the food product I offer, the health and safety of the people that I employ and the health and well-being of my animals. I care also because I am a consumer of my own product.

Signed, *Mark Street*

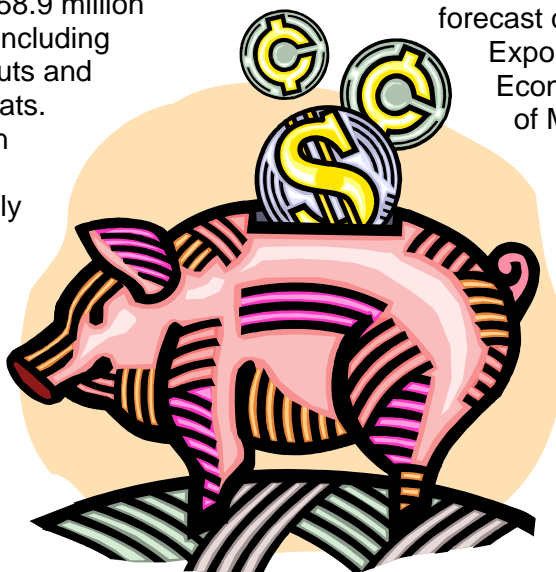
***Note: Please note newsletter attachment has talking points concerning MRSA from the National Pork Board*

US Pork Exports Continue to Break Records

Pork production is running 12 percent over last year, making it impossible to raise prices to cover the ever-increasing costs of production," said Erin Daley, USMEF manager of research and analysis. "Without pork exports, at these production rates the U.S. market would have to absorb the equivalent of an additional 60,000 hogs per day, which would drive prices down significantly."

Among other highlights from the two-month period for pork plus pork variety meat exports:

- **Japan:** up 4 percent to 143 million pounds or 64,927 metric tons.
- **Mexico:** up 2 percent to 122 million pounds or 55,384 metric tons, but still trailing the record export volumes of 2006.
- **Canada:** up 28 percent to 59.4 million pounds or 26,955 metric tons. Exports were basically on track with the strong volumes recorded during the final quarter of 2007, reflecting large live hog imports from Canada.
- **Russia** continues to be a tremendous growth market: 164 percent growth to 58.9 million pounds or 26,716 metric tons, including 21,812 metric tons of muscle cuts and 4,904 metric tons of variety meats. February exports at 34.8 million pounds or 15,786 metric tons were nearly equal to the monthly record of 35.1 million pounds set in November 2007.
- **South Korea:** down 2 percent to 53 million pounds or 24,051 metric tons, but February exports were larger than any monthly volume last year with the exception of December. Also note that South Korean import statistics show imports from the United States up 10 percent while imports from the EU are down 16 percent and those from Canada are down 10 percent.
- **ASEAN:** exports to the Philippines increased 141 percent to 7.6 million pounds or 3,470 metric tons and exports to Vietnam grew from essentially zero to 2.4 million pounds or 1,099 metric tons. Total exports to the region in February, nearly 6.7 million pounds, surpassed the monthly record set in December 2007.
- **EU:** exports were up 83 percent to 11.6 million pounds or 5,275 metric tons, primarily destined for France at 4.4 million pounds, Germany at 1.8 million pounds and Italy at 1.3 million pounds. However, USMEF notes that U.S. exports, reported by the Department of Commerce, are significantly larger than EU imports, reported by the European Commission. For example, Department of Commerce pork export stats for January 2008 show 3.8 million pounds while EU stats show 2.0 million pounds of pork imports from the United States.
- **Caribbean:** up 42 percent to 8.3 million pounds or 3,780 metric tons, including exports to the Dominican Republic up 200 percent to nearly 2.8 million pounds.
- **Central and South America:** up 4 percent to 11.7 million pounds or 5,337 metric tons led by Honduras up 3 percent to 3.5 million pounds.
- **Oceania:** down 16 percent to 14.6 million pounds or 6,635 metric tons, but Daley notes the good news that the Australian Productivity Commission released its final report and did not



recommend safeguard action against pork exports to Australia. Therefore, the United States can continue to export pork to Australia duty-free.

- **Taiwan:** down 19 percent to 5.1 million pounds or 2,341 metric tons as market access issues continue to impede U.S. pork exports.

The National Pork Board has responsibility for Checkoff-funded research, promotion, and consumer information projects and for communicating with pork producers and the public. Through a legislative national Pork Checkoff, pork producers invest \$0.40 for each \$100 value of hogs sold. The Pork Checkoff funds national and state programs in advertising, consumer information, retail and foodservice marketing, export market promotion, production improvement, technology, swine health, pork safety and environmental management. For information on Checkoff-funded programs, pork producers can call the Pork Checkoff Service Center at (800) 456-PORK or check

Challenging Times Expected to Continue

More challenging times ahead, was the forecast delivered last week at the World Pork Expo. Economists Steve Meyer, Paragon Economics, and Glenn Grimes, University of Missouri, says pork production will face red ink for at least another 18 months, maybe longer. "I can't see working out of this until 2010," says Meyer.

Reducing costs and managing risk was the charge the economists present producers, because corn prices and soybean prices will likely continue to rise. Meyer looks for corn prices to run between \$4.50 and \$8.50 per bushel. The critical question is, "How can I minimize losses," says

Grimes. He points out that the futures market is offering producers decent risk management opportunities.

Grimes and Meyer agree that a 6 percent to 12 percent reduction in the North American breeding herd is needed to re-establish long-term profitability. Grimes expects the breeding herd to be down 2 percent in USDA's June Hogs and Pigs Report. For more, go to www.porkmag.com.

U.S. Hog Inventory Up 7 Percent

The number of hogs and pigs on March 1, was 65.9 million head, up 7 percent from last March, but down 2 percent from December 2007. In USDA's Quarterly Hogs & Pigs Report the breeding inventory came in at 6.14 million head, up less than 1 percent from last year, but down slightly from December's report. Market hog inventory, at 59.8 million head, also was 7 percent higher than last year, but down 2 percent from last quarter.

The December 2007/February 2008 pig crop, at 28.1 million head, was 6 percent higher than the previous year. Sows farrowing during the period totaled 3.05 million head, up 5 percent from 2007. The sows farrowed during this quarter represented 50 percent of the breeding herd. The average pigs saved per litter was 9.21 for December 2007/February 2008, compared to 9.09 last year.

U.S. pork producers plan to farrow 3.05 million sows for the March/May quarter, up slightly from the actual farrowings 2007 for the same period. Intended farrowings for June/August, at 3.04 million sows, are down 2 percent from 2007.

www.porkmag.com