

Pork Producers Change Views Of Product

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NEWARK, Del. — Over the past several months, I've had the opportunity to talk with several people involved in the livestock industry regarding consumer concerns about fat in the diet. On two separate occasions, it was suggested that producers need to change their own attitudes about the livestock they grow.

You see, producers have the habit of referring to their market hogs as fat hogs. This term is not acceptable to consumers and should not be acceptable to producers either.

Trends in the hog industry are toward leaner, meatier hogs not — fat ones. Our descriptive names for market animals need to reflect the type of product we're trying to produce.

Fat is not a positive term in today's society. It's become associated with health concerns,

and the American consumer is constantly reminded that fat makes up too much of his daily caloric intake.

But why the big fuss? Aren't today's pigs leaner than those produced 10 or 15 years ago?

Everybody associated with the pork industry knows that today's pigs are leaner. Along with this leanness, they're also more efficient to produce.

The problem is that even though we raise a lean product we still refer to it in our old terms. Believe me, I'm as guilty as the rest of the pork industry in doing this. I've used the description "fat hogs" and have been wrong in doing so.

What's the solution? First of all, let's all get out of the habit of using the term "fat" in referring to our livestock. If you ever hear me say it, point it out to me, and I'll do likewise. It's not easy changing language we've used over 10 or more years, and we all can use a

little help.

Instead of saying "fat," why not substitute "market" or "market ready." "Finished" might also be a good term to use when referring to our market hogs.

Another problem faced by our industry is a lack of desirable product in the store meat cases. I don't know how many pork producers have mentioned to me that they can't find the type of pork, cut the way they like, in the meat cases.

For example, have you ever noticed how thin pork chops are cut for consumers? This is basically a ploy by the meat cutter to make more (but smaller) servings out of a given amount of meat. But have you ever tried to grill a 1/2 inch thick pork chop? The results are usually somewhere between shoe leather and brick. By the time the meat is cooked through, it's usually dry and flavorless.

As consumers, insist that the

meat you buy is what you want. If you have to wait a couple of minutes before getting your order custom cut, do it. Encourage other people to do this, too.

We need to educate consumers that today's pork is leaner and more nutritious than ever. Here's where your state pork associations

come into play. Educational materials and promotional campaigns organized by local pork producer groups can play a large role in educating consumers about the wholesomeness of pork.

However, we as producers also need to make some changes in the way we view our own product.

Weaver To Sponsor Benefit

LANCASTER — Victor F. Weaver, Inc. will sponsor the Weaver Zesty Wings Hot Hitters Contest to benefit the March of Dimes Saturday, September 13 at Zinn's Park.

The event features contestants in three divisions — men, women and children (10 to 15) — hitting slow-pitched softballs for distance.

"We're very pleased and excited about being able to help the March of Dimes by sponsoring the Zesty Wings Hot Hitters Contest," said Allen Tate, communication services manager at Victor F. Weaver, Inc. "We're looking forward to a competitive and fun day."

All contestants who enter will receive an event t-shirt, coupons for Weaver's new Zesty Wings and will be eligible for additional contest events and prizes.

"The Weaver Zesty Wings Hot Hitters Contest pure and simple is a fun event for the Lancaster area softball players," said Duane Peters, executive director of the Lancaster County March of Dimes.

There is a \$5 entry fee for the Weaver Zesty Wings Hot Hitters Contest with proceeds going to the March of Dimes. More information on the event can be obtained by calling the March of Dimes office at (717) 397-6131.



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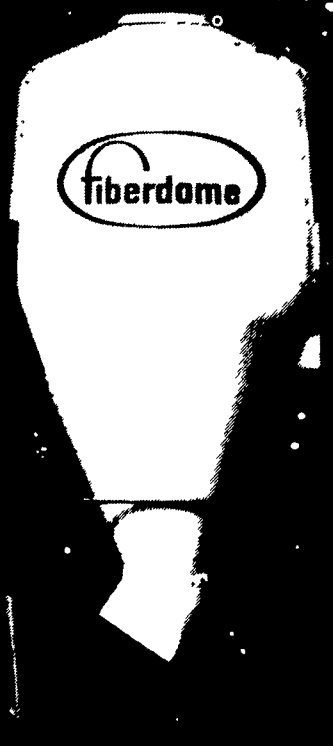
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