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Pork Quality Assurance...Dollars and Sense

Angela Baysinger[1]

Summary and Implications

Is there any reason a pork producer would ***not*** *want to reduce production cost or improve management skills? With the pork industry becoming more consumer driven, should producers take an active role in producing a quality pork product? The Pork Quality Assurance (PQA) Program, developed by the National Pork Producers Council on behalf of the pork industry, is available to help pork producers answer these questions and ensure future success.*

Why Worry?

Producers need to be conscious of the effect of swine health on pork quality. Packers have switched to more carcass buying, placing more responsibility on producers to provide them a quality pig. Producers must withstand the loss for pigs condemned for health reasons. The Pork Quality Assurance (PQA) program helps producers, through an analysis of their herd health protocol and management techniques, to produce better quality pork.

The PQA program is based on the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) process. This is an evaluation program routinely used by the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) to monitor slaughter and processing facilities. The PQA program helps producers in evaluating the following critical control points.

- Establish an efficient and effective herd health management plan.
- Establish a valid veterinarian/client/patient relationship.
- Store all drugs correctly.
- Use only FDA approved over-the-counter or prescription drugs with professional assistance.
- Administer all injectable drugs and oral medications properly.

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- Follow label instructions when using feed additives.
- Maintain proper treatment records and adequate identification of all treated animals.
- Use drug residue tests when appropriate.
- Implement employee/family awareness of proper drug usage.
- Complete quality assurance checklist annually.

Benefits

The following are benefits for producers of becoming PQA certified.

- An objective professional assessment of their pork production practices (ie. people/pig flow, biosecurity, processing, etc.)
- Examine the production process for possible cost saving areas (ie. vaccine, antibiotic or feed-additive usage).
- Discuss newly available animal health care products with a veterinarian.
- Review and update facility design and repair needs.
- Learn new technology and developments to improve the production system, nutrition program and swine health. For example, producers can gain insight into segregated early weaning, all-in/all-out, the latest dietary lysine recommendations or the most recent reports on Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS).

Producers can certify by a one-on-one consultation with their veterinarian, local extension educator, vocational agricultural teacher or through statewide certification meetings. To maintain Level III status, producers must re-certify every other year. For more information about the Pork Quality Assurance Program, contact the Nebraska Pork Producers Association, Inc., at (402) 472-2563.

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