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Anyone connected to the pork industry understands that our environmental image is dismal at best. The distrust the public holds for all of us, I think, stems from three things. First, the vast majority of people do not care much for hogs. Second, every time a mishap occurs with manure, people point to each incident with an "I-told-you-so" attitude. Finally, swine units are getting bigger, which raises concerns and fears among the neighboring folk, mostly because of the first two items mentioned.

Despite the pervasive criticism against the pork industry, I have often said, and still believe that the worst is behind us if we stick to the facts, and behave responsibly. But behaving responsibly may have deeper implications than some producers realize.

**PUBLIC CONCERNS**

Although many residents say otherwise, odor probably ranks first in the list of public concerns. The sooner we find a solution to manure odors, the sooner we'll begin to improve our image. Odors are generated every minute of every day from any livestock operation. The larger the operation, the greater the intensity of odors. If, most of the time, neighbors find themselves in the path of those odors, their life will be affected.

The magnitude of the effect depends on how often people notice the odor, their cultural background and their feelings toward

the livestock operation generating the odor. Note that more and more people in rural settings do not have an agricultural background. And as we've already pointed out, people's feelings toward hog production is anything but positive. Some people tolerate it. Some complain. Some get nauseated.

The other major concern is the fate of our manure. As beneficial as this substance has proven to be, there is nothing livestock producers do that will impact the environment as much as manure disposal. If it's done right, manure provides a rich source of nutrients and enhances soil tilth.

If manure is spread without regard to crop needs or soil fertility, we can contribute to ground and surface water pollution.

Beyond these two issues -- odor and manure disposal -- there is a long list of concerns. But I believe that most of them would go away once we master the first two items. We don't have an effective solution to manure odor yet. Until we do, location of large swine facilities is critical. As to the application of manure, we already know how to do that correctly, and emerging technology will continue to make it easier.

**INDUSTRY EFFORTS ON THE NATIONAL FRONT**

The National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) is light years ahead of all other livestock industries in their development of proactive environmental programs. The Environmental Assurance Program, born in 1995, was expanded in 1997 to include five new components -- Pollution Prevention Strategies, Manure Stor-

age and Treatment, Odor and Emissions, Composting of Mortality, and Community Relations. More recently, NPPC launched the On Farm Odor Assistance Program to provide engineering expertise to producers to help improve all aspects of environmental stewardship at the farm level. (This program will begin this fall in Pennsylvania this fall). Funding for environmental research, including odor solutions, has steadily increased over the years. And most importantly, NPPC recognizes the truth -- if we don't soon identify odor solutions, if we don't give manure disposal the priority it deserves, if we don't design and construct swine facilities properly, the long term viability of pork production in this country is in trouble.

**EFFORTS IN PENNSYLVANIA**

Shortly after NPPC released their Environmental Assurance Program, county agents and myself began doing third-party environmental assessments of swine operations. This on-farm program provides the producer with an easy to use framework for monitoring and documenting the environmental integrity of the operation. Producers scoring high in the program are considered "certified" which can provide some help on the public relations front.

The Pennsylvania Pork Producers Council has funded the production of an educational video. Some of the public concern results from lack of knowledge or the distortion of facts. The video shows the public, without apology, how we produce pigs in this state. We have in the last several months, provided dozens of copies of the video to township supervisors, planning officials, school teachers and the general public.

Numerous informational meet-

ings have been held across the state. The meetings are usually structured in a question and answer format, with a panel of speakers present to provide a range of expertise. In all meetings, the intensity of concern is obvious, and there are few if any minds that are changed. But I am confident that a lot of misconceptions are cleared up, and people walk away with a more realistic understanding of our business.

Recently a group of people including producers, personnel from Penn State and the University of Pennsylvania, and representatives from allied industry began writing a Best Management Practices Manual. The manual which is specific and far-reaching, provides a set of standards by which the pork industry should operate in Pennsylvania. Many public agencies, have already provided input into the process. We expect to publish the manual by late September.

**INCREASED REGULATION**

Farmers are used to some degree of regulation. Now increased regulation and scrutiny have become a part of life. The bad news is that most producers, for generations, have been good stewards of the land without someone looking over their shoulder. The good news is that regulations do set the rules. And as long as the producer follows the rules, the public has little room for complaint.

State Senator Robert Jubiler recently introduced a resolution calling for the formation of an advisory committee to examine Pennsylvania's livestock industry. The committee has been selected, and the first meeting will occur in the next month or so. Among other things, the committee will be charged to review the Best

Management Practices Manual mentioned above.

Although this resolution has received a lot of press, the potential impact of the committee is probably not as significant as some would like to believe.

More important are the regulations which the Department of Environmental Protection has proposed for Pennsylvania. Lancaster Farming has published the full text of the proposed regulations, which are written for all livestock operations (Make no mistake, however. Concerns over swine production prompted these efforts.) In this issue of Lancaster Farming, we have provided an easy-to-read summary of the regulations.

The two categories of operations that will be impacted most by the regulations are

- 1. operations with more than 1000 animal units (CAFO's)
- 2. operations with 301 to 1,000 animal units which have the potential to discharge to surface waters\*

\*Any operation that must comply with the Nutrient Management Act is considered to have the potential to discharge. For most producers, this means having more than 2 animal units per acre.

Very briefly, if a new operation is proposed to have more than 1000 animal units, there will be a lot of expensive regulatory hoops. Even the smaller operations (301-1000 animal units) that must comply with the Nutrient Management Act, must complete a number of permits before construction can commence. If the operation has 301-1000 animal units and does not have to comply with the Nutrient Management Act, there are no additional regulations.

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