Adopting a Swine Well-Being Mindset

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Outline

• Importance of animal welfare
• Role of attitude
  – Understanding animal welfare
• Regaining public confidence
• Case study: euthanasia
• Review
Importance of Animal Welfare

• Consumers, our ultimate customer, may be separated from the production process, but are increasingly interested in how their food is produced:
  – Affordable
  – Healthy
  – Eco-friendly
  – Welfare-friendly

A study from Kansas State University concludes that pork demand would be 2.65% higher if welfare issues had not been reported in news media.
Developments in U.S.A.

• Ballot initiatives in Florida, Arizona and California
  – Increasing support to regulate how animals are raised
• Legislative activity in several other states
• Negotiated regulations in order to avoid ballot initiatives in others (eg. Michigan and Ohio)
• A lack of confidence in how we raise pigs
Meeting Welfare Standards

• Personal
  – Your own ethical standards

• Farm
  – Standards for your farm, perhaps contractual

• Industry
  – Impact on reputation and market

• Consumer
  – For commodity and/or specialized market
Role of Attitude

“The most important factor affecting pig welfare is the quality of stockmanship.”
“Within a given system, the most important factors affecting pig welfare are the attitude and skill of the stockperson.”
Attitude vs Skill

• ProHand
  – Training program for stockpersons
  – Developed by Paul Hemsworth and Grahme Coleman
  – Includes both attitude and skill development

• An animal welfare mindset requires some understanding of what animal welfare is

By changing attitudes and behaviour through ProHand, the fear responses in pigs are reduced, resulting in improvements in pig reproductive performance by, on average, 7%.
Components of Animal Welfare

- Understanding Animal Welfare (2008)
  - David Fraser, NSERC Industrial Research Chair in Animal Behaviour, University of British Columbia
Affective States

- Welfare . . . embraces both the physical and mental well-being of the animal.
  - (Brambell Report)
- The question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk?, but, Can they suffer?
  - (Jeremy Bentham)
- Welfare is dependent on what animals feel.
  - (Duncan, 1993)
Affective States

- Emphasis on practices that cause:
  - Pain
  - Fear
  - Frustration
  - Discomfort (or comfort)
  - Etc.
- Balances both positive and negative feelings
- Practices may or may not be associated with physical damage, but it is the feeling that is important to animal welfare
Function

- Animal welfare relates to an animal’s state of coping with its environment. (Broom, 1991)

- Stress becomes a threat to well-being only when the stressor . . . results in an animal’s biological function such that the animal enters a pre-pathological state. (Moberg, 1985)
Function

- Productivity
- Health
- Stress
- Disruption of behavior
- Often an assumption that if a production system is efficient (biologically and/or financially), then the welfare of the animals is good.
Natural

• Natural selection has resulted in animals that are best able to cope with natural conditions.

• An animal’s natural response to its housing conditions should be accommodated.

• Fit the farm to the animal, not the animal to the farm.
Natural

• In the wild, a solitary boar joins a group of females which soon cycle in response to his presence.
  – The boar effect used in commercial mating.
• Pigs have an innate drive to be familiar with their environment, and as such discover food sources and shelter.
  – Pigs housed in large groups will visit most feeders every day, rather than using only the nearest one.
Components of Animal Welfare

Affective states

Function

Natural
Components of Animal Welfare

- We need to be science based
- Which science?
- Recent Feedstuffs article contrasted the conclusions of two scientific panels. One emphasized a ‘functional’ approach, while the other included ‘affective states’ and ‘natural’ components.
Towards a Collective Approach

Affective states

Presence of good and absence of unpleasant feelings

Natural

Able to use normal behaviour to cope with conditions

Function

Functions well in terms of health, production and longevity
Towards a Collective Approach

Animal functions well, feels well and can rely on its natural abilities to adjust. Within an efficient, and hopefully profitable, production system.
Regaining Consumer Confidence

- The 3 Ds
  - Do the right thing
  - Document what you do
  - Be deemed to do the right thing
North American Approach

- Best practices
  - Codes of Practice
- Auditing programs
  - Voluntary
- Production contracts
Best Practices

- United Egg Producers (US)
- Dairy Code of Practice
- European Union
- The producer committee makes the final decision
- Risk of being seen as an industry screen
  - Content is critical to its credibility
N.A. Farm Audits: Components

- **Resource based measures**
  - Space allowance, feeders/pig, drinkers/pig
- **Health and nutrition**
  - Documentation by veterinarian
  - Documentation by nutritionist
- **Standard Operating Procedures**
  - Breeding, castration, weaning, loading, euthanasia
  - Addressing problems
N.A Farm Audits: Components

• Training
  – File for each employee
  – Evidence of training

• Documentation
  – What was done every day
  – Check list

• Inspection
  – Condition of facilities
  – Verify S.O.P. and training in place
  – Exceptions: health cards, overcrowding, observe procedure
Regaining Confidence

• Our Codes of Practice address Doing the right thing
• Our auditing programs emphasize Documenting what we do

It is not a question of just another thing to do, it is a question of doing it right.
What’s Important

• You can’t manage what you can’t measure.

• Not everything that counts, can be counted, and not everything that can be counted, counts.

(Albert Einstein)
Being Deemed to Do the Right Thing

“Farmers must reclaim their authority, based not on science and economics, but on their ethics and morality.”

(Mike Smith quoted in Western Producer)
Euthanasia: A Welfare Challenge

• All of our animals are going to die
  – Our goal is for as many as possible to be marketed and to make money

• Approximately 15% will die on the farm
  – Will they die humanely, or suffer prolonged distress

• How does a ‘welfare attitude’ apply to these pigs?
Confidence in Our Methods

• Some of the most spectacular stories of poor animal welfare relate to animals that should have been euthanized, or those that were poorly euthanized.
• Euthanizing a pig is a humane, and often necessary part of raising pigs.
• We, and the public, must have confidence in our methods.
Our Methods

• Must render the animal unconscious, and they must remain so until death
• Various approved methods for different ages of pigs (AVMA)
• If using captive bolt or concussion, check for death or bleed out to ensure death
• Greatest challenge is for piglets
# Our Methods

## Table 1: Euthanasia Methods for Swine: Based on Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Farrowing Pig Less than 3 weeks (5.5 kg)</th>
<th>Nursery Pig Less than 10 weeks (32 kg)</th>
<th>Grower Pig Less than 68 kg</th>
<th>Finisher Pig Greater than 68 kg</th>
<th>Mature Sow or Boar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gunshot</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captive Bolt</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anesthetic Overdose</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(administered by vets only)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blunt Trauma</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Carbon dioxide (CO₂) and electrocution are also considered to be acceptable methods of euthanasia. However, it is recommended that producers seek professional advice on the use of either method to ensure human and animal safety.
University of Guelph Study

• Confirmed that blunt force trauma is rapid and effective for piglets
  – 100% effective
• Developed an alternative using a modified head to a pneumatic nailing gun that created a non-penetrating captive bolt
  – 87% effective, requires confirmation of death
• Proven effective for small pigs
• Continuing evaluations for older piglets

(Widowski, 2010)
When to Euthanize

• Acute – only means to stop suffering
• Prolonged – animal fails to respond to treatment
• Economic
  – Unmarketable
    • Multiple abscesses
    • Severe lameness
    • Severe emaciation
  – Unprofitable
    • Animal will cost more to raise than it will sell for
      – May vary with the market
    • Animal is a threat to others in the herd
Who Decides?

• Standards for research
  – Campus veterinarian
  – Principal investigator
  – Unit manager
  – Technician

• A need to train, trust and empower the people working with the animals to make the decision
When to Euthanize

• One suggested measure for welfare is the number of days of suffering per 1000 pigs marketed
  – Suffering being defined as an animal that is identified for euthanasia

• If a pig is identified on Monday, but not put down until Wednesday, the number of days increases

• What about a pig identified on Saturday, but you wait until Monday, when ‘Bob’ comes in?
Standard Operating Procedures

• Develop protocols
  – Identifying animals
  – Methods to be used
• Train personnel
• Empower workers
• Make it a priority

• One of the more sensational ‘bad euthanasia’ news items was about sows on an Ohio farm.
• The newly formed Ohio Livestock Care Standards Board choose euthanasia as its first issue.
• The OLCSB recommended a negotiated policy rather than fight a ballot initiative.
Review

- Animal care and welfare are increasingly important to the pig industry.

- One of the leading factors affecting animal welfare is the attitude of the stockperson.

- Producers must recognize that animal welfare includes consideration of the animals’ feelings, their ability to function, and their ability to use normal behaviour effectively.
Review

- Animal welfare assurance programs must do the right thing and document what they do, before our industry can be deemed to do the right thing.

- Timely euthanasia is an important part of an animal welfare program.

- Animal welfare is not just something to do, it is something to do right.