BSE’s impact on the pork industry

The occurrence of a single case of mad cow disease in Alberta this spring has been devastating for the nation’s cattle industry. While the brunt of the hurt has been shouldered by both cattle and dairy producers, and continues on to this date, the BSE incident has also impacted other red meat sectors.

The Canadian pork industry first felt the fallout of the BSE incident when processors across the nation, including Brandon’s Maple Leaf Pork, prohibited meat and bone meal (MBM) in the rations of hogs entering their plants. This prohibition was done in response to foreign market demands and not because of any food safety concerns. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) maintains, and the processors agree, that there are no scientific or food safety concerns with feeding rendered proteins, including MBM, to pigs.

**New impacts continue.** Pig farmers in other provinces now have to pay to have their deadstock rendered, although Rothsay continues to pick up free in Manitoba. Ontario Pork has recently banned MBM in all hog feed in that province and will be conducting a study to examine its economic impacts on hog farmers. If MBM prohibitions become commonplace throughout North America and renderers’ markets for MBM disappear, the impact on pig farmers will be significant. A recent study completed for the Canadian Pork Council indicates costs for pig farmers would rise at least $4.71 per hog if rendered proteins were banned, and by as much as $25.33 per hog if all animal by-products were removed from both human and pet food chains. Alberta Pork has flagged decreased demand for pork as having potential for serious consequences for pig farmers. They have also been in contact with western Canadian grocery distributors to share concerns and urge their help.

Here in Manitoba some producers have already been faced with paying disposal surcharges when they take their animals to local butcher shops or abattoirs for processing. These facilities maintain that they are simply passing along new costs they are now facing because of BSE.

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**Important CQA* deadline reminder**

All hog producers should be aware that Maple Leaf Foods has imposed a Canadian Quality Assurance (CQA) deadline. As of December 31, 2003 only CQA-validated hogs will be accepted at all Maple Leaf plants. If you are not yet registered in the CQA program, information sessions are held Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons by appointment at the Manitoba Pork Council office. Contact Melanie Couture at 1-888-893-7447 for further details and to make an appointment.

For producers already registered or in the process of renewing their CQA protocols, please ensure that your finisher rations are tested for sulfamethazine. Send one to two cups of feed, properly labeled with name and producer number along with a cheque for $26, to the attention of Melanie at Manitoba Pork Council. Or send sample directly to Central Testing Laboratories (however, a copy of the results must also be sent to Manitoba Pork Council to ensure validation is recognized).

This is a very busy time of year for CQA; be sure to schedule an appointment with a Validator as soon as possible.

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**Lone BSE cow born in Canada**

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency announced that genetic tests have confirmed that the single mad cow, responsible for international trade bans that crippled Canada’s beef industry, was traced to a farm in Saskatchewan. It was born in 1997, just before a North American ban on including protein from cattle and other ruminants in cattle feed was instituted. The cow spent time on two other farms before it ended up in the northern Alberta herd; however, experts cannot say conclusively where it ate the contaminated feed.

(Source: Reuters)
Chairman's Viewpoint
by Marcel Hacault, Chairman, Manitoba Pork Council

Is the glass half full or half empty?

Half Full

Maple Leaf Foods announced the acquisition of Schneider Foods assets. The good news for hog farmers is that JMS has a strong value-added product line. This will make Maple Leaf Foods a stronger competitor on the domestic and international scene. A stronger competitor means a more stable company and one that can pay for product that it wants. Hog farmers benefit from this. Maple Leaf Pork is also adjusting grids to bring producer payments more in line with the quality of carcasses the market prefers. Producers who can provide the “right” hogs receive higher rewards.

Half Empty

The acquisition of Schneider Foods by Maple Leaf Foods has received mixed reviews from producers. After all, we are losing another packer. Production contracts that Mitchell’s made with Big Sky and ownership interest in Cold Spring Farms expand Maple Leaf’s production base. Understandably producers are concerned that we have changed from a single desk marketing system to a single buyer system. Producers are feeling they are being dictated to and losing the ability to negotiate all dealings with packers. We should be looking at what mechanism is needed to empower the producers when it comes to producing food animals. We need checks and balances in a potentially totally integrated industry.

As is often the case, it is how we approach conflict that determines the outcome. It would be very easy to be reactionary with the Maple Leaf Foods announcement. What will be more difficult is to build on the positive aspects and benefit from them. If producers feel they have ownership in the changes and can benefit, all of us can be winners. Producer concerns about the JMS acquisition could be dealt with if Maple Leaf Foods would sit down and show us the benefits that will accrue from the deal, and how an independent farmer can also benefit. Producer concerns about the way they are being treated when their contracts are up would be met if the process is transparent and there is an allowance to develop a plan to meet the improvements necessary for their hogs to be the “right” hogs. The only way we can compete as an industry in the international markets is for all to be pulling in the same direction. We can do the pulling; we just don't want to be shoved!

Directors’ Corner

• Karl Kynoch (District 1) participated in a western provinces pork associations traceability meeting in Saskatoon on September 8.
• Marcel Hacault (District 9) participated in a meeting of the Manitoba Agriculture Stakeholders group and the NDP caucus September 8 in Winnipeg relative to the BSE crisis.
• Karl Kynoch attended a Manitoba Rural Adaptation Council Livestock Industry Stakeholders meeting in Winnipeg on September 9.
• The Executive Committee met on September 11.
• Marcel Hacault participated in a National Pork Value Chain meeting in Winnipeg on September 16-17.
• Marcel Hacault attended the signing ceremony of the Agricultural Policy Framework agreement in Winnipeg on September 19.
• Larry Friesen (Weanling Exporters’ District) participated in a conference call of the Canadian Hog Sector COOL Coalition on September 22.
• Garry Tolton (District 3) attended a Manitoba Farm Animal Council meeting in Winnipeg on September 23.
• The Board of Directors held its regular monthly meeting on September 24 and a conference call September 26.
• Karl Kynoch participated in a joint industry-government, fact-finding mission to The Netherlands and Belgium sponsored by the Canadian Animal Health Emergency Management Strategy September 28-October 3.
• Ray Timmerman (District 2) chaired a Pork Information Alliance meeting in Winnipeg on October 1.
• Marcel Hacault participated in a conference call of western hog association chairs and CPC on September 30.
• Marcel Hacault and Bill Vaags (District 7) met with the Secretary to the Community and Economic Development Committee of Cabinet on October 8.
• Karl Kynoch participated in a meeting of the Canadian Animal Health Emergency Management Strategy in Winnipeg on October 8-9.
• Bryan Ferriss (District 4) participated in a Dauphin and Area Community Workshop on Climate Change on October 16.
Because they also slaughter beef cattle and dairy cull cows, the trimmings and offal from beef and pork are mixed; this mixed product now has no value to renderers and they are now charging for pick up and disposal.

With the recent push for increased provincial beef slaughter capacity, Manitoba hog farmers are now facing another challenge – the proposal to convert Best Brand Meats into a cattle processing plant. Recently, Council Chairman Marcel Hacault urged the provincial government to take action to attract new additional hog slaughter capacity and maintain the Best Brands killing floor capacity.

In media interviews, Hacault went out of his way to make it clear that Manitoba's hog farmers are not opposed to increased beef slaughter. “Manitoba’s hog farmers support new or expanded beef processing, but not at the expense of reducing slaughter capacity for pork,” said Hacault. “We are sympathetic towards the plight of the cattle industry.”

“It is our view that all meat sectors must work together with government in seeking solutions to this challenge. The last thing we want is to turn a beef crisis into a meat industry crisis,” he said.

The BSE disease outbreak underscores the importance of livestock groups working together on a common Foreign Animal Disease strategy. In many people’s minds, the BSE incident was a wake-up call for the entire Canadian livestock industry.

**Human Resources & Training**

**Apprenticeship programs off and running**

This has been a whirlwind year for Jennifer Sabourin and the Pork Production Technician (PPT) Apprenticeship program. Jenn is embarking on her second year as a full-time instructor of the PPT program. She is also graduating later this month from the University of Manitoba with a Master of Science degree and, to top it all off, she was married this past summer! Lots of changes in her life but the one thing that has remained the same is her focus on the students in the program and her dedication toward their success.

This winter will see another two groups of students graduating from the two-year program and we are looking forward to enrolling numerous students in our new start-ups. The program offers a wonderful balance between theory and technical training with guest speakers, lots of opportunities for hands-on learning and a chance for people working in the industry to come together and share ideas during class discussions, to make new friends and to feel like they have more to contribute when they return to their barn.

Students who graduate from the PPT program have a renewed sense of accomplishment and are proud to be working in this challenging and exciting industry. If you would like information on signing-up for the program, please contact the program co-ordinator Mary Petersen at 1-800-862-6307 ext. 6683 or petersem@assiniboine.net OR Jennifer Sabourin at 235-2306 or email at jsabourin@manitobapork.com.
Producers Be Aware / Be Active!

As producers, we need to be aware of any proposed municipal by-laws that may affect the livestock industry. Be especially aware of by-laws that propose to make unreasonable requirements or restrictions on livestock farming. This is particularly important at the public meeting after first reading of the by-law as there is a need for you and/or an industry representative to be present to formally give the R.M. Council:

- any advice we may have on the by-law or; alternatively
- object to the by-law and to have the right to appeal for by-laws under The Planning Act.

Usually such public meetings are advertised in the local paper. Unfortunately, by-laws under the Municipal Act have no requirement for public review, hearing and appeal so we have to be extra vigilant. Please contact Manitoba Pork Council at 1-888-893-7447 for advice when there are to be public meetings in your area on proposed development plans, zoning or other municipal by-laws that may affect the livestock industry … and your right to farm.

Eight largest pork producers in Canada

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Name of operation</th>
<th>Headquarters</th>
<th># of sows 2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Maple Leaf Foods (Elite Swine)</td>
<td>Landmark, MB</td>
<td>122,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Premium Pork</td>
<td>Lucan, ON</td>
<td>47,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Hytek</td>
<td>La Broquerie, MB</td>
<td>40,000</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Isporc</td>
<td>Ange Gardian, PQ</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>F. Menard</td>
<td>Ange Gardian, PQ</td>
<td>32,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Big Sky Farms</td>
<td>Humboldt, SK</td>
<td>26,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>The Puratone Corporation</td>
<td>Niverville, MB</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Heartland Pork</td>
<td>Saskatoon, SK</td>
<td>18,000</td>
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Ambassador Program

More workshops planned

The kids are back at school. Most crops are in the bins. And Manitoba Pork Council is preparing for another busy fall and winter of Pork Ambassador workshops.

The Pork Ambassador program is designed to provide hog industry players and partners with information and tools to help them share, in a credible and effective manner, the success of Manitoba’s hog industry. The free, half-day workshop provides each participant with a comprehensive Pork Ambassador Kit that includes ideas for signs, sponsorships, classroom visits, success stories, fact sheets and sample answers to those “difficult” questions.

Why not join the more than 100 others who have already been to a session? Anyone involved in the industry who would like to attend a session in their local area is invited to call Dwayne Marling at the Pork Council office – Toll-free: 1-888-893-7447.

Hurry Hog!!! ice decals available

Ice making is underway at curling rinks around the province and the calls are coming in for the popular Hurry Hog!!! ice decals introduced as part of the Ambassador Program by Manitoba Pork Council. If you’d like to have them at your curling rink hog lines, call Elizabeth Gould at 1-888-893-7447. They’re free!
Environmental award to Lowe Farm operation

Caring for the land has always been a priority for Eldon and Mildred Schroeder of Lowe Farm. Their commitment and dedication to environmental stewardship were recently recognized when their pig operation, Green Gable Piglets, won the 2003 Elite Swine Environment Award in the nursery category.

“I do one hundred percent of the barn work myself and I don’t like a messy yard,” says Eldon. The Schroeders’ pride and confidence is evident throughout the operation. From the barn site to the neighbouring farmyard, everything is clean and well kept. And you can’t be much more confident in your manure storage system than Eldon and Mildred. They built their own new home water supply dugout beside the 400-day capacity manure storage.

Promotions

Another Successful BBQ Season!

The end of October ushers in the end of another successful season for Manitoba Pork Council’s Barbecue Cart program. A record 144 events were booked this year, an 8% increase over 2002. In addition to the school windups, casual Fridays, birthdays, anniversaries and such, we provide sponsorship for many events. That is, the meat, staff and service for fundraising opportunities of various kinds are donated by Council. Among the charities that have benefited from this sponsorship are Winnipeg Harvest, the Manitoba Organ Transplant Program, Children’s Miracle Network, Manitoba Special Olympics, Manitoba Marathon, the Arthritis Society, and the ALS Society. As always, the Pork on a Bun is a crowd pleaser. But what makes this program such a hit is the enthusiastic and capable staff. Our young team of barbecue chefs are efficient, professional and able to handle difficult or unusual situations with aplomb. We receive many favourable comments about the food, and just as many about the staff. Our last event will be at the end of October. The carts will then be cleaned, repaired and “put to bed” in preparation for an equally busy season in 2004.

Alberta Pork opened a new Pork Industry Interpretive Centre at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. Designed to showcase Alberta’s thriving pork industry “The Pig Science Centre” gives visitors, especially students, an inside look at how pigs are cared for through interactive displays. On hand to officially cut the ribbon were Bill Wildeboer, Chairman, Alberta Pork, Dr. Rod Fraser, President, University of Alberta, Honourable Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Jack Moerman, Vice Chairman, Alberta Pork and Dr. Ian Morrison, Dean, Agriculture, Forestry and Home Economics, University of Alberta.
“Entertaining and Festive Pork”
as seen on TV’s
Great Tastes of Manitoba

Our newest consumer recipe brochure features fall and winter recipes for holiday entertaining and will be in retail stores during the month of November. The brochure is also available at the Pork Council office and may be seen on our website at www.manitobapork.com.

Recipes from the brochure will be featured on “Great Tastes of Manitoba”, our joint commodity television series airing on CKY-TV at 6:30 p.m. on Saturdays. “Pork for Family and Friends” will air on November 1, with “Pork for the Holidays” on November 29.

Agriculture Comes to the City

Manitoba Pork Council was again a part of the annual Ag Awareness display at St. Vital Shopping Centre on September 25-27. The major commodities each have a display with information about their product and its production. Visitors, young and not-so-young, are invited to answer fun questions about the various commodities and then enter to win a variety of prizes. This year’s event was particularly busy, with many families traveling to each display and competing against each other to answer the questions. Along with Amazing Grains for school children, this event is an excellent way of bringing agriculture to the city.

Manitoba Pork District Directors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Karl Kynoch, Baldur (Vice-Chairman)</td>
<td>(204) 535-2387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ray Timmerman, Treherne (Executive Member)</td>
<td>(204) 723-2707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Garry Tolton, Newdale</td>
<td>(204) 849-2081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bryan Ferriss, Bowsman (Executive Member)</td>
<td>(204) 238-4484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Brad Friesen, Altona</td>
<td>(204) 324-6527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Robert Jacobson, Arborc</td>
<td>(204) 376-5112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bill Vaags, Dugald</td>
<td>(204) 853-7948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ben Hofer, Rock Lake Colony</td>
<td>(204) 322-5231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Marcel Hacault, Niverville (Chairman)</td>
<td>(204) 388-4924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>James Hofer, Starlite Colony</td>
<td>(204) 735-2229 (ext. 223)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Guy Baudry, Landmark</td>
<td>(204) 355-4374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Scott Lins, Niverville</td>
<td>(204) 388-0013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weanling Exporters’ District:</td>
<td>Larry Friesen, Rivers</td>
<td>(204) 328-7288</td>
</tr>
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Pork Council’s Marlene McDonald discusses pig care with a class of interested school children who had the opportunity to get in touch with agriculture during the annual three-day Amazing Grains event co-ordinated by Ag in the Classroom Manitoba. Manitoba Pork Council participated as part of the Amazing Animals station with a sow and ten piglets on display. Thanks to Arnold Gross and Sommerfeld Colony for once again providing such excellent animals and to Alayna Giesbrecht of Manitoba Farm Animal Council for her able assistance.