

## Pseudorabies program

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Present regulations in the state prohibit all infected or exposed swine from being transported within the state or into Pennsylvania without a permit. All breeding swine imported into the Commonwealth need prior permits and numbers which identify the purchaser, where the hogs are going, where they're coming from, the number of swine purchased, and their complete description — including ear tag number, sex, age, breed, registered name and number or ear notch.

For buyers who purchase a large number of out-of-state hogs throughout the year, a blanket or open prior permit can be issued. The stipulation for getting one of these permits is that the buyer agrees to purchase only swine that comply with Pennsylvania's import regulations. This permit is issued for a 12-month period. These buyers still need to have the interstate health certificates for all breeding swine, with complete identification information.

All breeding swine coming into Pennsylvania must be tested pseudorabies negative within 30 days of import or they must come from a pseudorabies free herd. These breeding swine must be isolated for 15-30 days after import and then be retested at the owner's expense. If all swine test negative, they can enter the herd.

If, instead, the swine test positive for pseudorabies, they are placed under quarantine. And, if the isolation and retesting is not done immediately after the farmer brings the out-of-state hogs home, the entire herd is quarantined. The only way the quarantine is lifted is after two negative retests are obtained during a 15-day period.

Any swine showing a positive test are sent to slaughter and the herd is retested after 30 days at the owner's expense.

Imported and breeding swine that test positive for pseudorabies must go directly to slaughter under permit without any side routes. Feeder swine, raised in the state, can either go directly to slaughter, through an approved slaughter swine auction, or into a quarantined feedlot.

Imported breeding swine and feeder swine do not need a pseudorabies test if they are: kept separate during transport (a state and federal requirement); have interstate health certificates with individual identification and point of origin; and are from a state that requires all pseudorabies positive tested swine to be quarantined.

No swine that have been vac-

inated for pseudorabies are allowed entry into Pennsylvania. And, any exhibition swine taken out of state must be isolated on their return and retested in 15 to 30 days — unless all the swine at the event were tested and negative within 30 days prior to the show.

In Pennsylvania to date, there have been 63 herds infected with pseudorabies since its outbreak in Pennsylvania in January, 1980. Currently there are 47 herds under quarantine, with 45 of those herds being located in Lancaster County.

A recent survey in a 50 square mile area in the northern part of Lancaster County identified 22 infected herds in addition to the previous 25 quarantined herds in the state. The survey tested a total of 207 herds, and 2,197 hogs were bled.

Since the outbreak began a year and a half ago, 16 herds have been released from quarantine after depopulating.

According to Dr. Max Van Buskirk, chief veterinarian of the state's Bureau of Animal Industry, the proposed pilot program would require testing of every hog in the infected area. This program, he estimated, would not get underway for at least six to eight months pending federal funding and other constraints. He, too, expressed optimism that Pennsylvania is competitive with other states for funding.

Since the completion of the Lancaster County survey, Van Buskirk has submitted policy changes to Secretary Hallowell for the Department head's consideration concerning swine movement within Pennsylvania and from other states.

"Pennsylvania cannot unilaterally limit imports to pseudorabies free hogs — we need federal support," he said. "We're hoping to write regulations that are effective, not burdensome. The trouble is what the financial impact will be on the farmer with only a few pigs.

"Certifying the baby pigs as pseudorabies free will be a significant cost to the small farmer, whereas it is not unreasonable for the commercial hog producer.

"Writing regulations is easy — it's control that's tough," Van Buskirk remarked.

One of the major problems in regulation control is identification. If there are going to be regulations to control movement of swine, there has to be a method of tracing that movement and proving those positive pigs came from a certain herd.

"Something is needed to tie the

pigs to their health statement," Van Buskirk observed, admitting ear tags are not necessarily the solution since they don't stay on the pigs. "Ear tags make the pigs' ears sore, so the farmer cuts the small tags out or the hogs rub them off," he said. "They're not effective for long."

Van Buskirk suggested ear notching, tattooing or branding might be feasible alternatives in identifying pigs. "I'd like to see all pigs tattooed — preferably in the ear, but they could be tattooed in the flank area. Tattooing is an effective identification that is not easily tampered with if done properly."

Speaking for the Pennsylvania Swine Breeders Cooperative, President Dennis Grumbine echoed Van Buskirk's cry for more uniform pseudorabies control on the federal level.

"The federal government needs to outline regulations that are good for every state — and everybody must participate," Grumbine stated emphatically. "Our U.S. Secretary of Agriculture is a hog producer who knows our disease problems. He could have enacted legislation, but he sat on his hands."

Grumbine stressed the need for all hog producers to get involved, stating "I can't believe how many hog producers are ignoring the problem. Their negative attitude shocks and disturbs me."

Referring to the situation in Lancaster County, Grumbine said some of the farmers are refusing to depopulate. He pointed out the key to controlling pseudorabies is depopulating.

Grumbine said purebred swine breeders are willing to do anything to get rid of the stigma surrounding swine in southeastern Pennsylvania these days. However, he noted, the problem with pseudorabies isn't in the purebred herds since they are already required to blood test.

One way of curtailing the spread of pseudorabies in the state, said Grumbine, is to allow no more swine to be imported into the state. This would benefit Pennsylvania swine breeders, he said.

Grumbine questioned the effectiveness of writing regulations for commercial hog producers because of the difficulty of policing them.

"Out in the Midwest, there are check stations on all the main arteries travelled by the truckers. There's none in Pennsylvania. Here you can almost walk a boar from one farm to the next," he mused. "So, all their regulations end up in the purebred breeder's lap. Here their regulations can be enforced simply while feeder pigs keep running up and down the coast."

## Big piggies

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"Considering what it costs daily to buy the hogs and what it costs to slaughter them, compared to what we get when we sell the meat, Penn Packing couldn't continue to operate."

"We're closed indefinitely until economic conditions might change to warrant reopening."

Among the financial troubles cited by Lapoff were its labor costs in the slaughter and cutting processes. Penn Packing did no further processing operations.

"Our base rate for employees is \$9.06 an hour," he said.

"To that must be added between \$4.50 and \$5.00 in fringe benefits."

He denied that the firm was experiencing any higher absentee rate among employees than others in the packing industry.

One report listed absenteeism at about 10 percent, though.

Penn Packing has a work force of about 600 employees. During the past peak season, slaughter had been running about 30,000 or 31,000 head a week from September to March. The firm had been operating five days a week and some Saturdays.

Recently before closing, kills had been cut back to four days a week.

Besides the station at Ephrata, Penn Packing had received hogs in Delaware, Maryland and Illinois. A large number of hogs had been trucked in from the Midwest.

During the last week of operations, a large number of these Midwest hogs died in the high temperatures and humidity on Tuesday, June 16.

Reportedly, 500 or more hogs died when a convoy of some 10 trucks arrived at Penn Packing and became backed up

Despite efforts to hose them down and keep them cool, the high death toll resulted.

The incident had no effect on the decision to cease operations, according to Lapoff. The loss was that of the truckers, not Penn, he said.

Until the marketing situation stabilizes, the total impact of the Penn Packing closing will not be known.

But hog auctions in Lancaster County already saw an increase in the number of head consigned this week. Some were up about 400 head.

The question of auction price quotes has arisen several times in contacts with both buyers and farmers. Some claim that lower prices are being dropped off the quotes.

Thus if the lower prices are dropped off auction reports, it serves to "inflate" the price range that is actually paid for hogs on any given day.

Also, it was reported that efforts had been attempted by the auctions to secure prompt, daily payments from buyers since the auctions make payments to consigning farmers on the day of the sale. But it was reported that such efforts were abandoned by some auctions when buyers let it be known that they favor the traditional several days lag time in making payment to the auctions.

And thus as the rhyme goes: "This little piggy went to market."

"And this little piggy stayed at home."

Still to be seen are how they will continue to go to market and when.

And hopefully, as many farmers explain, the pigs won't be staying home too long, eating unnecessary feed and putting on excess fat.

## FEC denies

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North Dakota co-op, calling for indirect member solicitation.

Krzyszynski explained Land O Lakes defended their (Land O

Lakes) request by claiming individuals in locals had a greater overall influence or a more direct relationship with Land O Lakes.

The large co-op also argued that under federal labor regulations, a federated labor association can solicit from members of local unions, a point that had not surfaced at the Midstate hearing, said Krzyszynski.

Currently an advisory committee to the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives is preparing a draft for a petition to amend the regulation. However due to a "cumbersome regulatory process," explained Krzyszynski, it may be another six months before legislative wheels move in the direction of a change.

"I suppose it's going to have to hurt everyone's pocketbook more than it is now before the state's pseudorabies problem will be solved," Grumbine concluded.

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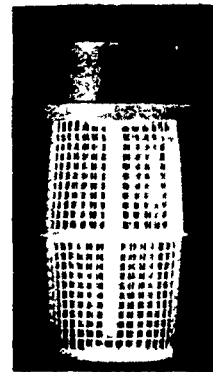
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