

MAY 2010

FROM THE CEO

In May 2009 activist organisation SAFE launched a media campaign against our pork industry using comedian Mike King. SAFE is a vegan organisation whose agenda is to stop any animals being farmed for food or clothing.

Throughout the last year activists have broken into family pig farms and provided selective, and unrepresentative, images to the media.

In response many consumers have expressed concern, have asked questions and requested from farmers more information, and in particular, reassurance that we are looking after our pigs.

This update provides answers to these questions and charts the activities and progress the industry has made in providing reassurance to customers.

CONSUMER FEEDBACK

Over the last year NZPork has talked extensively to consumers and those that interact with them such as retailers and food writers to understand their needs and concerns. There were a number of themes that emerged:

- Consumers were concerned by what they had seen or heard. The main concerns were around the use of sow stalls and why they are used.
- Consumers acknowledged their lack of knowledge about pig farming and could understand the reason for sow stalls and farrowing crates when explained to them.
- Consumers are continuing to buy pork, bacon and ham – its good value and they like it; around 4% are buying free range or free farmed.
- In the 12 months to December 2009 total meat consumption dropped 5.4% but pork consumption actually increased by 0.5%. This was despite pigmeat prices increasing 15% through that period. ¹

However, consumers had a number of requests for the industry. They wanted

1. some assurance from the industry that we were looking after our pigs
2. that assurance provided through labelling
3. more information on our farming systems and why we farm the way we do
4. to have a clear choice of pork products to buy from different farming systems

¹ Meat & Wool New Zealand Economic Service, March 2010

HOW HAS THE INDUSTRY RESPONDED?

1. Consumers are being given the choice of pork, bacon and ham from a variety of farming systems whether it be free range, free farmed, or indoor produced. Most retailers are providing this range, and clearly identifying these options. If consumers are confused about what the terms mean, they can visit www.pigfarminginnz.co.nz or if they want to know suppliers of different products they can visit www.pork.co.nz
2. NZPork has put in place an independent welfare audit on all commercial farms. The audit is independently managed by AsureQuality. The audit is focused on not only verifying that farmers are adequately caring for their pigs but is about identifying opportunities for continuous improvement. Where farmers' welfare isn't adequate, clear directions for changes required are given with specified timeframes and those that fail to remedy issues will be passed to MAF compliance for prosecution.
3. New "welfare approved" 100% New Zealand pork, bacon and ham labelling has been developed. This will progressively be made available to retailers, processors and wholesalers who can provide traceable evidence that the product has come from farms that have passed the audit.
4. New Zealand Pork has developed a website www.pigfarminginnz.co.nz to provide an insight into pig farming, to explain how and why we farm the way we do and to explain the use of sow stalls and farrowing crates. It has farmer profiles that include video tours of producer's piggeries. We also have brochures available that provide a shortened overview of the key parts of the website. You can get this brochure by calling 0800 697 675.

WHAT'S THE INDUSTRY'S ONGOING COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING WELFARE?

The New Zealand pork industry operates under the Animal Welfare Act (1999) and the Pig Code of Welfare (2005) which was developed by a government appointed independent body the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC).

One of the areas of debate is the use of sow stalls. Sow stalls individually separate sows from each other during pregnancy to prevent fighting and injuries, to allow sows to be individually fed to meet their specific nutrition needs and to ensure that their pregnancy is secured. The downside of the stalls is that they restrict the movement of the sow during this period.

In 2005 the New Zealand industry committed to phase down sow stall use to the minimum beneficial period for the sow, that is, the first four weeks of pregnancy. We are world leading in this decision, with most of the 700,000kgs of weekly imported pork coming from countries that have made no such commitment or that lag behind us. The industry has committed to have this phasing down completed by 2013.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE - WHAT CHANGES WILL WE SEE?

We believe research can develop good robust management systems that will allow us to almost totally remove stalls. The industry supported by MAF has invested in a research project to try and find these solutions. The criteria for changes are that they must deliver better welfare outcomes for the sow, while allowing her to remain productive, and they must be practical for farmers and their staff. When these new systems are proven the industry will change. In most cases changes will require new buildings, which will need resource consents and farmers will require adequate income or bank loans to finance them. Farmers will either need support from government to be able to make changes sooner or will need time secure the income or finance to make changes over a longer period of time. At present the industry is focused on finding the solution.

The other time when sows have restricted movement is for the first four weeks after piglets are born, where a farrowing crate is used to prevent the sow from rolling on the piglets and also allow staff to interact safely with the piglets without fear of being attacked by the sow.

Most industries around the world note that they do not anticipate finding a solution to this in the short-term. In fact the UK has indicated they can't see any realistic options being available for ten years. The NZ industry is currently developing a research plan to find a local solution and we're hopeful that government agencies will support this research.

OUR FARMERS ARE CONSTANTLY UPSKILLING

- We have a strong focus on welfare in training – in NZ the pork industry has one of the highest participation rates of any industry in training.
- Farmers can attend a world recognised training programme on handling pigs called 'ProHand'. This course helps farmers to understand pigs' behaviour and work most effectively with them.
- NZPork annually provides seminars, workshops and literature to help farmers assess their own practices.
- NZPork and farmers are constantly monitoring international research to identify new ways of caring for pigs, our farmers are part of this process.

WHAT DO WE ASK FROM CONSUMERS?

We ask consumers to support the local pork industry. Buy New Zealand pork, bacon and ham from a farming system that suits your needs whether it be free range, free farmed or indoor raised.

Every week approximately 700,000kgs of pork is imported into New Zealand and mainly made into bacon and ham.

As an industry our promise is to be responsive to New Zealand consumers and constantly improve what we do. However, we still have to be competitive with imported product, so any changes we make must be practical and affordable.

Buying 100% New Zealand pork, bacon and ham is good for you, good for our farmers and good for the wider economy. For every \$1 paid to a NZ pig farmer another \$1.92 goes to the wider community. For every \$1 spent on imported pork only another 78 cents goes to the economy.

How do you know it's grown in New Zealand? Look for the 100% New Zealand Pork, Bacon and Ham labels.



WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Visit our websites:

www.pork.co.nz for information about our products and recipes

www.nzpork.co.nz for information about NZPork's activities

www.pigfarminginnz.co.nz for information about our farmers

Please feel free to call me to discuss any of these issues further.

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Yours truly

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "SAM MCIVOR". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Sam McIvor
CEO