APL Animal Care – philosophies, priorities and programs

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Animal Welfare Science Centre – 2007 Seminar Series
APL Animal Care Strategy

VISION

“To be acknowledged by its key stakeholders as providing:

a high standard of animal care through farm and supply chain management practices that deliver good animal welfare outcomes combined with financial and environmental sustainability.”
Benefits from achieving & maintaining good pig welfare

- Australian community & consumer approval
- Consistent good quality product output
- Improved animal health
- Food safety
- Environmental sustainability
- Good animal performance & production efficiency
- Increased job satisfaction
Animal Care Strategy – Setting the direction for industry

- Animal Health
- Management Systems
- Animal Husbandry
- Animal Handling
- Supply Chain Requirements
- Consumer and Community Expectations
- Animal Welfare
- Animal Productivity
- Sustainable Business Performance
Animal Care Strategy: Proactive & Commitment to Improvement

- Technical Standards
- Regulatory & Legal
- Human Resources: stockmanship, training
- Communications & Education
- Supply chain alignment
- Research & Innovation
- Quality assurance
- Continuous Improvement: benchmarking
New Model Code for Pigs 2007: How different is it?

- 25 key changes from previous Code
- **Standards** - directly enforceable in law and binding on all pig owners
- Changes to sow stall use & size
- Movement to group housing
- Increased space allowances for other stock
- Stockperson training & competency assessment & verification
Implementation of Code: Immediate priorities & programs

- Implementing Code on farm: making it workable
- Quality Assurance – auditing of standards, compliance, verification reporting to regulators and community
- Human resources, stockmanship training & verification
- Addressing environmental & OH&S issues arising from Code changes – footprints
- R&D – group housing, objective measures of pig welfare, environment, stockperson training, genetics/fear
Implementation of Code: Immediate pressures on welfare & health

- IMPORTS?
  - Welfare of a lower standard: Cost to community, consumer AND PIGS
  - Cost competitive issues
  - Free trade environment
  - Labeling: ACCC, FSANZ, WTO?
  - Food miles, footprints – environmental costs?

- DROUGHT?
  - Feed
  - Water
  - Bedding?

- And what about LABOUR?
  - Rural industries face shortage
  - Quality of labour?
  - Competition from mining boom - Sets high wage costs
Change drivers

• Increasing public opposition to close confinement systems for intensive animal production

• Community concern generally to the intensive farming of animals

• The emergence of the affluent society: the hierarchy of needs

• Mainstream groups such as retailers in the USA moving to take policy positions for restrictions on sow stalls

• The role of animal welfare and animal rights groups
The myths vs. the reality
International Sow Stall Bans or Phase Out: What animal rights groups don’t tell you

• EU Directive RESTRICTS stall usage to the first 4 weeks of pregnancy from 2012 (existing farms), and from 2003 (new facilities) (13 YEAR TRANSITION!!)
  – Some individual EU member countries moved to implement more restrictive legislation

• US – NO federal legislation. State bans on stalls in Florida and Arizona, and a bill pending in Oregon

• Canada - NO legislation banning sow stalls

• NZ - LIMITS sow stalls to no more than first 4 weeks after mating from 2015 (10 YEAR TRANSITION)

• Australia – LIMITS sow stalls to no more than the first 6 weeks after mating from 2017 (10 YEAR TRANSITION)
North American Corporations: What’s really driving their change?

• Smithfield Foods (USA) - 10 YEAR TRANSITION TO PHASE OUT SOW STALLS
  – NOT A STALL BAN!
  – Embracing group housing BUT will continue to house sows in “individual spaces” until they are confirmed pregnant

• Maple Leaf Foods – 10 YEAR TRANSITION TO phase out of stall use for company owned sows
  – Part of company restructure they will own few sows

• Quick Service Food Providers e.g. Burger King
  – By 2008, 20% of the pork will come from producers who phase out sow stalls
Animal Welfare and the Consumer: Attitude, behaviour, expectations & ability to pay

- Consumers perceive that restriction of animal space is “unnatural”
- But will consumers pay for “animal welfare friendly” products as animal rights groups claim?
  - Can all consumers afford to pay?
- Consumer behaviour does not match attitude
- Shoppers amnesia: “willingness to pay ≠ preparedness to pay”
- Branding / labelling and Trust Labels:
  - What are they really worth?
  - Will consumers buy?
  - What will the market pay?
  - When does labeling stop being informative & become downright confusing?
Community Attitudes: Welfarists, Animal Rights and Vegans - What’s the difference?

- Does industry hide behind a “veil of secrecy”?
- What really happens on farm?
- Education, Labelling & Litigation? Is this the way to go?
- Can animal welfare be reduced to a simplistic argument?
  - Is it a quick fix?
  - Does it advance the welfare of the animal?
  - Whose welfare are we protecting?
Putting animal welfare at risk

• Complex issue being reduced to a simplistic argument → HUGE RISKS
• Animal welfare cannot be seen or progressed in isolation from other critical factors:
  – culture
  – genetics
  – health
  – labour
  – imports
  – environment
  – food safety
Finding the Right Balance

• How do you produce pigs to meet community expectations and stay in business?
Where to from here?
Opportunities for the future

• Quality Assurance - proving compliance and good practice
• Technical challenges and knowledge gaps including R&D
  – Alternatives to elective husbandry procedures
  – Environmental enrichment: bedding etc
  – Group housing
  – Genetic improvement
  – Farrowing crates
  – Space allowances
  – Cross compliance impacts – environment & OH&S
  – Staff training & competency
Where to from here?
Opportunities for the future

- Consumer and public education programs
- Product differentiation & diversification:
  - production system authentication
  - providing a wide range of product to the market to meet consumer requirements i.e. different production systems
- Branding and/or labelling of welfare friendly products
- Regulatory environment:
  - farmers as custodians of animal welfare
  - ensuring appropriate and equitable treatment for farmers as well as consumers
The Future:
Just one of the many ways to farm pigs

BE PROACTIVE!