

# **Canadian Hog JOURNAL**

**Canada's national  
hog magazine**

**Supply chain  
disruptions  
provide  
important  
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**Also inside:**

**Ups and downs of Quebec  
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Charlotte Shipp, c/o Alberta Pork

4828 – 89 Street NW

Edmonton, Alberta T6E 5K1

Phone: 780-491-3528

Fax: 780-479-5128

Email: charlotte.shipp@albertapork.com

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## Advertising

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Phone: 403-296-1346

Email: robert@wtrmedia.com

## Publisher

Darcy Fitzgerald, Alberta Pork

## Editor

Andrew Heck

Phone: 780-491-3527

Email: andrew.heck@albertapork.com

## Cover Photo

Workers at Maple Leaf Foods' facility in Brandon, Manitoba



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The Spring 2021 edition of the Canadian Hog Journal is here!

Find out how COVID-19 hog backlogs could have implications for foreign animal disease planning, and discover what sets the Quebec pig price apart from formulas in western Canada.

Springtime is symbolic of *renewal*, *hope* and *growth*. Inherent to personal growth is education, and education in the pork industry takes many forms. This edition does the long division on several parts to that equation.

Looking back, visionaries George Visser and David Price helped revolutionize western Canadian hog production in years gone by, and their work is now being celebrated in a very permanent sense. Looking forward, producers are collaborating with post-secondary animal science students to virtually share their lived experiences. Find coverage of both in this edition, along with a thought-provoking piece on mentorship from a conservation pig breeder.

My grandmother passed away relatively suddenly in late February in Provost, Alberta, 300 kilometres southeast of Edmonton. In her lifetime, she was a farmer, teacher, wife and mother-of-nine who was no stranger to the kitchen. Her homemade potato noodles with my family's traditional farmer sausage will always be a favourite meal of mine. She helped encourage my



own love of cooking, and a program in Ontario, 'Six by Sixteen,' aims to transmit critical culinary skills to Ontario teens. You can read about that program in this edition as well.

On the research side, learn about the potential for using alternative feed ingredients to save costs, and find out about a recent \$1 million grant to continue studying disease resilience, with the goal of creating healthier pigs. Both projects represent efforts to help producers protect their bottom lines.

My wife and I welcomed our second child, another daughter, at the end of January, which is a source of great fulfillment for us. Rather fortunately, despite the circumstances, my late grandmother was able to hold our newest daughter in-person shortly before her passing, when we made the snap decision to travel out-of-town to visit her one final time.

Once I catch up on some sleep, I may feel *renewed*, but for now, my *hope* is that your businesses and our industry can continue to *grow*, just as my family has! I await your good news, excited to broadcast it. And even if the news is not always good – an inevitability of life – we can be content knowing that the eternal balance between success and failure, joy and pain, and triumph and tragedy are what create the character-building moments essential to enhancing ourselves, our families and our work.

As we head toward summer and BBQ season, hog prices have sprouted to multi-year highs – a ray of sunshine in a year that has been mostly dim. What's blooming in your world these days? Let's plant the seeds of inspiration in each other by sharing ideas! Let your thoughts take root in a 'Letter to the editor' by emailing [andrew.heck@albertapork.com](mailto:andrew.heck@albertapork.com). ■

*Andrew Heck*

Andrew Heck  
Editor

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# Technology protects livestock in transit

Canadian Animal Health Coalition project confirms electronic monitoring system provides critical information to keep animals safe in transit

**T**echnology that monitors environmental conditions inside livestock trailers will contribute to improved animal welfare, according to a two-year research project that tested remote wireless sensors. The Canadian Animal Health Coalition (CAHC) partnered with Transport Genie Ltd., an Ontario-based technology company, to conduct the research that wrapped up this spring.

“Electronic monitoring is a step forward in providing livestock transporters with the tools they need to be able to monitor their loads effectively,” says Jennifer MacTavish, CAHC chair. The Coalition, whose objective is to work towards better welfare for all livestock and poultry, spearheaded the national research project with funding from the *Canadian Agricultural Partnership* AgriAssurance Program.

“We already have high standards of livestock hauling, but this initiative will make a positive difference,” says MacTavish. “Ideally, if we make it easier for the drivers to make objective decisions, then the livestock in their care will benefit from further improvement in welfare.”

## Smart-sensor technology

The Transport Genie system uses smart sensors to monitor temperature, humidity and other environmental conditions inside stock trailers, providing critical information to drivers, dispatchers and livestock managers to ensure animal safety in transit. For instance, when conditions inside the trailer fall below

an acceptable range, the sensors send a wireless signal to the driver for corrective actions. Braking, acceleration and the duration of rest stops are also monitored.

The project tested the technology in different climatic conditions over long- and short-haul distances – using a variety of trailer designs and hauling multiple species. Luckhart Transport, a livestock trucking company specializing in humane transport of animals based out of Sebringville, ON, tested the sensors and provided feedback.

“Transport Genie was very receptive to our suggestions. Not only do they want the sensors to work, but they want them to be easy to use and reliable,” says Angie Hurst, vice president and co-owner. “The use of real-time temperature monitoring of animals in transit is something that the industry really needs. It is preventative care, which is crucial to animal welfare.”

## CAHC ahead of regulations

CAHC instigated the project in advance of new animal transport regulations for feed, water and rest intervals as well as for checking livestock in transit.

According to MacTavish, providing livestock haulers with the tools to help them comply with the regulatory requirements easily and practically was important. “Putting regulations into effect for better welfare is a good thing, but we also need the tools to make it easier for the industry to meet new requirements,” she says.

Hurst applauds CAHC for its leadership. “I believe CAHC has played a critical role in getting this product developed. It is reassuring to see the coalition embrace technology to better the transport of animals.”

Livestock Genie, and electronic monitoring systems like it, provide a valuable tool to help ensure livestock and poultry are healthy, comfortable and properly cared for during transit. “The consensus is that these systems work and are vital to supporting the industry in demonstrating accountability. At the end of the day, we’ll end up with improved animal welfare,” says MacTavish.



**Smart sensors monitor temperature, humidity and other environmental conditions inside stock trailers to enhance animal welfare.**



## Supply chain disruptions provide important lessons

Andrew Heck

It has been a little more than a year since the entire world began to face the massive and unanticipated consequences of COVID-19. By now, grudgingly, we are all too familiar with the pandemic song and dance, and it is looking like we may still be in for the long haul.

Despite the grim past and lukewarm outlook, Canada's meat industry has adapted remarkably well in the face of challenge and criticism. For packers, it has meant ongoing threats to labour stability, processing capacity and, ultimately, social licence to operate. For producers, the meatpacking response has largely inspired decisions made at the farm level over time to adjust pig production, either by conscious choice or necessity, when various plants have been slowed or shut down.

From one situation to the next, Canada's COVID response in the meat industry is providing us with lessons not only for handling this disease into the future, but also examples of how producer-packer relations have improved in some cases and deteriorated in others. It also gives us a glimpse into hypothetical outcomes for foreign animal disease response, most notably African Swine Fever (ASF), and its potential impacts not only to production and processing, but also trade.

### Olymel faces full brunt of COVID catastrophe

Between early February and March 2021, three workers at Olymel's Red Deer plant, halfway between Edmonton and Calgary, were reported to have died of COVID-19, following a resurgence of the disease in the community. The plant had previously experienced a notable outbreak in August 2020.

In response to high rates of worker absenteeism, as the COVID case count in the community climbed, the decision was made to reduce daily slaughter volume by 40 per cent. At this point, Olymel issued a notice to its independent producer-suppliers notifying them that their hogs would be given priority for processing, with the company opting to send its own hogs to U.S. packers and holding others where possible, in a bid to ease the burden on those independent producers.



*Processing plant shutdowns have created hog backlogs on-farm in nearly every province since the start of COVID-19. (Photo taken prior to COVID-19 restrictions.)*

Shortly following the reduction, after the first worker death was announced, Olymel shifted its decision and voluntarily shut down the plant for nearly three weeks, working to minimize impacts to worker health and safety. Following the shutdown, the plant was re-opened gradually, but not before creating an estimated backlog of 100,000 hogs on-farm in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Producers adapted to the unexpected conditions by adjusting feed levels to slow their animals' growth, while seeking processing capacity at facilities across western Canada and the U.S., as options for moving market-ready hogs. The decision to hold hogs longer than desired was made especially difficult on account of high feed costs. Some producers opted to move younger pigs to empty barns in the U.S. to free up space for larger pigs at home.

"The shutdown had potential to devastate a lot of producers," said David Tschetter, hog barn manager for Holt Colony near Irma, Alberta – 250 kilometres northeast of Red Deer. Tschetter ships hogs to Olymel weekly and was forced to make adjustments during the shutdown. "The company did

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 8*



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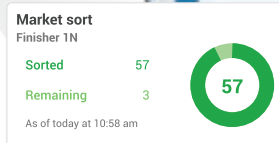


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*An outbreak of COVID-19 in Red Deer, Alberta prompted the closure of Olymel's plant in that city in February 2021. Holt Colony near Irma, Alberta was one of many impacted farms.*

the right thing for its workers, but we can't forget about producers either. We were forced to make alternative marketing arrangements, which adds to costs. Thankfully, the provincial government stepped in to provide a bit of relief, but it's inevitable that some costs will never be recovered in situations like these."

As a result of the backlog, Alberta Pork appealed to the Government of Alberta and Government of Canada to launch producer financial support through the federal-provincial AgriRecovery program, similar to the support offered as part of a set-aside program for Alberta cattle producers a year earlier, when two major beef plants in the province were closed. For hog farmers, the program paid impacted producers \$0.95 per head per day to cover the costs of keeping market-ready hogs on maintenance rations between the beginning of February and end of March 2021.

Starting in late October 2020, Olymel backlogs also followed in Quebec with reduced capacity at the company's Vallée-Jonction plant, southeast of Quebec City, after a worker died of COVID-19. Non-lethal outbreaks have also been reported over the past year at the company's Yamachiche and Princeville plants, near Trois-Rivières, and at the Saint-Esprit plant, north of Montreal.

As a result of labour issues challenging processing ability, with the additional COVID burden, by mid-March 2021, anywhere between 80,000 and 90,000 hogs were backlogged in Quebec, with average live weights around 120 kilograms, thankfully trending downward from weeks earlier. At the height of backlogs, Olymel increased its diversion of hogs from Ontario to the U.S. to help manage the situation.

Olymel continues to work with public health officials across the country to better protect workers by implementing new protective equipment requirements, creating physical distance with plexiglass barriers, staggering shifts and regularly sanitizing common areas. Working closely with union officials and producer groups, the company is making efforts to sustain its business while keeping workers safe and being mindful of producer concerns.

Elsewhere in Canada, in April 2020, a one-week shutdown of the producer-owned Conestoga facility at Breslau, Ontario, northeast of Kitchener, created a substantial interruption. That shutdown, coinciding with the Olymel Yamachiche shutdown, resulted in a backlog of 90,000 hogs at the time.

### **Other packers fortunate to escape COVID wrath**

While Olymel's struggles with COVID are well-documented, two of western Canada's other largest packers – Maple Leaf Foods and Donald's Fine Foods – have luckily remained mostly unscathed.

No COVID cases have been reported among Donald's workers, but 80 cases were reported at Maple Leaf's Brandon, Manitoba plant, with another dozen at the company's Lethbridge, Alberta plant, in August 2020. As in the case of Olymel's outbreaks, public health officials determined that transmission outside of the workplace was likely responsible for the growth in cases, not the workplaces themselves. Fortunately, in the case of Maple Leaf's outbreaks, both plants were able to remain open.

However, at that time, as the case numbers continued to grow for Maple Leaf, the company suspended meat exports to China, in response to import controls introduced by the Chinese government. While neither the Brandon nor the Lethbridge plant was ever closed, producers shipping to Brandon were met with complications, on account of reduced processing, as the company eliminated an entire shift. As COVID cases declined eventually to zero, exports to China were resumed, and the backlog dissipated.

Despite the recovery to normal levels by September 2020, the Brandon plant still routinely operates below capacity – somewhere in the neighbourhood of 75 per cent. The plant is capable of slaughtering 90,000 hogs weekly, but regular volumes hover in the 70,000-hog range. This includes between 3,000 and 4,000 shipped every week from southern Ontario – nearly



*Maple Leaf Foods' plant in Brandon, Manitoba accepted a small number of backlogged hogs from Alberta as a result of the Olymel shutdown, but those that were accepted were penalized. The company continues to regularly accept hogs from Ontario.*



2,000 kilometres away and nearly 1,000 kilometres farther than any commercial farms on the prairies.

Maple Leaf Brandon's shipments from Ontario have been a source of contention among some western Canadian producers, who were disappointed that so few hogs were accepted at that plant – western Canada's largest – while Olymel Red Deer was closed. This resulted in hogs being shipped during the shutdown from Alberta to plants as far away as California and Iowa – approximately the same distance as southern Ontario to Brandon.

While a small number of backlogged hogs made it into the Brandon plant while the Red Deer plant was closed, Olymel readily accepted many backlogged hogs from Maple Leaf producers while the Brandon plant had slowed down. In addition, those hogs were paid consistently with Olymel's contracted producers, including a standard proximity bonus, whereas the relatively small number of hogs shipped to Brandon from Alberta were docked \$10 per head, with no freight compensation.

Though shared value discussions have been taking place between western Canadian pork producer organizations and western Canadian packers for nearly a year, Maple Leaf has not yet made any adjustments to its base pricing or bonuses, with the exception of a short-term pricing adjustment of \$20 per pig introduced last summer when hog prices were nearly \$50 below the cost of production. This lack of action is contrasted by the efforts of Olymel, and even earlier, HyLife in Neepawa, Manitoba – the first western Canadian packer committed to using cutout values.

Donald's Fine Foods, which pays producers according to the Maple Leaf Signature 4 formula and covers the cost of freight to its Britco plant in Langley, B.C., accepted some backlogged hogs from Olymel Red Deer producers at its Thunder Creek plant in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. Thunder Creek reduced processing speed in response to a small outbreak experienced in November 2020. During that incident, hogs were diverted to the company's own Langley plant and Olymel Red Deer.

### **COVID backlogs may simulate an ASF dry run**

While COVID-19 does not affect pig health, and ASF does not affect human health, there are parallels between these diseases when considering the management of potential backlogs and the resiliency of the entire Canadian meat industry.

In the case that ASF should arrive in Canada, severe hog backlogs could be expected, with the closure of international borders to Canadian pigs and pork. However, critical zoning agreements with major trading partners are providing some confidence for the Canadian industry, which is observing the conditions in Germany with great intrigue. The German pork industry has also suffered from processing shutdowns and public backlash due to COVID-19 worker infections.

Since September 2020, Germany has reported more than 1,000 cases of ASF in wild boar, mostly contained within the eastern

state of Brandenburg, along the country's border with Poland, from where the disease arrived. Shortly after the initial ASF confirmation, China, Japan, South Korea and the Philippines banned pork imports from Germany. Despite being an ASF-positive country itself, China regularly imposes import bans on pork from other ASF-positive regions, causing major turmoil for export-dependent nations. Over time, as those affected regions suffer financially, the Chinese government returns to the bargaining table to negotiate access to its coveted market. This was the case in late April, as Germany's federal agriculture minister, Julia Klöckner, met virtually with Chinese authorities to plead her country's case for halting the spread of ASF within Germany's borders, in a bid to resume normal trade relations.

With ASF cases beginning to pile up, and with most Asian trade routes blocked, the German industry responded immediately by diverting hogs to other plants in the E.U., in countries where ASF is not present, allowing for the continued albeit inconvenient flow of pigs and pork. In Canada, such options would be untenable, thanks to our geography and existing trade agreements, which would not allow for such flexibility. More recently, confidence in the German industry's efforts to control ASF in wild boar has resulted in the re-opening of some markets, including Vietnam. By the end of April, permanent fencing was being actively erected along hot spots at the border with Poland, further demonstrating the German industry's fastidious approach to addressing the problem, with ample government support.

As in Germany, getting a handle on the spread of wild pigs in Canada will be key to assuring partners that the Canadian industry is serious about securing its zones. If wild pigs cannot be completely eliminated, a next-best option may be strict containment. Such an accomplishment will be important *before* any hypothetical arrival of ASF. Unlike in Germany, wild pigs are not native to North America. Despite this reality, some animal activist groups in Canada have petitioned to preserve this invasive species – much to the contrary of ecological experts and common sense.

Around the same time restrictions on German exporters had begun to ease, in March 2021, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)



*Eurasian wild boar root on a beach in Berlin, Germany, in August 2020. Just one month later, ASF would arrive in the country's boar population from neighbouring Poland.*

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 10**

agreed on an approach to guide bilateral trade if ASF is detected in wild pigs in either country. As in Germany, where no ASF cases have been found in domestic pigs, limiting the disease spread within the wild pig population may be a limp the Canadian industry can learn to accept, even if it is far less than ideal.

"We are pleased to announce another milestone in our Canada-U.S. collaboration on prevention and preparedness related to ASF," said Jaspinder Komal, Canada's Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO). "This first-of-its-kind protocol will use a science-based approach to minimize trade impacts while protecting the swine populations in both countries."

On the commercial side, conversations between officials in Canada and Japan have been ongoing related to the issue. Perhaps even more importantly than certain agreements with the U.S., a Canada-Japan zoning framework could be the top priority for the Canadian industry. On volume, Canadian pork traded with the U.S., China and Japan has been fairly consistent over the past decade, while dollar value compared to volume undoubtedly favours the Japanese market.

But for trade to continue in the case that ASF should enter Canada for any reason, Japan wants proof of effective zoning, which is where PigTRACE – a component of the Canadian Pork Excellence (CPE) program – comes into play. PigTRACE is an industry-led, live animal traceability initiative designed to ensure protection, prosperity and peace of mind for the Canadian pork industry and its customers. In the event of a food safety issue or foreign animal disease outbreak, traceability gives government and industry officials the tools to manage the situation.

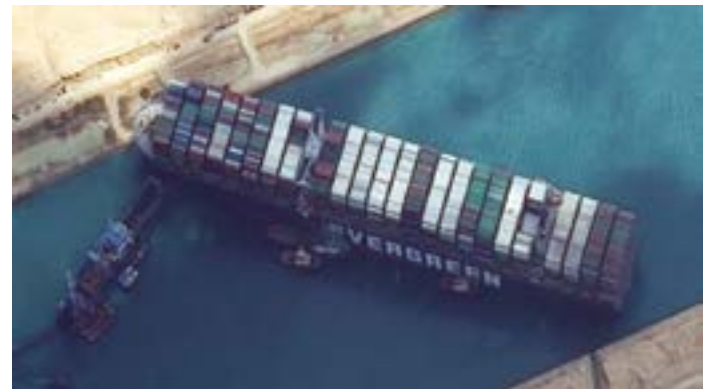
In Japan, pork of Canadian origin commands an observable premium over and above similar products of U.S. origin, according to the Canadian Pork Council's (CPC) Made-in-Canada Hog Pricing Report, released in November 2019. CPE is the on-farm program that creates the foundation for the Verified Canadian

Pork (VCP) brand. For packers selling product at the retail level in Asia, the VCP logo is an important visual identifier for consumers. A Canada-Japan zoning framework will be important for preserving this valuable outlet for Canadian pork exports.

### **Animal ag's newest, biggest threat**

Agriculture especially in North America has long been regarded as a pioneering field. From the days of homesteading and breaking land in the 19th and early 20th centuries, to the emergence of largely export-based commodity sectors in the mid- to late-20th century, the 21st century's greatest new farming frontier, especially for livestock sectors, may well be the management of disease – whether in animals or humans.

For the Canadian pork industry, it is immaterial whether the supply chain breaks as a result of processing issues connected to COVID-19 or trade issues connected to ASF; all stakeholders must stay limber and focused on mitigation strategies and response plans, while ensuring the entire value chain is functioning cooperatively, should the inevitable happen. ■



*When a large container ship became wedged in the Suez Canal for a full week in late March, it caused massive disruptions to supply chains impacted by the delay. For the Canadian pork industry, human or animal disease could be the wedge that jeopardizes business.*

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# Ups and downs of Quebec pig pricing

**Bijon Brown**

*Editor's note: Bijon Brown is the Production Economist for Alberta Pork. He is currently collecting and analyzing cost and pricing data to improve producer success. He can be contacted at [bijon.brown@albertapork.com](mailto:bijon.brown@albertapork.com).*

When the *Régie des marchés agricoles et alimentaires du Québec* – the body that oversees hog pricing in Quebec – renewed the hog marketing agreement between *Les Éleveurs de porcs du Québec* (Quebec Pork) and the province's packers in April 2019, the decision to include whole carcass values, cutout values and other premiums into the final price was heralded as a positive step toward producer-packer equity.

Over the course of the next two years, pig prices in Quebec have been observed with a great deal of interest by producers in other provinces, namely western Canada. When the marketing agreement was most recently renewed, many producers on the prairies were being paid decade-low prices for their hogs, so they began to ask, 'Why not here too?'

Understanding how the Quebec pig price is broken down and how it compares to western Canadian contracts is key to determining its hypothetical effectiveness for producers outside of Quebec, using recent market data to demonstrate its application.

## Breaking down the Quebec price

Although the Quebec price is not available to western Canadian producers, there is value in knowing how this price is determined and how it measures up to prices in western Canada.

The centralized marketing system in Quebec allows for a global price to be computed, and this is the price all packers in that province apply to their gird adjustments. This global price, like in the OlyWest 2021 contract, is a blend of the U.S. Depart-



*The United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW Canada) worked with major meat processors nationally to secure premium pay increases and asked for more worker safety protections to be put in place. (Photo taken prior to COVID-19 restrictions.)*

ment of Agriculture's (USDA) national price, using the whole carcass report (LM\_HG201) and the pork cutout value report (LM\_PK602). From these reports, a U.S. window price is created, from which a Canadian window price is derived. Specifically, the U.S. window price is computed from a series of conditions:

- If the ratio of the national price (LM\_HG201) to the pork cutout value (LM\_PK602) is less than 65 per cent, then the ratio is kept at 65 per cent, which means that U.S. window price is 1.38 times the national price (0.90/0.65 multiplied by the national price).
- If the value of the national price (LM\_HG201) is less than 90 per cent of the pork cutout value (LM\_PK602) but




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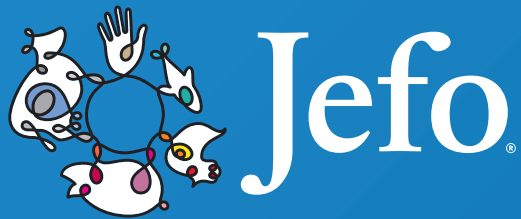
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**Manitoba : Zhenbin Zhang**  
zzhang@jefo.ca | 1 (431) 373-0844

**Alberta/Saskatchewan : Ron Jones**  
rjones@jefo.ca | 1 (855) 767-5336

**Alberta/Saskatchewan : Rhod Ross**  
rross@jefo.ca | 1 (403) 702-6709

**British Colombia : Jan Breckman**  
jbreckman@jefo.ca | 1 (855) 438 3020

greater than 65 per cent, then the U.S. window price is 90 per cent of the pork cutout value.

- If the value of the weighted national price (LM\_HG201 plus adjustments) is between 90 per cent and 100 per cent of the pork cutout value (LM\_PK602), then the U.S. window price is the national price.
- If the value of the weighted national price (LM\_HG201 plus adjustments) exceeds the pork cutout value (LM\_PK602), then the price used is the pork cutout value.

To establish a Canadian window price, the U.S. window price in U.S. dollars (USD) is adjusted by the exchange rate, U.S. and Canadian carcass yields and pound-to-kilogram conversion, which

results in a price reported in Canadian dollars (CAD) per 100 kilograms (cKg). A CAD \$2/cKg premium is added to arrive at the Quebec global price.

Table 1 shows an example of how hogs are priced in Quebec. Two of the most significant drivers of hog pricing variations across Canada are the dates and contents of the reports used in the pricing formulas. In the Quebec price example, reports dated March 15, 2021 will generate the price for March 17, 2021, while western Canadian contracts may be based on average prices of the previous week (Monday to Friday, or Friday to Thursday).

Even though some major Canadian contracts use the USDA's whole carcass report (LM\_HG201) for the U.S. national price, those packers use differ-

ent components of that report in their computations. The Quebec formula uses the weighted average of the negotiated price and the 'Swine' and 'Pork Market' formula categories in the report. While certain packers may weight the price on the head count of the different categories, the Quebec price is weighted on the total carcass weight (head count multiplied by the average carcass weight).

The cutout value is the pork carcass price reported on March 15, 2021: USD \$102.44/100 lbs. The ratio of the national price to the cutout value (88 per cent) determines the U.S. window price. Since the ratio falls between 65 and 90 per cent, the U.S. window price is 90 per cent of the cutout value: USD \$92.20/100 lbs.

The next step is to convert the U.S. price to a Canadian price. Adjusting for the relative U.S.-Canadian yield, imperial-metric conversions (from 100 lbs. to cKg) and the USD-CAD exchange rate, the Canadian window price of CAD \$234.65/cKg is computed. The quality premium of CAD \$2/cKg is then added to arrive at the Quebec global price of CAD \$236.65/cKg for March 17, 2021.

The reported final Quebec global price is not necessarily the price paid to producers, as this price is initially discounted and reimbursed depending on the quality of the pig.

In Table 2, the Olymel Plus 13-week average index of 111.7 is used. In Table 3, assume the producer is on the 261 Quebec Quality Grid. If the producer's hog optimally fits the grid, an index of up to 115 can be recouped for yields between 59.6 per cent and 61.79 per cent, and weights between 87.5 kg and 119.9 kg. This means the perfect hog carcass would receive a price of almost CAD \$244 (CAD \$211.86 multiplied by the 115 index). However, any hog that weighs above 120 kg or below 87.5 kg, or yields less than 59.59 per cent of meat, will be significantly discounted from the Quebec global price.

### Quebec price calculation

Sale for: 2021-03-15					
	Negotiated	Swine Pork Mkt Formula	Negotiated Formula	Other Purchase Arrangement	Other Formula
Hg201					
Head count	6044	174762	N/A	N/A	N/A
Carcass Net Price	\$88.21	\$89.88	N/A	N/A	N/A
Average Carcass WT	198.27	215.67	N/A	N/A	N/A
LM_HG201 two-market weighted average price		\$89.83 USD/100lbs			
Pk602 Carcass		\$102.44 USD/100lbs			
% 201/602		88%			
If % 201/602 >=100 %		Then Pk602			
If % 201/602 >90% & <100%		Then Hg201			
If 65% <= % 201/602<=90%		Then 90 % Pk 602			
If % 201/602<65%		Then Hg201 x 0.9/0.65			
U.S. Window price		\$92.20 USD/100lbs			
carcass yield US		X 74%			
carcass yield CAN		÷ 82%			
kg /lb		X 2.2046			
Exchange rate		X 1.3480 CAD/USD			
= Canadian Window price		\$234.65 CAD/100 kg carcass			
+ 2 \$ premium		\$2.00 CAD/100 kg carcass			
=Qualité Québec Global price		\$236.65 CAD/100 kg carcass			
Olymel Plus 13 week index		+ 111.70			
Qualité Québec daily price		\$211.86 CAD/100 kg carcass index 100			
261 Quebec Quality Grid of up to 115% but no other premiums.					

Source: Alberta Pork calculations

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{National Price}^* &= \frac{((6044 \times 198.27 \times 88.21) + (174762 \times 215.67 \times 89.88))}{(6044 \times 198.27) + (174762 \times 215.67)} \\
 &= \text{US\$89.83/100lbs}
 \end{aligned}$$

Table 1



## 261 Quebec Quality Pork 5 kg grid

Selection criteria		Agreements									
		001 QUEBEC QUALITY PORK		<input type="button" value="Refresh"/>							
261 QUEBEC QUALITY -5 KG											
Agreement		Slaughterhouse				Start date of slaughter		End date of slaughter			
001 QUEBEC QUALITY PORK		All				August 30, 2020		December 31, 9999			
Yield	% of meat	WEIGHT (kg)									
		0.1 70.0	70.1 77.4	77.5 82.4	82.5 86.4	86.5 87.4	87.5 99.9	100 107.4	107.5 119.9	120 122.9	123 999.9
1	64.30 - and over	40	65	80	95	103	110	110	110	99	80
2	61.80 - 64.29	40	65	85	99	103	110	110	110	100	80
3	59.60 - 61.79	40	65	85	100	109	115	115	115	104	80
4	57.70 - 59.59	40	65	85	102	107	112	112	112	102	80
5	56.80 - 57.69	40	65	85	95	100	107	107	107	96	75
6	1.00 - 56.79	40	65	80	85	90	102	102	102	90	75

Source: Éleveurs de porcs du Québec

Table 2

## Computed per-hog revenue based on the 261 Quebec Quality 5 kg grid

Yield	% of meat	weight (kg)									
		0.1 70	70.1 77.4	77.5 82.4	82.5 86.4	86.5 87.4	87.5 99.9	100 107.4	107.5 119.9	120 122.9	123 999.9
1	64.30 - and over	\$84.74	\$137.71	\$169.49	\$201.27	\$218.22	\$233.05	\$233.05	\$233.05	\$209.74	\$169.49
2	61.80 - 64.29	\$84.74	\$137.71	\$180.08	\$209.74	\$218.22	\$233.05	\$233.05	\$233.05	\$211.86	\$169.49
3	59.60 - 61.79	\$84.74	\$137.71	\$180.08	\$211.86	\$230.93	\$243.64	\$243.64	\$243.64	\$220.33	\$169.49
4	57.70 - 59.59	\$84.74	\$137.71	\$180.08	\$216.10	\$226.69	\$237.28	\$237.28	\$237.28	\$216.10	\$169.49
5	56.80 - 57.69	\$84.74	\$137.71	\$180.08	\$201.27	\$211.86	\$226.69	\$226.69	\$226.69	\$203.39	\$158.90
6	1.00 - 56.79	\$84.74	\$137.71	\$169.49	\$180.08	\$190.67	\$216.10	\$216.10	\$216.10	\$190.67	\$158.90

Source: Alberta Pork calculations

Table 3

### Comparing the Quebec price to western Canadian prices

Quebec Pork publishes the daily global price on its website, allowing web visitors to see the posted price of all the packers in the province, including all grids and 13-week average indexes. Quebec Pork's website is not only a hub for current data but historical data too. Data for the week of March 15 to 19, 2021 is shown in Table 4. The global price trended upward slightly over the week and averaged around \$232.

OlyWest prices for this week under review were calculated based on reports

from the previous week (March 7 to 13, 2021). The average price was just under \$240 and \$227 per hog for the OlyWest 2020 and 2021 contracts, respectively. For the Maple Leaf Foods Signature 4 contract, the review week starts on Friday, March 12 as opposed to Monday, March 15 for the Olymel contracts. Therefore, Friday, March 19 begins a new week under the Signature 4 contract. For Monday to Thursday during the week of March 15 to 19, 2021, the price was \$221.04, while Friday's price jumped to \$226.26, with the start of the new contract week. The average across Monday through Friday was \$222.08.

In western Canada, the index value used to adjust prices falls within lower ranges, from 107.5 to 114.89. In Quebec, this value varies for each plant as well. For illustration purposes, compare this to the Olymel Plus price in Quebec. The 13-week average index was 111.7. Therefore, a hog with a lower index will receive less than the global price. In this example, however, it is assumed that the representative hog on the Quebec grid receives the average index.

Producers on the OlyWest 2020 contract would have done much better in the week of March 14 to 20, 2021 compared

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

## One-week comparison of Quebec and western Canadian prices

	March 15 to 19, 2021					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Week
U.S. price (USD/100 lbs.)	\$89.72	\$88.72	\$92.20	\$90.81	\$91.09	\$90.51
Exchange rate (USD to CAD)	1.2561	1.2493	1.248	1.2455	1.2465	
Quebec global price (CAD)	\$231.82	\$228.03	\$236.65	\$232.65	\$233.54	\$232.54
Olymel Plus 13-week average index	111.7	111.7	111.7	111.7	111.7	111.7
Olymel Plus hog price at 13-week average index*	\$231.82	\$228.03	\$236.65	\$232.65	\$233.54	\$232.54
OlyWest 2020 average hog price*	\$239.00	\$239.00	\$239.00	\$239.00	\$239.00	\$239.00
OlyWest 2021 revised average hog price*	\$226.60	\$226.60	\$226.60	\$226.60	\$226.60	\$226.60
Maple Leaf Foods Signature 4 average hog price*	\$221.04	\$221.04	\$221.04	\$221.04	\$226.26	\$222.08

\*It is assumed that the representative Quebec hog has an index of 111.7, the hog under the the OlyWest 2020 contract has an index of 111.5 and the hog under the OlyWest 2021 revised contract has an index of 100. The hog under the Maple Leaf contract is assumed to have an index of 110. Additionally, it is assumed that the Alberta hogs receive premiums of \$16, \$17 and \$8.20 under the OlyWest 2020 and 2021 and the Maple Leaf contracts, respectively. The Quebec hog already has its negotiated \$2 premium built into the global price.

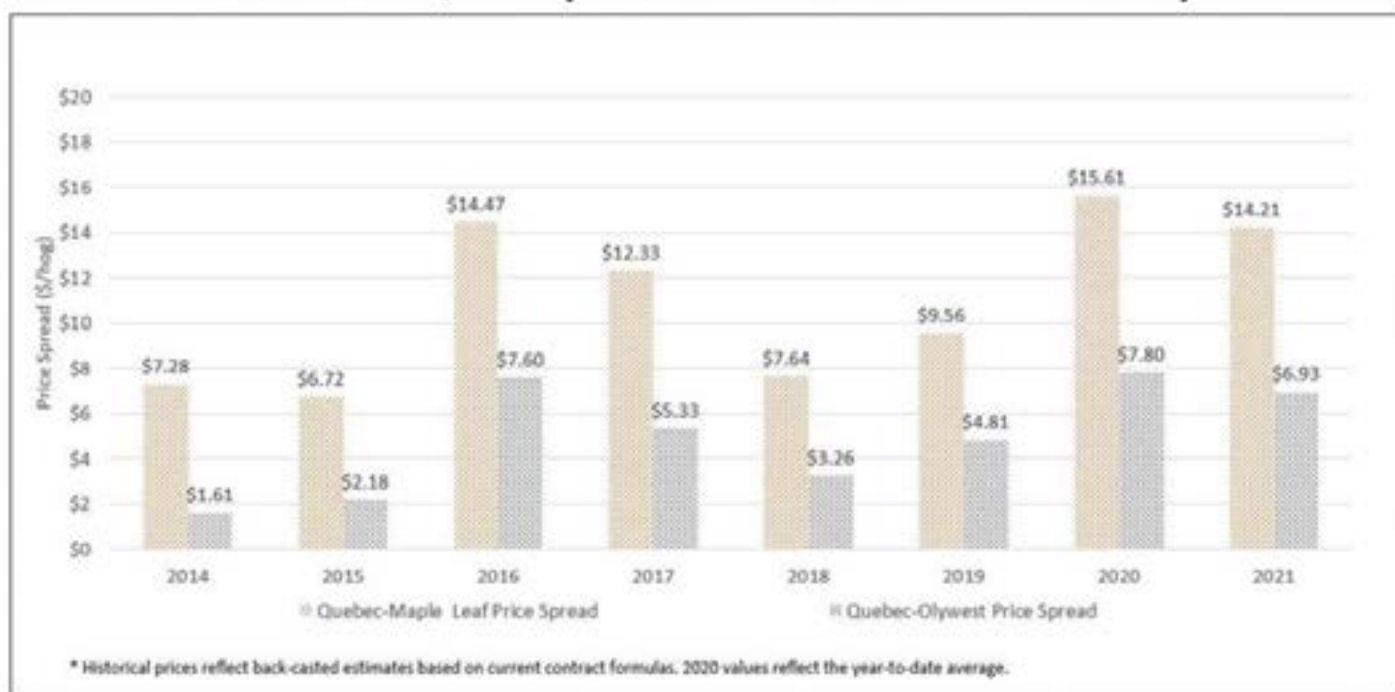
Source: Alberta Pork calculations

Table 4

to having the Quebec price. The revised OlyWest 2021 contract sits around \$6 less per hog than the Quebec price and more than \$12 less per hog than the OlyWest 2020 contract. The Maple Leaf Foods Signature 4 contract sits at approximately \$17 less per hog than the OlyWest 2020 contract, \$9.50 less per hog than the Quebec price and \$4.50 less per hog than the revised OlyWest 2021 contract.

However, the revised OlyWest 2021 contract has something that the Quebec price, OlyWest 2020 and the Maple Leaf Foods Signature 4 contracts do not: a (quasi) floor base price set at \$160/cKg. Barring a significant drop in the cutout price, a hog receiving the average grid grade would not fall below \$177 (with bonuses) on OlyWest 2021.

## Difference between the Quebec price and select western Canadian prices



Source: Alberta Pork calculations

Figure 1



## Quebec price includes no premiums or freight coverage

An obvious disadvantage to the Quebec price over western Canadian contracts is that no additional premiums are available, other than the \$2 premium that was built into the global price calculation. There is also no compensation for transportation costs.

For producers whose transportation costs were more than \$6 per hog, even on the OlyWest 2021 contract, they would have done better in the week of March 14 to 20, 2021 than Olymel Plus producers in Quebec, who would have still paid their \$6 for trucking. Based on estimated calculations, the average price differential (the difference between the prices, also known as the 'price spread') would have been \$5.96 between the Quebec price and the average OlyWest contract (using a simple average of OlyWest 2020 and 2021) between 2016 and 2021. This is shown in *Figure 1* using the average compensation for transportation under the OlyWest contracts.

In addition, the spread between the Quebec price and Maple Leaf Foods Signature 4 contract is even more pronounced. Again, transportation would need to be deducted from the Signature 4 contract for an ideal comparison. This would increase the average spread from more than \$12 to more than \$18 between 2016 and 2021.

As a result of having a strong association with the pork cutout value (LM\_PK602), the Quebec price has had the most appeal. However, if cash prices fall sufficiently, the producer could still face significant losses. The combination of the pork cutout value and a floor price within the OlyWest 2021 contract could be more appealing to the producer with a lower risk appetite, as much of the volatility is taken out of the price.

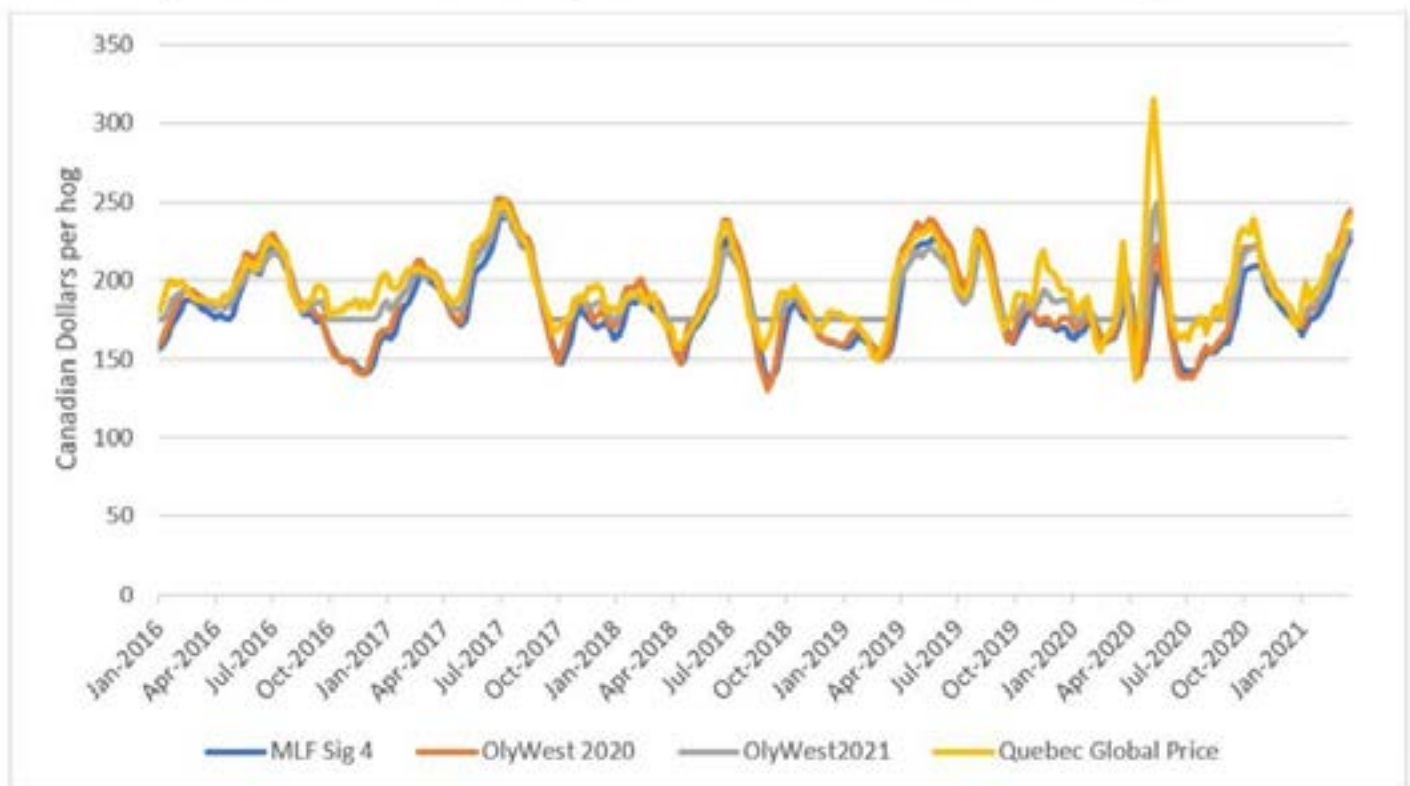
## Pricing benefits come down to location, options

Benefits of the Quebec price versus western Canadian prices might be largely based on individual producers' preferences and circumstances. No two producers are exactly alike, and it is important to consider the range of factors that could affect whether one price is more lucrative than other.

While some western Canadian formulas have evolved to incorporate cutout values, others are lagging behind. Producers in western Canada should rightly continue exploring their options and advocate for pricing that more equitably distributes the value of hogs between producers and packers. ■

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## Price comparison of the Quebec price to select western Canadian prices



Source: Alberta Pork calculations

Figure 2

# Pork producers support student success

Andrew Heck



*Farming and family go hand-in-hand. But for young people from non-farm settings, breaking into the sector can seem daunting.*

Farming is often a family affair. Across Canada, you can find generational family farms involved in any commodity dating back decades or centuries, depending on the region of the country. For many of these families, their legacies are an integral part of their identity, of which they are extremely proud.

While no-one would doubt the depth of this tradition, for others, agriculture is an industry entered from the periphery. With each passing year and each passing generation, Canada, like many parts of the world, becomes increasingly urbanized. Coming from an urban setting, it can be especially difficult to break into the industry directly, and often, a leg-up is needed on the side of education, as a starting point.

Getting a leg-up can prove challenging, depending on the field of interest, but for undergraduate students attending the University of Alberta, the course 'AN SC 101 - Principles of Animal Agriculture' is one unconventional avenue through which the Canadian agriculture sector is supported by individuals who may not seem to be a natural fit but grow an appreciation for the industry just the same.

## Ag education helps inspire science students

Frank Robinson, Professor, Poultry Production and Physiology, University of

Alberta, takes to heart the mission of bringing agriculture to the young, wide-eyed masses. The university's Winter 2021 semester for Principles of Animal Agriculture is the forty-fifth time Robinson has taught or co-taught the course over three decades, currently alongside Martin Zuidhof and Leanna Grenwich.

This year, the course features a group project component, 'The Game of Farm Life 2.0,' during which student cohorts must propose a hypothetical farm design, helping them gain knowledge of farm start-up requirements, practical application of animal husbandry, technologies, breeding, nutrition, housing, health and marketing.



*'The Game of Farm Life 2.0' is the current project that virtually connects 'Principles of Animal Agriculture' students with Alberta farmers.*

To guide the students' thinking, the course features a diverse group of producer representatives from pork, beef, dairy, poultry, eggs and other ruminant and farmed game commodities. This year's roster, among other producers, included Alberta hog farmers Scott Hyshka of Sunterra Farms, near Acme; Laurie Fries of Sunhaven Farms, near Wainwright; Ken Hamoen of Sand Ridge Farm, near Barrhead; Martin Waldner of Hartland Colony, near Bashaw; Alastair Bratton of OlyPork, with farms in central Alberta; and Chris & Jessica Fasoli of The Bear and Flower Farm, near Irricana. Each producer offers a glimpse into different angles of the Canadian pork sector, from independents and integrators to contracted pig production and farmgate sales.

On eight consecutive weeks throughout the semester, each student cohort was assigned at least one producer representative per commodity, with whom the cohort met virtually.

"In the past, I would connect students with two or three producers, and we would bring the entire class to those farms to learn about their operations," said Robinson. "While COVID-19 has created a lot of challenges in academia, for this course, we have the benefit of now connecting to dozens of producers and individualizing interactions, which is something we weren't able to do before."



On-farm visits come with a host of logistical challenges, including travel time and costs, aligning schedules and enforcing biosecurity, but the virtual format has the benefit of negating those considerations, in addition to creating digital copies of presentations and conversations, which are recorded using videoconferencing software.

## Today's students, tomorrow's leaders

From the outside looking in, many animal science students have hopes of eventually becoming companion animal veterinarians, but Robinson's course helps expose these students to other potential lines of work in livestock.

"A lot of these students come from the city, and they want to work with dogs and cats," said Robinson. "Some of them have never even thought about agriculture, but when they experience what's out there,

some of them realize this is a lot more interesting and practical."

Scott Hyshka is the manager of two Sunterra Farms barns near Acme – 100 kilometres northeast of Calgary. Sunterra's farrow-to-finish barns supply pigs for Sunterra Meats, a slaughter facility in nearby Trochu that sells much of its products through Sunterra Market locations in Edmonton, Calgary and, most recently, Red Deer. Sunterra's farrow-to-wean and nursery barns sell live pigs into the U.S., while Sunterra also exports some pork primals and high-end finished products to select Asian markets.

Amanda Hardman is a first-year Bachelor of Science student majoring in Sustainable Agriculture Systems. Her cohort was assigned to work with Hyshka and other producers to help design their fictional farm.

"Scott has been absolutely amazing," said Hardman. "I've been involved with 4-H, so I have some familiarity with livestock, but no-one in my group grew up on a farm, and none of us knew anything about pigs."

Hardman grew up on an acreage in Parkland County, west of Edmonton. Her mother worked with Alberta's agriculture ministries for three decades, and some of her father's family is still involved in beef cattle, but a love for agriculture and desire to pursue a career in the field has driven Hardman despite a lack of much first-hand experience.

"This project has been an absolute blast. It's the best class I've ever taken," she added. "The instructors still push you academically, but they want you to have a good time. And the producers have all been very helpful and open to all of our questions."

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 20*



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*One of Sunterra Farms' barns in central Alberta. Manager Scott Hyshka was one of the producer mentors involved in this year's project.*

Some of those questions for Hyshka centred around pig breeds, equipment, nutrition, manure management and other topics necessary to consider for the sake of the project. Hardman's team is all ears, as Hyshka is more than willing to speak to his expertise.

"Frank did a great job of breaking down these course learnings into modules that the students can work through," said Hyshka. "Real-life advice can be hard to come by without having the right connections, and I am glad to have been able to assist in the mentoring process."

Laurie Fries is a barn manager with Sunhaven Farms, near Wainwright – 200 kilometres southeast of Edmonton. Sunhaven supplies pork for Federated Co-op grocery stores across the prairies and for Thrifty Foods, a B.C.-based subsidiary of Sobeys. The organization belongs to a larger producer group with barns across east-central Alberta.

Fries served as a mentor for Cory Commandeur's group. Commandeur is a first-year Bachelor of Science student majoring in Animal Science. While more than half of his classmates are not from agricultural backgrounds, Commandeur grew up on a



*Laurie Fries is a regular contributor to initiatives supported by Alberta Pork. Her leadership includes an eagerness to mentor students.*

third-generation beef farm near Mayerthorpe – 150 kilometres northwest of Edmonton.

"A lot of classes have hundreds of students following virtual lectures, but in this class, having one-on-one time with producers has been very helpful," said Commandeur. "Our group has done a lot of independent research, and we were able to follow up with Laurie on some specifics related to pig production, to ensure the theoretical aspects of our project were also practical."

For her part, Fries takes an enthusiastic approach whenever she has the opportunity to become involved with learning.

"I believe these sorts of projects are important for the ag industry as a whole, as it gives the students real-life connections and first-hand information from the farmers and ranchers that do this every day," Fries said. "As a pork producer, it was a valuable experience, because people don't often get to see what we do, and it was exciting to give a virtual tour. It also helps these students connect to the farm faces that actually produce the food that they see in the grocery store."

## Industry benefits from sharing knowledge

Aside from the obvious student impact, the Canadian pork sector too benefits from internship arrangements and other educational pursuits. Pork producer organizations across Canada have a mandate not only to serve the financial interests of the producers they represent but also to give back to the institutions that keep the industry fed with talent and support.

"I used to struggle with connecting to pig producers, as I didn't have very many connections that way," said Robinson. "Alberta Pork was instrumental in making that part of this program a success. Without their insight, we wouldn't have had the involvement of such a great group of producers, which speaks to the critical role of producer organizations in this process."

For years, Alberta Pork has invested itself in outreach programs, most notably through its partnerships with the University of Alberta's Department of Agricultural, Food and Nutritional Science, but also with the University of Calgary's Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, in addition to animal husbandry programs at other post-secondary institutions in smaller population centres across the province.

The University of Alberta's farm campus in south Edmonton features the Swine Research and Technology Centre, attached to the recently renovated Pig Science Centre, which was opened in 2003 and routinely hosts tours for students in Kindergarten through Grade 6, in alignment with the Alberta Education science curriculum.

In addition to the Pig Science Centre, for several years, Alberta Pork has supported University of Alberta students completing their capstone projects – arrangements between the producer organization and university with a focus on experiential learning and skill development for students that is geared toward real-life problem-solving. Students design projects with direc-





*Ag education inspires the young and the young-at-heart, including the Alberta Pork Board of Directors, who toured the newly renovated Pig Science Centre at the University of Alberta. (Photo taken prior to COVID-19 restrictions.)*

tion from Alberta Pork, helping the students build their portfolios while also helping Alberta Pork generate information for producers. In at least one case, a capstone student has gone on to work a paid position with the organization.

With visits to locations like the Pig Science Centre, grade-school children grow into young adults ready to study animals

in-depth, and with capstone projects helping round out post-secondary learning, there is a very real possibility of translating that learning into long-term career options that make up the broader Canadian agriculture industry. Not only in Alberta, but across the country, the value of such partnerships is being realized.

## **The future of ag education in Canada**

While student-farmer internships have a direct benefit for students exploring the possibility of working on-farm, the agriculture sector reaches far beyond the barn. This matters not only in the conventional value chain capacities of production, processing, transportation and retail, but also in support services such as research, administration, communication and education – all of which are vital components to industry sustainability.

Much is made about sustainability in agriculture. For the Canadian pork sector, that often refers to environmental or economic sustainability. But the human resources angle, perhaps, is even more important to long-term success. For the future, it seems certain the industry must continue making concerted efforts to attract talent from non-traditional backgrounds. Education and outreach will be a crucial part of that recruitment initiative. ■



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# Veteran producers enter ag hall of fame

Alberta Agriculture Hall of Fame Staff



George Visser (left) and David Price (right)

When many people think about 'Hall of Fame' legends, their minds turn quickly to sports heroes.

Wayne Gretzky and Lanny McDonald may or may not have ever set foot in a hog barn, but two legendary Alberta pork producers, George Visser and David Price, certainly have.

And while Wayne and Lanny may be quicker on skates or have softer hands with the puck, those skills are not particularly transferrable to hog production. In fact, Visser and Price could probably put on quite an impressive performance wearing work boots, with rattle paddles in-hand, but who is keeping stats?

After years of service to the Canadian pork industry, Visser and Price are being formally congratulated for their greatness, as they are two of three inductees into the Alberta Agriculture Hall of Fame in 2021, with the third being Walter Paszkowski, a pioneer in the canola sector and a former provincial politician.

As long-time representatives of innovation and excellence, Visser and Price can now take their seat alongside the many mavericks and mavens to grace Alberta agriculture. The high honour is not only well-deserved but worth recognizing for upcoming generations of hog farmers who can certainly be shown a thing or two by these cagey veterans.

## George Visser goes whole-hog

In the 1970s, intensive agriculture in Alberta was only beginning. Visser could

see that specializing in certain commodities would be important. He led the way by setting up a 130-sow farrow-to-finish operation and a 5,000-hen laying operation on his farm. Others followed suit, and during the 1980s, the Neerlandia region – about 150 kilometres northwest of Edmonton – became one of the most concentrated hog production areas in the province.

Visser's foresight, hard work and cooperation with the team around him led to the development of Twin Peaks Feeders Inc. and BarrWest Pork Ltd.: two large investor-



BarrWest Pork Ltd. has played a key role in commercial hog production in the province for almost four decades.

led hog production units. The development of these entities led the way for Alberta hog farming to shift to investor-led production – a trend that was already occurring in Manitoba and in other parts of the world.

"George is a dynamic leader. He has inspired and led in his local community, his county and in the entire province of Alberta," said Walter Preugschas, who nominated Visser for the recognition. Preugschas and Visser co-founded Twin Peaks Feeders Inc., and both still serve on the board of BarrWest Pork Ltd. "George has been a man of vision, an innovator and a leader throughout his career. He is a man of conviction who understands the value of collaboration and brings out the best in those who surround him."

Visser's foray into agriculture policy started when he joined the Alberta Egg Marketing Board and played a key leadership role in its initial development. Soon

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after, he was appointed to the Alberta Agriculture Products Marketing Council – the body that oversees and regulates the various agriculture marketing boards and commissions in the province. Equipped with his experience in agriculture and his negotiating skills, he served as a valuable liaison between Marketing Council and the many commodity boards the council oversees, including Alberta Pork.

“George brought fair and impartial leadership skills that helped the provincial agriculture industry grow,” said Ed Schultz, former General Manager, Alberta Pork. “Although we did not always agree, George understood that his job was to challenge us to find the right path forward. In that regard, he succeeded.”

In 1986, Visser was elected as a councillor for the County of Barrhead. His leadership abilities were soon noted, as he was selected as the county’s Reeve and remained in that position for a full decade. He not only led the county in its various operational functions, but he realized the importance of value-added agriculture and of regional economic development. He represented his office with honesty, dignity and integrity.

Visser was also influential within the Rural Municipalities of Alberta – an independent association comprising the province’s 69 counties and municipal districts. Here, he advocated for rural Alberta on numerous issues and provided suggestions in the formation of the Municipal Assistance Grant: a provincial program largely formed to assist assessment-challenged municipalities.



*Production, processing and retail are all represented under the Sunterra Group of Companies, a unique concept for its time and place in western Canada.*

## David Price integrates from the bottom-up

As a founder, past president and company director of the Sunterra Group of Companies, David Price’s leadership was integral to building a fully integrated family-run food company with top-quality pork and a true farm-to-fork business model.

“I believe that no significant accomplishments are made alone,” said Price. “With the wonderful support of my family, I have been very fortunate to have the opportunity

to work with and learn from some tremendous people of all ages and walks of life.”

The Sunterra Group of Companies now includes pig production in Canada and the U.S., crop and greenhouse production, two meat processing plants and nine retail markets in Alberta. All facets of the business continue to expand. Price’s ability to see potential future trends and opportunities, but not compromise on quality or service, continues to be a critical pillar of the company’s success.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 24**

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As a young man in 1968, Price spent a year in England working with Pig Improvement Company (PIC), a new pig breeding concept. Upon returning to Alberta, he, his parents and some very close friends decided to launch Pig Improvement Canada.

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David Price's father, Stan Price, was inducted to the Alberta Agriculture Hall of Fame in 2002 for his foundational work in the industry. ■



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# Trust, patience crucial in ag mentorship

Shaman Crowe

*Editor's note: Shaman Crowe operates Silver Prairie Stock & Poultry Farm near Stettler, Alberta, 170 kilometres southeast of Edmonton. The farm specializes in conservation breeding of pigs, sheep, cattle, llamas and fowl.*

## Good mentorship is hard to come by

It is never easy to learn things on your own but having a great mentor can make all the difference. However, not every mentor is the same, and not all mentorships are a match made in heaven. That is why it is so important to choose the right mentor for your needs.

A mentor means many things to different people, but a mentor should be an experienced and trusted advisor – someone who has a background in whatever the mentee is attempting to learn. In agriculture, having a mentor is often overlooked, but it is an integral part of a successful program.

Whether you are growing crops or raising livestock, each endeavour offers unique challenges. Challenges are much easier to overcome with the knowledge to do so. You could spend the afternoon frustrated, throwing your tools, or you could find yourself a mentor to help steer you toward a solution.



*Everyone has to start somewhere. Good mentorship helps but taking the first step can be a challenge.*

## Understanding goals is the key to successful mentorship

Kunekunes are a pig that tend to serve several different purposes – existing as

pets, for conservation breeding, exhibition or meat production. Depending on your goals, your approach to pig care may be different, as each purpose has its own means to an end. Generally speaking, best practices are likely similar no matter

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 28*

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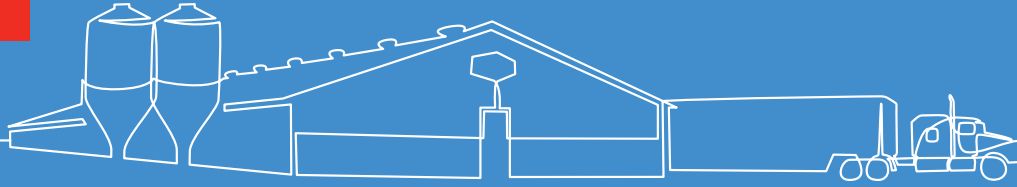
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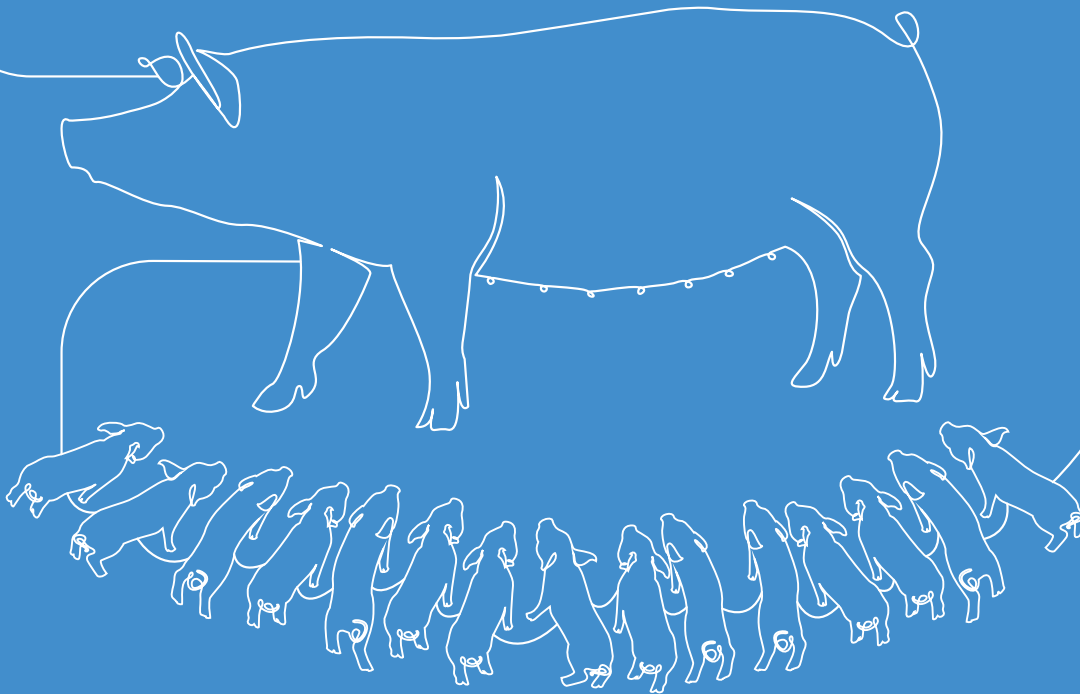


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the goal, but the breeding match-ups and conformations expected will be vastly different.

Pet breeders will no doubt breed down for size, while conservation breeders tend to prefer a more traditional-looking pig, and production breeders tend to breed up in size, selecting for higher weights and faster growth rates. Kunekunes are quite capable of all these things. In fact, going by the recognized breed standard, there are plenty of differing but acceptable traits – nose length and overall size are just two examples, among many.

Just as achieving desired pig traits requires a calculated breeding approach, achieving desired outcomes for a mentee in any field requires a calculating mentor. It is necessary to look for likeminded people and cultivate those relationships. It is not always obvious to a prospective mentor that someone is looking for help – do not be shy to ask outright! Sometimes, a prospective mentor may fill the role simply by working with an understudy informally, not because an official arrangement is in place.

The challenge: not everyone makes a good mentor, and not everyone is a good

mentee. A production breeder might not think to mention to a buyer that there is a change in the registry disallowing for the lack of wattles, because to them, this is not a deciding factor in their production program. Someone with a more traditional viewpoint might disagree. Neither of them is necessarily wrong – they just have different perspectives based on their own needs. If a mentor and mentee are on two

different pages, it does not matter what kind of advice is being offered. The results will almost certainly be unsatisfactory.

There is much made about the role of the mentor, but what about the role of the mentee? An honest mentee must be open to both praise and criticism. The role of a good mentor is not to simply validate what the mentee already knows – it is also to point out areas where the mentee may be

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 30*

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*Understanding pigs' needs is a key to effective herd management. Whether in pigs or otherwise, mentors and mentees need to share an understanding of goals.*

making mistakes or try to help mitigate issues prior to their occurrence. Mentees lean on the experience and expertise of their mentors, and that dynamic should be respected. If a mentor offers advice that a mentee chooses not to follow, it would be unfair for the mentee to blame the mentor for an undesirable outcome.

Even when the goals of mentees and mentors are shared, if every piece of advice or information given on behalf of the mentor is ignored, this can create a toxic relationship with potential for breakdown. Mentors invest their own time and effort to help mentees, and the chances are, they are also helping others or have priorities of their own. It is also unfair for a mentee to become upset if a mentor is not immediately available to assist, such as a delayed response to a text message or email. If a mentee fails to appreciate a mentor's efforts, you can rest assured that the mentor's energy will soon be directed elsewhere. Patience is key.

Mentors also need to accept the incredible importance of this most valuable position – not just as a mentor, but as a general ward of his or her trade and a steward of best practices. If a mentor sees something that is troubling, there is an obligation to speak up. If a mentor notices that an animal is not fit for breeding, the mentor needs to be comfortable having a conver-

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sation with the mentee about it. It is the respectable thing to do, and from a mentorship perspective, it presents a great learning opportunity.

Mentees must be able to trust in their mentors' guidance. To that end, mentors must maintain the respect of their mentees and their own integrity by being transparent and open at all times. Authenticity counts. Mentors should not have higher expectations of mentees than they would for themselves. Be the kind of leader you could see yourself following, if the roles were reversed.

## Great mentorships generate great results

An effective mentor will often put what is best for your program before their own wallet. They will put you in a position of assured confidence and set you up for success, independent of their inputs. A good mentor will look for gaps or areas of improvement in your program, communicate them to you, and advise you on how to move forward.

An ineffective mentor will look at gaps in your program and communicate them to others. They may be inclined to give you advice that would leave you dependent on their program for fi-



*Kunekunes crave attention, just like eager mentees.*

nancial gain or discuss your shortcomings with potential buyers to the detriment of your business. This is why it is so important to find a mentor that suits not only your goals but your values as well.

Choosing a mentor should not be difficult, but it should take some of the guesswork out of a new pursuit. Anything that can make things easier on your farm should not be overlooked. Have the courage today to reach out and seek the advice of your peers! ■

An advertisement for the Integra Farrowing Floor. The top section features a dark blue background with the 'BEST MANAGED COMPANIES' logo (a stylized leaf) and 'Platinum member' text on the left. In the center are social media icons for LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram. On the right is a photograph of a piglet lying on the floor. The middle section shows several grey, perforated floor panels. A yellow starburst with the word 'NEW' is positioned above the product name. The product name 'Integra FARROWING FLOOR' is written in blue and black. Below it, a red flame icon is next to the text 'CLASS A FLAME RESISTANCE'. Further down, it says 'Optional Integrated water panels keep piglets warm!'. To the right, a list of features is preceded by blue checkmarks: 'Flame resistant material', 'Easy to clean and install', 'Rugged, yet gentle on sow's skin', 'Non-corrosive', and '15 YEAR WARRANTY'. The bottom section is a dark blue banner with white text: 'Visit [www.canarm.com](http://www.canarm.com) or call 1-800-260-5314 for more information.'



## Manitoba Pork names new general manager and chair

Cam Dahl joined Manitoba Pork in late February as the organization's new General Manager, replacing Andrew Dickson, who had spent the past 16 years in that position.

Dahl brings an extensive background in Canadian agriculture, encompassing both crops and livestock, having most recently served as Chief Strategy Officer for Cereals Canada. Prior to his time at Cereals Canada, Dahl served as General Manager for Manitoba Beef Producers, as a commissioner for the Canadian Grain Commission and as Executive Director for Grain Growers of Canada.



Cam Dahl

In addition to his professional experience, Dahl has served on the Scientific Advisory Committee for the Canadian International Food Security Research Fund and is a past president of the Canadian Agriculture Hall of Fame. Dahl holds a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture and a Master of Science, both from the University of Manitoba.

During Manitoba Pork's annual general meeting in early April, the organization bid farewell to George Matheson, now former Board Chair, who served in that capacity for the past seven years, in addition to 15 years as a director. Rick Préjet has been elected as the new Chair.

## Quebec Pork hires assistant general manager

In early March, Steve Gagnon joined *Éleveurs de porcs du Québec* (Quebec Pork) as the organization's new Deputy General Manager of Operations.

Gagnon brings more than two decades of experience in the field, most recently with BMR Group, Sollio Cooperative's retail division, operating nearly 300 home renovation centres and hardware stores in Quebec, Ontario and the Maritimes. Sollio is the parent company of Olymel.

"Steve's experience, his personality, his recognized leadership and determination will enable our team to reach new heights. I am very happy that he has accepted to join our team," said Alexandre Cusson, General Manager, Quebec Pork.

In his role, Gagnon will guide Quebec Pork's strategic development and will oversee the organization's services related to pork marketing, economic affairs and research.

## New faces at Ontario Pork Industry Council

The Ontario Pork Industry Council (OPIC) announced in late January that Emma Payne had joined the organization as its new project coordinator.

"Emma has been actively involved in OPIC events for a number of years," said Tanya Terpstra, Vice-Chair, OPIC. "Going forward, Emma's role with OPIC will be expanded and enhanced."



Emma Payne

A search has begun for a new managing director, following the departure of Andrea DeGroot, who has returned to a role in the agriculture finance sector.

"Andrea DeGroot served the Ontario pork industry as an outstanding OPIC Managing Director and is a remarkable leader in her industry," said Al Mussel, Past Chair, OPIC.

During OPIC's annual general meeting in late April, Mike Luyks and Marsha Chambers were welcomed onto the board of directors.

## Pork industry gives back to Canadians in need



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Charitable organizations across Canada are grateful for the contributions of pork producers and industry partners.

Despite a great deal of market volatility and uncertainty around COVID-19, the Canadian pork industry continues to support charitable efforts in the regions where farmers, plant employees and other essential workers live and do business.

Over the past year, and most recently in early April, Sask Pork partnered with two provincially inspected abattoirs, Drake Meats and Country Choice Meats, to donate nearly \$40,000 worth of pork products to several charities in the province, including the Saskatoon Food Bank & Learning Centre, Saskatoon's Friendship Inn and the Regina Food Bank.

Every year, Manitoba Pork donates more than two tonnes of pork products to those in need. In late March, Manitoba Pork and Hams Marketing donated \$10,000



worth of product and financial support to Harvest Manitoba – an amalgamation of Winnipeg Harvest and the Manitoba Association of Food Banks.

“We are absolutely thrilled to have Manitoba Pork producers kick off our Spring for Meals campaign with this timely food and funds donation,” said Keren Taylor-Hughes, CEO, Harvest Manitoba. “With many federal financial assistance programs ending, we expect to see another surge in demand as hardworking families, adults and seniors struggle to make ends meet.”

In Ontario, producers have a long history of supporting the Ontario Association of Food Banks (OAFB), now Feed Ontario. In the early days of COVID-19, producers and industry partners across the province came together to support Ontario Pork’s Pork Industry Gratitude Project. As of mid-April, producers and processors including Conestoga Meats have been providing up to 10,000 lbs. of ground pork weekly to feed less-fortunate Ontarians.

## Pork Promotion Agency moves forward

In early November, the Canadian Pork Council (CPC) welcomed the establishment of the Canadian Pork Promotion and Research Agency (PRA) by the Government of Canada – a project years in the making. The producer-funded PRA will receive funds through the collection of a levy on the imports of live pigs and pork meat.

In mid-February, the website for the PRA was launched, featuring information

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 34*



Home page of the new PRA website

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about Canadian pork production, processing and research partner programs, the Farm Products Council of Canada, news media resources and more.

“The PRA will be an important vehicle for producers. It will help facilitate even greater collaboration across the value chain through increased research and promotion activities,” said Rick Bergmann, Chair, CPC. “In the long run, it will result in improving the growth and competitiveness of the sector.”

In early March, CPC announced the hiring of Chloe Tremblay as the organization’s new policy analyst, who is now responsible for the administration of the PRA. Her role also involves supporting producer services and government relations efforts.

In mid-March, the PRA held its first meeting of delegates to identify the members that will guide the agency’s operations. The agency will be relying heavily on its collective knowledge and expertise to ensure a successful start-up. Membership includes representation from all provincial pork producer organizations, in addition to representatives from the food service and grocery sectors. These members will play a key role in shaping the agency’s annual business plan and five-year strategy.

## Sofina doubles with new acquisition

Sofina Foods announced the purchase of Eight Fifty Food Group in late March, effectively doubling the size of the company, which operates a hog slaughter facility in Burlington, Ontario, north of Hamilton.

Eight Fifty is a leading supplier of privately branded and own-label seafood and pork. The pork division is one of the largest processors and suppliers of products across the U.K. and Ireland, employing more than 8,000 people at 23 facilities in Europe.

“As a leading Canadian multi-protein specialist, this acquisition allows Sofina

Foods to continue on our path of ambitious expansion,” said Michael Latifi, Founder & Executive Chairman, Sofina Foods. “With a history of excellence in food production and processing spanning over 25 years, the strong brands of Eight Fifty Food Group align perfectly with our prominent brands and our shared future vision.”

The new company will have more than 13,000 employees globally across 44 sites and nearly \$6 billion in annual revenue. In addition to Canadian hog slaughter capacity, Sofina operates facilities for further processing of pork and poultry in B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan and other parts of Ontario, sold under several consumers brands, such as Mastro, San Daniele, Lilydale and Jane’s.

## HyLife looks to relocate corporate office

In early April, HyLife announced the construction of a four-storey head office in Steinbach, Manitoba’s Millbrook Market development. Once completed, the office will be home to more than 200 corporate employees. HyLife’s current office is located in nearby La Broquerie, southeast of Winnipeg.

“We are excited to share this news with our community,” said Grant Lazaruk, President & CEO, HyLife. “This new facility, along with the recent additions and current renovations taking place at our pork plant in Neepawa, showcases our

commitment to our employees and our communities. We are grateful for the support we have received.”

In the past year, HyLife has rapidly expanded operations, with a plan to build a 24,000-head nursery barn site near the town of Elgin, southwest of Brandon, and the acquisition of a 75 per cent equity interest in Prime Pork, a recently renovated facility that produces, processes and sells pork products out of Windom, Minnesota, northeast of Sioux Falls, South Dakota – a major U.S. pork processing region.

## COVID-19 support for farm and plant workers

As of late March, Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs) arriving in Canada may travel directly to their farm workplace if they are asymptomatic for COVID-19, following a negative rapid test result, provided they travel privately and directly. TFWs travelling publicly or indirectly will be required to quarantine at a government hotel site.

The Mandatory Isolation Support for TFWs program was introduced in April 2020 to help farm and processing employers cover the costs associated with mandatory 14-day isolation period for TFWs entering Canada, per the federal *Quarantine Act*. The program was renewed in 2021, with an application deadline set for late April. The latest edition of the program will cover TFWs who arrived starting from the beginning of January.



Artistic rendition of HyLife’s new office space in Steinbach, currently under construction.

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On the processing side, several plants across Canada have faced various community-based outbreaks that have caused shutdowns of their workplaces. In response, various stakeholders have called for vaccine prioritization.

In early December, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Canada – representing workers from companies including Maple Leaf Foods, Olymel and Sofina Foods – issued a statement calling upon provincial and federal governments to consider the essential status of plant workers.

“We strongly believe that frontline workers in the food retail and meat processing industries should be considered priority recipients as part of Canada’s COVID-19 vaccine rollout,” UFCW’s statement reads. “Workers in these sectors are putting themselves in harm’s way every day that they show up to work, and they have been at risk for contracting the coronavirus since day one of the pandemic.”

In mid-March, the Canadian Meat Council (CMC), representing Canadian packing

companies, joined the chorus of voices speaking out on the matter.

“We are urging all provinces to follow the lead of the Ontario Government and recognize agri-food and the importance of our meat processors to the supply chain, and the need for our workforce to get vaccinated,” said Chris White, President, CMC. “From freezer spaces to store vaccines, to nurses on-site, CMC members offer provinces and local public health units a solution, as we can be self-sufficient to vaccinate our industry.”

In early April, the Government of Ontario announced that food manufacturing workers would be eligible to receive vaccines as part of its newly introduced phase of immunization efforts. In late April, Maple Leaf Foods announced it would privately seek vaccines for its plant workers in Ontario, and in Alberta, all meatpacking workers became eligible as part of the most recent vaccine rollout phase.

Vaccine distribution and administration in Canada has lagged the pace seen in the U.S., where processing workers have been

actively receiving vaccines since early March. In Kansas, sector workers across the board were identified as a priority, and in South Dakota, Smithfield Foods workers were singled out as a vulnerable group, following a large outbreak at the Sioux Falls plant nearly a year earlier.

## Pathways to permanent residency offered

The Government of Canada announced in mid-April new pathways to permanent residency for more than 90,000 Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs). Up to 30,000 of those applications are eligible to be received from selected essential sectors, including agriculture.

“The pandemic has shone a bright light on the incredible contributions of newcomers. These new policies will help those with a temporary status to plan their future in Canada, play a key role in our economic recovery and help us build back better,” said Marco Mendicino, Minister, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. “Our message to them

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 36*



is simple: your status may be temporary, but your contributions are lasting, and we want you to stay.”

The stream of applications open to the agri-food sector covers general farm workers, industrial butchers and meat cutters, nursery and greenhouse workers, harvesting labourers, transport truck drivers and railyard workers. To be eligible, workers must have at least one year of work experience in Canada.

The push for permanent residency is part of the federal government’s Immigration Levels Plan, which sets out a path for immigration increases to help the economy recover from COVID-19 and drive future growth. The government expects to receive more than 400,000 newcomers in 2021, increasing to more than 410,000 and 420,000 in 2022 and 2023, respectively.

## AgriStability proposed changes stalled

Following the federal-provincial-territorial meeting of agriculture ministers in late March, proposed changes to the AgriStability reference margin limit and compensation rate were only partially approved, with the ministers for Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba challenging the compensation rate increase from 70 to 80 per cent.

“Removing the reference margin limit does very little for pork producers,” said Rick Bergmann, Chair, Canadian Pork Council (CPC). “We expected that, in these difficult times, the prairie provincial ministers would have considered the challenges faced by pork producers.”

Bergmann had previously sent letters in August and October 2020 to Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau urging changes to AgriStability.

In response to criticisms from Minister Bibeau, lodged on social media, the prairie ministers issued a statement challenging the perceived opposition.



*Canada’s federal, provincial and territorial agriculture ministers typically gather twice annually to discuss matters of collective importance, shown here in December 2019. The past two meetings have taken place virtually.*

“A majority of provinces participating in the meeting voted in favour of the federal government’s \$170-million change to AgriStability,” said Devin Dreeshen, Minister, Alberta Agriculture and Forestry. “However, the federal government chose to withhold \$75 million in compensation funding for farmers, costing Alberta \$12 million per year in federal transfers.”

The prairie provinces are working closely to advance AgriStability reforms as part of the next agricultural funding framework in 2023.

## Biosecurity bill passes second reading

Bill C-205, an amendment to the federal *Health of Animals Act*, was tabled in late November 2020 in the House of Commons by John Barlow, Member of Parliament for Foothills (Alberta) and former federal ag critic. The bill makes it an offence to enter, without lawful authority or excuse, a place in which animals are kept if doing so could result in the exposure of the animals to a disease or toxic substance. The bill passed first reading in mid-February and second reading in mid-March, with support from Conservative, New Democrat and Bloc Quebecois Members of Parliament.

“This legislation is a message to Canada’s farmers, ranchers and their families. Your livelihoods matter, we care deeply about the biosecurity of your farms and our food supply, and we care about your mental health in these trying times,” said Barlow. “This important legislation would also protect the rights of whistleblowers and an individual’s right to peacefully protest on public property.”

Following in the footsteps of provincial governments in Alberta and Ontario, in mid-March, the Government of Manitoba introduced amendments to the provincial *Petty Trespasses Act*, the *Occupiers Liability Act* and the *Animal Diseases Act*, designed to protect farmers and their livestock. The most notable change is that Manitoba farmers are no longer required to verbally notify trespassers to leave their property. Removing this requirement eliminates potential conflicts between farmers and trespassers, defending the safety of all parties involved in a trespassing incident.

## COOL concerns heating up

With a transition in U.S. administrations following the November 2020 election of President Joe Biden, talks of mandatory

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 38*



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*The highly integrated nature of the North American red meat supply chain is hampered by mandatory country-of-origin labelling on account of added cost and bureaucracy.*

country-of-origin labelling (mCOOL) have once again emerged.

In 2008, the U.S. Government introduced mCOOL legislation, which was successfully challenged by the Government of Canada on behalf of the Canadian pork and beef sectors before the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2015. The result was a decision to allow Canada to impose retaliatory tariffs in response to the harm caused to Canadian pork and beef exports to the U.S., and in 2016, the mCOOL legislation was amended by the Republican-led U.S. Congress to remove discriminatory labelling requirements for pork and beef.

In early February, returning U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, who held the same position with President Barack Obama's administration, publicly expressed his support for the reintroduction of mCOOL, provided Canada does not retaliate: "I'm absolutely willing to listen to anybody and everybody who's got an idea how we can circumvent or get to a point where the WTO doesn't slap it down, that creates retaliatory impacts on American agriculture," Vilsack said.

In mid-March, Rick Bergmann, Chair, Canadian Pork Council (CPC) and Bob Lowe, President, Canadian Cattlemen's Association sent a joint letter to Marie-Claude

Bibeau, Minister, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) and Mary Ng, Minister, Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade Canada to express the need to "be vigilant" as mCOOL discussions appear to be returning.

Part of the letter reads: "The change in U.S. administrations has provided an opening for the proponents of mCOOL. Unfortunately, their requests to revisit the issue have been sympathetically received... If the likelihood of producers being negatively impacted increases, we will ask to meet quickly to coordinate next steps."

## Prairie Swine Centre receives renewed funding

The Government of Saskatchewan committed \$1.9 million over five years to Prairie Swine Centre in late January from the province's Agriculture Development Fund. The fund has supported Prairie Swine Centre since 1996, and with this renewed agreement, will continue to be a strategic partner through 2026.

Prairie Swine Centre also receives financial and strategic support from provincial pork organizations across Canada and the University of Saskatchewan to run knowledge transfer and management programs related to swine research.

"This funding will continue to create future opportunities for growth, enhancing the competitive position and sustainability of pork producers and the entire pork value chain throughout Saskatchewan and Canada," said Murray Pettitt, CEO, Prairie Swine Centre.

Prairie Swine Centre continues to seek industry input in its research programs through its strategic planning process, ensuring relevant and timely research results reach producers.

## Canadian Food Inspection Agency strengthened

The Government of Canada announced in early February an investment of more



*Prairie Swine Centre's 300-sow farrow-to-finish research barn is located just outside of Saskatoon.*



than \$160 million for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) over the next five years and \$40 million per year on an ongoing basis to maintain the integrity of Canada's food safety system, in response to COVID-19 interruptions and global trade volatility.

"Our government is investing in the CFIA so that Canada continues to have the best food safety system in the world," said Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC). "It also means CFIA will have the tools necessary to guard our agriculture sector from the threat of foreign diseases."

Despite the announcement, details of funding allocation seemed to favour crop sector needs over livestock. John Ross, President, Canadian Pork Council (CPC) took to social media with his concerns, expressing he is "disappointed to see no mention of investments in animal health." Gerry Ritz, former Member of Parliament for Battlefords-Lloydminster (Saskatchewan) and former Minister, AAFC, replied to Ross, "CFIA union wins the debate."

In the early-2010s, during his tenure as Minister, Ritz was involved in a public dispute with the Agriculture Union at the Public Service Alliance of Canada, which represents CFIA food inspectors. The dispute centred around alleged impacts of budget cuts.

## Varied COVID-19 approach to retail and restaurants

As COVID-19 gathering restrictions persist despite considerably low virus transmission rates found in the restaurant industry, some business owners across Canada have fought to stay open and continue serving customers.

In November 2020, Adam Skelly, owner of Adamson Barbecue in Etobicoke, Ontario – a Toronto suburb – made headlines when he was arrested for defying the province's orders to shut down in-person restaurant dining.

In mid-March, the Government of Ontario prioritized restaurant workers for vaccination as part of its second phase of re-opening the province; however, by



*The Mossleigh Bar & Grill, located 100 kilometres southeast of Calgary, remained open in February, in opposition to Alberta's COVID-19 lockdown measures.*

early April, that decision was stayed as a four-week "emergency brake" was applied to halt growing case counts. As a result, indoor and patio restaurant dining was banned, with takeout and delivery options intact. Similar decisions made by provincial governments resulted in further closures across the country, as COVID variant cases generated new anxiety among policy-makers.

The third-wave restaurant closure decision in Ontario prompted Restaurants Canada and the Ontario Restaurant Hotel & Motel Association to pen an open letter to Premier Doug Ford, urging his government to reconsider some of the decisions that have cost restaurants an estimated collective \$100 million over the past year.

"Our Ontario members have told us they lose about \$10,000 every time one of their establishments is suddenly ordered to shut down dining services," said James Rilett, Vice President, Restaurants Canada. "For a restaurant that's been through three lockdowns, the province's \$20,000 small business grant hardly covers their closing and reopening costs, let alone compensation for revenue lost while shut down."

More than 75 employees at 60 Loblaws-owned stores in the Greater Toronto Area – including Real Canadian Superstore – tested positive for COVID in the two weeks after Christmas, but the grocery sector has

not experienced any widespread spikes of cases beyond normal rates of transmission within the general population. In early to mid-2020, most major retailers across Canada introduced 'hero pay' as a bonus for frontline workers; however, Loblaws has not reintroduced this incentive so far this year. Other grocers, including Sobeys and Longo's, have brought back hero pay for employees.

In late March, DJ Briesbois, President, Retail Council of Canada, took to social media to express her disappointment with the lockdown experience so far: "Let us repeat as often as necessary: lockdowns don't work. We need a clear and timely actionable strategy on rapid testing and vaccination! We also need to pay close attention to Canadians and our employees' mental health when making these decisions."

## Canada-U.K. red meat industries draw closer

British red meat exports to Canada grew in 2020. The volume of pork increased by more than 400 per cent, and lamb export volumes were up by 1,800 per cent, compared to 2019 levels.

In late November 2020, the governments of Canada and the U.K. struck a transitional trade deal, which is expected to eliminate tariffs on 98 per cent of goods exchanged between the two countries, including agri-

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 40*



*As trade complications arise primarily due to the U.K.'s exit from the European Union, British pork is increasingly making its way to Canada.*

food products. The deal was proposed in response to the end of the U.K.'s transitional phase related to the country's withdrawal from the European Union (E.U.), known as 'Brexit.' The deal was ratified in Canadian Parliament in late March, with implementation starting in April.

"A transitional agreement is a welcome stopgap measure, but it is not enough," said Dan Darling, President, Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance (CAFTA). "The best way to show the world that free and open trade can protect the economy now and support recovery is by negotiating and concluding an actual meaningful free trade agreement that enables viable growth for agri-food."

Despite the proposed Canada-U.K. deal, the British meat industry remains worried about post-Brexit trade prospects. Until now, many of the existing favourable pre-Brexit trade conditions had remained in place. While the U.K. has set its sights on growing its international presence, the country remains a net-importer of pork, producing domestically only 60 per cent of what the British population consumes. More than 90 per cent of U.K. pork exports continue to flow into the E.U.; however, only 25 per cent of imports to the U.K. come from the E.U., meaning that the hard end date for Brexit risks exports more than imports.

"We are seeing a bureaucracy overload, and it is already having a big impact on

the pig sector," said Zoe Davies, CEO, U.K. National Pig Association. "This comes on top of an already very difficult situation with processing plants hit by COVID-19 outbreaks, meaning pigs are already staying on farms longer than they otherwise would."

In response to Brexit, the U.K. government applied in early February to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), the 11-member trade coalition to which Canada belongs, along with countries including China, Japan and Vietnam – some of Canada's largest pork export markets.

Pork from the U.K. was served up for Canadian webinar participants during a series of virtual red meat tasting events targeting the North American market in late October. Organized by the U.K.'s Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB), the event targeted chefs, butchers, importers and distributors located primarily in the Greater Toronto Area.

"The Canadian market is a hugely valuable region for our pork exports," said Susana Morris, Senior Export Manager, AHDB. "The aim is to showcase the exceptional taste and quality of our pork but also to speak directly with potential buyers."

Similarly, in late February, Canada Pork and Canada Beef co-hosted a webinar with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) to present an overview of the protocols implemented by Canadian farms, slaughterhouses and cutting plants to meet the requirements of the E.U. and U.K., demonstrating a willingness for the Canadian and British industries to potentially gain ground on each other's turf. ■

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## Food Culture and Trends

# Six by Sixteen challenge engages young cooks

Kaylee Coverdale

*Editor's note: Kaylee Coverdale is the Events and Programs Coordinator for the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA). She can be contacted at [kaylee.coverdale@ofa.on.ca](mailto:kaylee.coverdale@ofa.on.ca).*

A silver lining of the COVID-19 pandemic is that families are spending more time at home and in the kitchen discussing the origins of food, how it is produced, food security and favourite recipes. Food has always been a key ingredient in bringing people together, and during these challenging times when so many of us are apart, food continues to keep us connected.

Although food brings us to the table, there is still an increasing knowledge gap of where it comes from, how it is grown, who grows it and how to source it. Many people are now generations removed from the family farm, and food literacy rates remain low among much of the general population.

Increasing knowledge and understanding of food literacy has been a key priority of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) for several years. Food literacy is an awareness of how to make choices that help consumers develop good food habits for a lifetime of health. It is in the best, long-term interests of the agri-food sector to work together to help consumers develop a greater

awareness and appreciation of food and how dietary choices can impact themselves and their families.

### Food literacy is key for making healthy choices

Understanding where food comes from and knowing how to make healthy choices helps young people especially establish good eating habits. Becoming more food literate encourages consumers to choose products that support local agricultural communities, helping grow the economy in the process.

In 2017, to address the scope of local food knowledge, understanding and

awareness, OFA, with support from the Government of Ontario, in partnership with the Greenbelt Fund, developed the 'Food Literacy Attitude and Awareness Research Project.'

The Food Literacy Attitude and Awareness Research Project was the first step in establishing a baseline level of food literacy knowledge and understanding among Ontario consumers. The project's advisory committee included the Nutrition Resource Centre – Ontario Public Health Association, Ontario Home Economics Association, AgScape, and Farm and Food Care Ontario.

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 42*



*Only 28 per cent of Ontario teens know how to prepare a meal using the food available in their household. The Six by Sixteen initiative aims to improve that.*

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## Food Culture and Trends

The project surveyed three distinct groups of Ontario consumers: parents with children at home, adolescents aged 13- to 17-years-old, and adults aged 18- to 26-years-old who are living on their own. The survey measured the current level of food literacy among the three groups to develop baseline data and gain insights to guide future programs, resources and information. Two in-person focus groups were held to gather qualitative data on food literacy that was used to develop and launch an on-line survey, which garnered more than 1,000 responses. The survey collected quantitative data on local food, meal planning, purchasing, preparation and consumption in the home, and sources of information used by consumers.

The results of the project highlighted that only 28 per cent of teenagers know how to plan and prepare a quick, healthy meal using the food that is readily available to them in their household. The study also found that millennials seek health and nutrition information from a wide variety of sources, with more than 50 per cent of them relying on YouTube as a source

for learning new food information and cooking skills.

### Bridging the food literacy gap

Participating in meal preparation and observing it in the home is the most common way to learn kitchen and cooking skills, making it increasingly important for teenagers to get involved in the kitchen. Due to the significance of this type of learning, it is essential parents are comfortable with cooking skills and have an adequate knowledge of health and nutrition.

OFA is addressing the challenge through the 'Six by Sixteen' food literacy initiative. Six by Sixteen was launched to raise the profile of buying fresh, safe and affordable local food. The collaborative program, with more than 20 provincial and national industry partners, aims to teach young people how to plan and prepare six nutritious and locally sourced meals by the time they are 16-years-old. Six by Sixteen's website hosts a dietitian-developed recipe guide, which is freely downloadable, featuring eight nutritious and locally sourced recipes.

The website – *SixbySixteen.me* – was developed as an online gateway to an extensive library of Canadian resources, including how-to cooking videos, recipes and where to source local Ontario-grown products. The online hub was created for parents, health professionals and young teens to leverage the program.

Additionally, OFA has partnered with education and awareness groups to bring Six by Sixteen and food literacy to local communities. In collaboration with 4-H Ontario, OFA's food literacy initiative has been adapted for 4-H participants to learn about knife safety, proper handwashing, safe food handling and meal preparation. Six by Sixteen is also promoted through by OFA at consumer-facing events, such as Farm & Food Care Ontario's Breakfast on the Farm and the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair.

### COVID-19 drives digital education push

With the cancellation of in-person events, and with teens spending more time at home with limited access to recreational activities, OFA has taken the opportunity to develop its digital platforms.



Nearly two dozen provincial and national commodity groups, including Ontario Pork, lend support to Six by Sixteen. Food literacy and agricultural awareness are key for the pork sector.



Spinach salad with pork and nectarines – one of the recipes found in the Six by Sixteen recipe guide. Find the recipe on this page.

With the help of Growing Chefs Ontario, Six by Sixteen has launched a virtual food literacy challenge. Six by Sixteen's recipe guide was recreated using a digital format with videoed cooking tutorials for families to watch from the safety and convenience of their own homes.

In keeping true to Six by Sixteen's slogan, youth challengers need to prepare only six of the eight recipes to complete the challenge. Submissions can be made by emailing photos of completed meals to [sixbysixteen@ofa.on.ca](mailto:sixbysixteen@ofa.on.ca) or sharing them to social media by tagging @SixbySixteen using the hashtag #virtualchallenge6x16. Videos can be accessed directly from the Six by Sixteen website or by visiting [YouTube.com/OntarioFarms](https://www.youtube.com/OntarioFarms).

The pivot to virtual also strengthened existing partnerships with fellow industry stakeholders and led to the creation of several food literacy projects. To further promote the importance of local food, Six by Sixteen, under OFA's 'Always in Season' project, and in partnership with South Central Ontario Region Economic Development Corporation (SCOR EDC), developed the 'Agriculture is Always in Season' colouring book. The book is directly available on the Six by Sixteen website and lets kids get creative while celebrating the abun-

dance of healthy food produced by local farmers. The book also features a food literacy crossword, an Ontario agriculture infographic and a wordsearch.

As more families turn to their own kitchens and spend time together, the Six by Sixteen challenge is more attractive than ever. All families are encouraged to get their kids and teens involved by accepting the Six by Sixteen challenge. It is a fun, family-oriented tool for teaching and engagement, promoting Ontario's agri-food sector in the process. Get started today at [SixBySixteen.me](https://SixBySixteen.me). ■



### Spinach Salad with Pork and Nectarines

Prep time: 10 mins  
Cook time: 20 mins  
Serves: 6

#### Ingredients:

- 1 (1 lb.) pork tenderloin, trimmed (or chicken/turkey breast)
- 3 nectarines, halved
- Oil for cooking (grapeseed, olive oil, canola oil)
- 12 oz. fresh baby spinach
- ¼ cup light balsamic vinaigrette & ¼ cup olive oil (combine both)
- ¼ cup (1 oz.) crumbled feta cheese
- Fresh ground black pepper (optional)

#### Directions:

- 1 Cut pork horizontally through center of meat, but do not cut fully through. Do the same to the other side, using a sharp knife.
- 2 Place pork and nectarine halves, on grill rack or frying pan coated with 1 tablespoon of cooking oil.
- 3 Grill pork 5 minutes on each side or until a thermometer shows 160°F. Grill nectarine halves 4 to 5 minutes on each side or until thoroughly heated. Remove pork and nectarine halves from grill/pan. Let pork rest 10 minutes.
- 4 Slice nectarine halves. Thinly slice pork.
- 5 Combine spinach and oil & vinaigrette mixture in a large bowl; toss gently to coat all ingredients
- 6 Divide spinach mixture evenly on all 6 plates. Top each serving evenly with nectarine slices and pork slices.
- 7 Sprinkle with cheese. Sprinkle with pepper, if desired.

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# Increased appetite for lower feed costs

Geoff Geddes

*Editor's note: The following piece was written for Swine Innovation Porc. For more information, contact Leslie Walsh at [lwalsh@swineinnovationporc.ca](mailto:lwalsh@swineinnovationporc.ca).*

If you want to make a pork producer's day, you need only utter three words: lower feed costs.

Accounting for 65 to 70 per cent of pig production expense, feed continues to eat away at farmer profits. This is especially true for growing-finishing pigs, as they account for about 80 per cent of all feed consumed.

As producers continue to grapple with thin margins and challenges to sustainability, the timing is perfect for developing cost-effective feeding strategies through projects such as, "Reducing feed cost and the environmental footprint and enhancing global competitiveness of Canadian pork production by increased nutrient utilization of feedstuffs fed to growing-finishing pigs," supported by Swine Innovation Porc (SIP). The study and its benefits are made possible by financial support from pork producers –something that scientists appreciate at a difficult time for the industry.



*Limiting feed costs is as necessary as ever to increase hog farm profitability.*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 46

**Table.** Effect of including alternative feedstuffs in pig diets on performance and economic viability of pig production.<sup>1</sup>

Alternative Feedstuff	BW, kg		Feedstuff <sup>2</sup> level, %	Effect on <sup>3</sup>		Change in feed cost		Source
	Initial	Final		ADG	G:F	Per ton	Per kg gain	
Weaner pig								
Chickpea	9.6	22	15	Increased	None	-\$9.60	-€2.00	CHJ. Winter 2018
Field pea	8.5	26	40	None	None	-\$64.00	ND	CHJ. Fall 2018
Lentil	9.0	20	22.5	None	None	-\$4.13	-€0.64	WHJ. Summer 2011
nCanola expeller	7.3	20	20	None	None	-\$29.80	-€4.2	WHJ. Spring 2012
nCanola meal	8.1	22	20	None	None	-\$11.90	-€2.00	WHJ. Fall 2011
jCanola meal	7.7	25	24	Reduced	Reduced	ND	ND	WHJ. Winter 2013
Canola cake	7.5	25	20	None	None	-\$15.96	-€5.84	WHJ. Winter 2016
Wheat DDGS	6.2	17	15	Reduced	Reduced	-\$14.60	-€2.07	WHJ. Spring 2010
Wheat millrun	9.8	21	20	None	Increased	-\$36.60	-€11.60	WHJ. Fall 2015
Grower-finisher pig								
Full-fat canola	25	Mkt wt	15	None	Reduced	-\$5.50	-€2.00	WHJ. Summer 2012
nCanola expeller	25	Mkt wt	15	Reduced	Increased	NR	-€2.00	WHJ. Winter 2009
nCanola meal	33	Mkt wt	30	Reduced	Increased	Increased	Increased	WHJ. Spring 2011
jCanola meal	33	Mkt wt	30	Reduced	Increased	Increased	Increased	WHJ. Spring 2011
Corn DDGS	30	Mkt wt	30	None	None	None	None	WHJ. Spring 2009

<sup>1</sup>jCanola meal = Juncea canola meal; kg = kilogram; Mkt wt = market weight; nCanola expeller = Napus canola expeller; nCanola meal = Napus canola meal; ND = not determined; NR = not reported; ton = metric ton; DDGS = dried distillers grains with solubles.

<sup>2</sup>Feedstuff level = dietary level of alternative feedstuff.

<sup>3</sup>Reduced = dietary inclusion of the alternative feedstuff reduced ADG or G:F; None = dietary inclusion of the alternative feedstuff did not affect ADG or G:F; and Increased = dietary inclusion of the alternative feedstuff increased ADG or G:F.

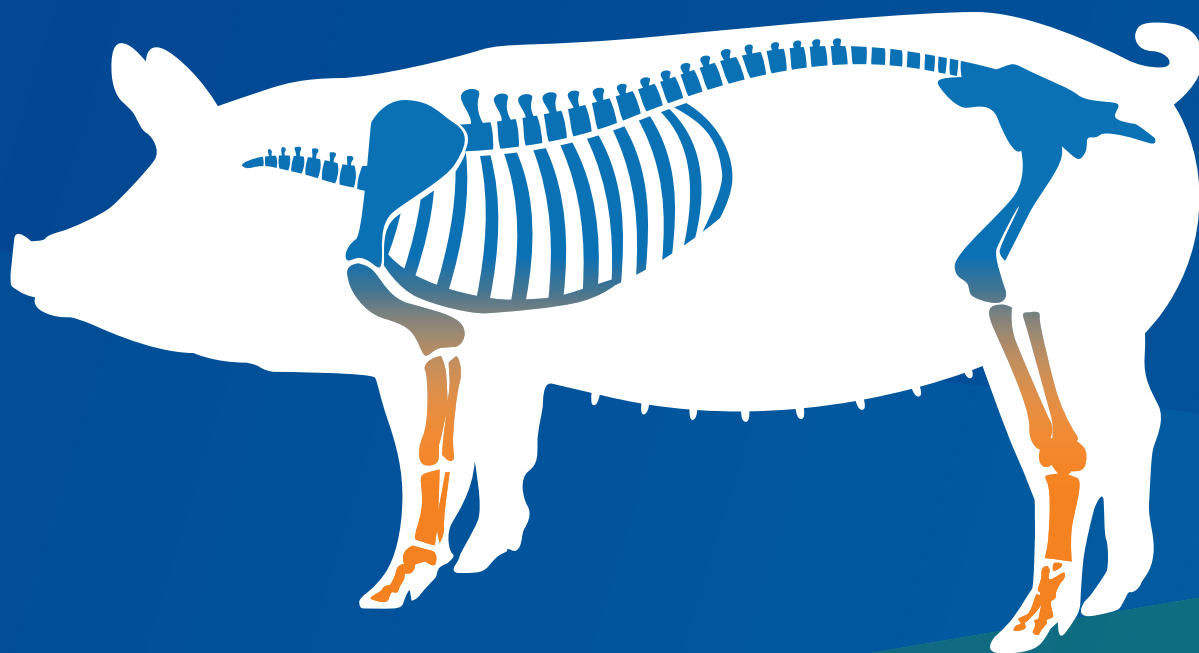
*Comparison of alternative pig feedstuffs and their impacts on performance and cost*





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“This is a follow-up to some previous projects that looked at reducing costs for growing and finishing pigs using alternative feedstuffs,” said Ruurd Zijlstra, Professor, Department of Agricultural, Food and Nutritional Science, University of Alberta.

The current study examines how to use enzymes and other technologies to derive more nutrients from those feedstuffs.

“We are hoping to characterize the nutrient value of different feed ingredients that people can use to formulate pig diets more accurately,” said Martin Nyachoti, Professor, Department of Animal Science, University of Manitoba. “In doing so, we can lower feed costs and reduce the environmental footprint. For example, if we avoid feeding pigs more than they require, there will be less nutrient excretion involved.”

As part of the project, locally available feedstuffs must be considered to meet the nutrient requirements for reducing the feed cost per unit of lean growth.

“To achieve the main goal, locally sourced ingredients need to be characterized, and we must consider opportunities of processing and feed enzymes to enhance nutrient utilization,” said Zijlstra. “Consequently, nutrient losses into the environment and the need to import nutrients into a production system will be reduced in parallel.”

This reduction is important, because excessive discharge of nitrogen and phosphorus in pig manure poses serious environmental concerns that may hamper competitive pork production. Expanding the matrix of well-characterized feedstuffs to formulate swine feed will enhance flexibility in feed formulation. Furthermore, the use of pigs as an omnivorous species to convert co-products into pork will improve the sustainability of pork production.

Central to this study is a nutritive evaluation of Canadian feed crops and their co-products for swine diets. Canada is the world’s largest exporter and one of the world’s largest producers of legume seeds, including pulse grains and soybeans. While soybeans are increasingly grown in Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba, a wide range of pulse grains – including faba

bean, field pea, chickpea, lentil and kidney bean – are grown in Ontario and western Canada.

“In general, pulses contain anti-nutritional factors that may reduce the nutritive value of pulses for swine compared to their expected value based on their starch, protein, fibre and fat content,” said Zijlstra. “Clearly, the relationship between anti-nutritional content and nutritive value requires better characterization.”

Initial data from the project that began in 2018 indicates that important differences exist in starch digestibility among feedstuffs, especially for pulse grains. Similarly, differences exist among feedstuffs in fibre fermentability. In addition to pulse grains, short-season corn and small grains – such as oats, triticale and oilseed co-products – are produced in Canada. Research focused on establishing the nutritive value of these feedstuffs for swine is needed to optimize their use in mitigating feed costs.

While strides have been made recently to characterize the nutritional value of Canadian feedstuffs, major gaps remain in North American feedstuff tables, especially for feedstuffs that are unique to Canada.

In spite of COVID-19, the projects are continuing following a brief stoppage. Once life returns to normal, they will target field peas and lentils, then move into oilseed co-products coming from different oil extraction methods. They will also resume analyzing a pile of samples that await their attention.

The unexpected break is frustrating all around, but researchers hope their final results will be worth the wait.

“The greatest benefit from this study will be making nutritionists more comfortable using a wider array of feedstuffs for growing and finishing pigs, which should significantly reduce feed costs,” said Zijlstra.

According to Nyachoti, the project should also “help companies better define and market these feedstuffs.”

Of course, the study and its benefits are made possible by financial support from pork producers, something that scientists appreciate at a difficult time for the industry. ■

**Table. Effect of feeding high levels of canola meal content to lactating sows\***

Response criteria	Control corn-soybean diet	Control diet with 30% canola meal	Control diet with 30% canola meal plus enzyme supplementation
Parity	3.3	3.3	3.1
Feed intake, kg	7.1	7.6	7.3
Body weight loss, mm	-6.0	-5.3	-3.3
Back fat change, mm	-2.3	-2.5	-2.6
Weaning to estrus interval, days	4.7	4.5	5.1

\* Experimental diets consisted of a corn-soybean meal control diet, control diet containing 300 g/kg solvent-extracted canola meal (CM) with or without multi-enzyme complex (MC). The MC used was a mixture of carbohydrases (Supercyme-OM, 1 g/kg of diet) and phytase (Bio-phytase, 0.2 g/kg of diet) provided by Canadian Bio-System Inc. (Calgary, Alberta, Canada).

*Results of feeding high levels of canola meal to lactating sows*



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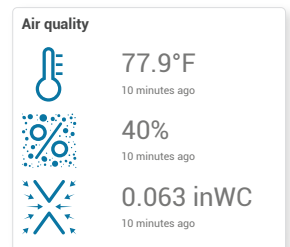
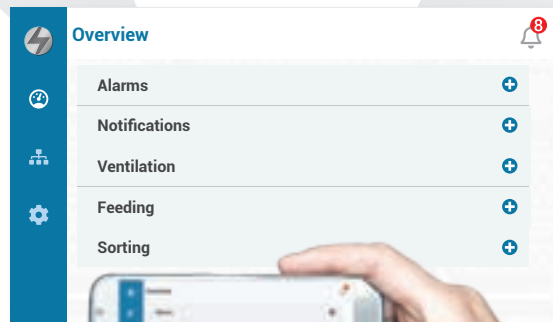
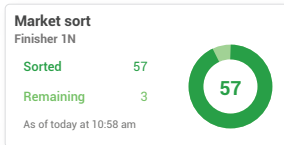
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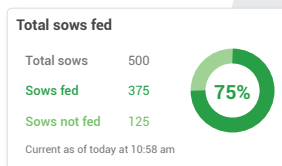


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# Healthy interest in disease resilience

Geoff Geddes

*Editor's note: This article was adapted from a piece written for Genome Alberta. For more information, contact Michael Dyck at [mkdyck@ualberta.ca](mailto:mkdyck@ualberta.ca).*

## Renewed research funding expands projects

Generally speaking, research project extensions are rarer than pigs that skip a meal.

Given that reality, it should speak volumes that a Genome Alberta-led project on improving disease resilience in pigs has been extended for three more years, worth \$1 million in additional funding from Genome Canada – Genome Alberta's not-for-profit parent organization, funded by the Government of Canada, which acts as a catalyst for developing and applying genomics technologies to create economic and social benefits for Canadians.

That is good news for producers, as it means more progress to protect their pigs and their bottom line.

"The new funding from the Genomic Applications Partnership Program [GAPP] will allow for additional research to validate some of our results,

as it extends our current project from five years to eight years," said Michael Dyck, Professor, Department of Agricultural, Food, and Nutritional Science, University of Alberta. "It will sustain the work we have been doing on disease resilience with PigGen Canada as an industry partner."

PigGen Canada is a not-for-profit organization with membership from the Canadian, U.S. and European swine genetics industries, including Alliance Genetics, AlphaGene, DNA Genetics, Fast Genetics, Genesis, Hypor and Topigs Norsvin. The goal of PigGen Canada is to represent the Canadian swine genetics industry with a single voice and develop strategies and support for research, in concert with the priorities of the Canadian pork industry. More information can be found on PigGen Canada's website: [PigGenCanada.org](http://PigGenCanada.org).

"The main objective of the research for the GAPP project is to capitalize on

key findings from our past research on Disease Resilience in Pigs," said Dyck. "This will involve validating genomic and phenotypic indicators so that they can be incorporated into the breeding programs of PigGen Canada member companies. Selection for disease resilience in breeding stock is expected to reduce susceptibility to disease in the pig population and reduce the impact of disease on overall productivity."

## More resilient animals equal fewer disease issues

The GAPP project involves using genomic tools to use bio-assays and genetic markers to identify animals that show superior resilience in the face of disease. From their efforts to date, researchers have pinpointed key phenotypic and genetic indicators that separate resilient pigs from their peers. With the project extension, they can further validate these traits and show how to incorporate them into breeding programs. Components of this research were published in the Fall 2020 edition of the Canadian Hog Journal article, "Selection of pigs that are more disease-resilient," and in the proceedings from the 2020 Banff Pork Seminar: *Advances in Pork Production, Volume 31, 137-144*.

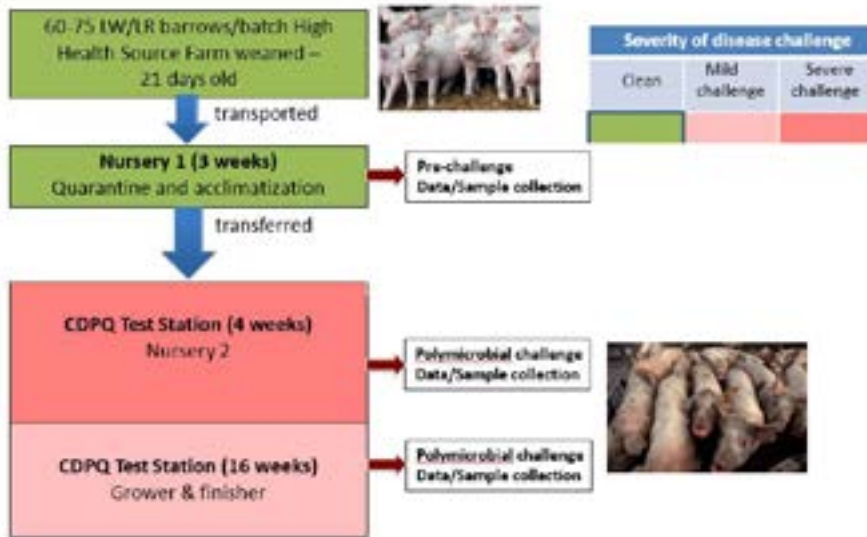
"As part of this ongoing research, we will continue assessing animals via the Natural Disease Challenge Model," said Dyck. "Working with CDPQ [Centre de développement du porc du Québec], we set up a facility where animals are exposed to various pathogens in a commercial environment to see how they respond to a commercially relevant disease challenge."

One of the prime indicators of resilience is an animal's genotype and the genes that control an animal's immune response, enabling pigs to continue grow-



*Studying disease resilience helps improve the genetics industry, which, in turn, means healthier, more profitable pigs for producers and the entire value chain.*

## Natural Disease Challenge Model



A diagram of the disease challenge model used to study disease resilience

ing and being efficient in a production environment when pathogens are present. The researchers also found indicator traits that predict which animals maintain their current food and water intake in the face of a disease challenge, and they hope such traits will help breeding companies better select more resilient pigs for pork production.

In collaboration with the University of Guelph, the researchers evaluated a test for immune responsiveness that can be conducted on young, healthy pigs, and they identified pigs that subsequently did better in the face of the disease challenge. These are the types of traits they are hoping to validate with more animals during the extension period.

In collaboration with Iowa State University and the University of Saskatchewan, the researchers will look at the association of these resilience traits and predictors with other important performance traits, so they do not select for resilience while having a negative effect on daily feed intake or average daily gain in an environment without major disease, for example. Clearly, researchers need to understand these interactions before incorporating traits into a breeding program.

## Animal welfare improves with better genetics

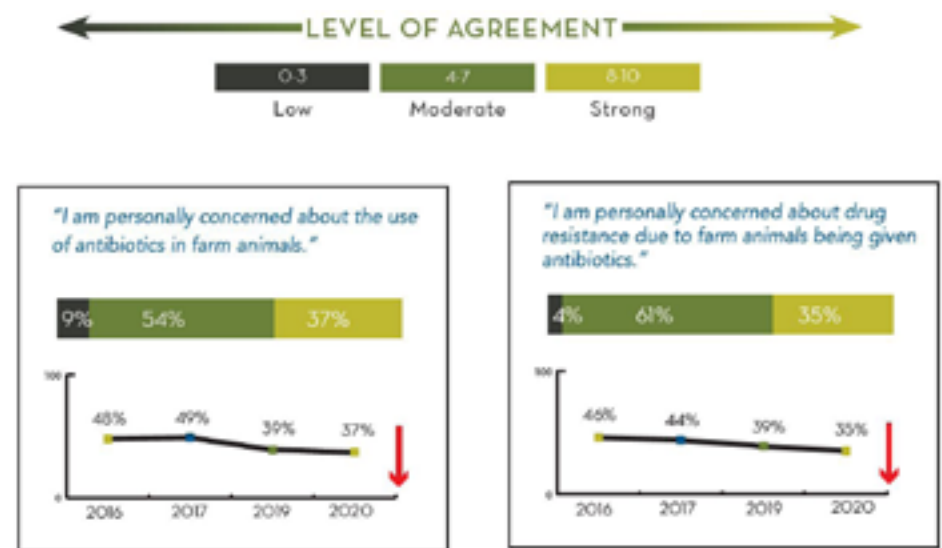
"By working directly with breeding companies through this project, we are creating tools that can be used to improve pig performance through all levels of the genetic pyramid," said Dyck. "If we can give breeders the tools to select more resilient animals, these will filter down to commercial herds and reduce costs associated with disease detection

and treatment. This should enable us to use fewer antibiotics, thereby addressing society's concerns around the use of antibiotics in livestock production.

Perhaps most importantly, decreasing the impact of disease also addresses the issues that come with exposure to pathogens, enhancing animal welfare in the process. Producers will know that the pigs they market come from an optimal health environment, and that knowledge can be passed along to consumers, enhancing public trust.

Though achieving results from research is often satisfying, the three-year extension on this project takes that feeling to another level.

"Often with research, you don't get the opportunity to see the outcome integrated and fully applied in industry. The extra funding lets us take that next step of collaboration, so that's very gratifying," said Dyck. "It was PigGen Canada that came up with the initial idea of working with Canadian researchers on using genomic tools to improve disease response. I want to commend PigGen Canada for having the vision and ability to continue working with us to make this happen." ■



By improving animal welfare, public trust follows. Most consumers surveyed for the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity's (CCFI) 2020 Public Trust Research expressed 'moderate' concern for antibiotic use in animal agriculture.

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