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Swine Newsletter
February 1, 2017

Report from the Banff Pork Seminar

It is a habit of mine to attend the Banff Pork Seminar held in January every year. It is a two day meeting and this years theme was "Innovative and Sustainable Solutions for an Evolving Industry". Pork production has been and continues to be an innovative industry. We are always looking at ways to improve health, genetics, nutrition, management, etc.

Change is continually bestowed upon us as either industry striving for improvements or outside pressures (consumers) driving us to change practices in what we do and how we do them. Our first reaction is generally to resist which can be a good thing because it means we believe in what we are doing. But with that being said, when we look at all the options we do become very adaptive to change.

Feeding the Planet – Animal Protein Challenges.

We will need to produce more food in the next 40 years than we have produced over the past 8,000. To meet demand from a larger, wealthier population, protein will come from various sources, including animals. Animal agriculture, including pork, will need to bring its use of resources and impacts in line with the Earth's finite capacity and demonstrate to consumers how their products can be part of sustainable diets. The pressures to do things differently will increase on animal protein producers, including pork, not only due to campaigns from groups of opinion leaders and NGOs, but also due to business risks for producers, including availability of affordable, quality resources such as water, land and feed. Solutions are within reach, and can be further developed in the future.

Genetic Modification Issues.

Obviously GMOs are a hot button for a lot of people. At the BPS there were several presentations put forward in their favour but education of the consumer is definitely necessary. It was concluded that genetic engineering will not solve all of the worlds food challenges but that it is one of the tools that can help.

Swine Health

- Canada exports about 70% of its swine production as live pigs and pork products. This puts the industry in a very vulnerable position if a Foreign Animal Disease (FAD) caused closure of borders to trade. Only a few countries, such as Denmark, Belgium, and the Netherlands, are in a similar position.
- A lot of effort has already been made to reduce the risk of a FAD
 - Prevention, monitoring, biosecurity, early detection, containment
- There is a need to create “zones” within Canada so that the whole country would not be affected as it was when B.S.E. was found in a cow in Alberta in 2004.
- The veterinary industry is enhancing surveillance through Canada-West Swine Intelligence Network and Ontario SHIN, but these should all come together under one national program which would demonstrate to our trading partners that we have a more comprehensive program.
- Contaminated feed could serve as vehicles for FAD into North America.

Big Picture Stuff

- 2014 & 2015 were very good years for the pork industry. And 2016 was better than expected. Predictions were that the 4th quarter would be real bad but turned out to be less severe than anticipated. Why? Because demand for pork and beef went up (after years of slightly declining demand).
- Both domestic and export demand has been good.
- 20% of our domestic consumption is filled by American pork. Traditionally, 20% of our domestic consumption has been imported pork. This hasn't changed.
- The Canadian pork industry can compete globally. A lot of numbers were shown to prove it.
- The Canadian packing industry still has to make up some lost ground. The U.S. plants are more efficient than ours.
- There will be strong demand for our weaners and feeders in the U.S.
- The Canadian pork producers are becoming fewer, larger, and more integrated. That's obvious!
- What about CETA (The Canadian Europe Trade Agreement)? Europe has a huge pig industry and are very protectionist. Chances are CETA won't have much impact on us as they will find ways to keep our pork out.
- One big problem the industry is already wrestling with is how to determine the hog price. Only 2.4% of hogs were price negotiated (?) last year and that % has been decreasing since 2002.