Good afternoon (or evening) members of the Clean Environment Commission panel.

Ladies and gentlemen of the audience, my name is Irvin Gross, manager of Rolling Acres Hutterite Colony. We are a new colony which began farming in 1995 but only started residency in January of 2005.

Our community is located between two villages - 2 miles south of Birnie, or 2 miles north of Eden, and 12 miles north of Neepawa, in the RM of Rosedale. Our Community currently has 65 members which is 16 families. Our livelihood is almost entirely dependent on livestock production, which includes a 1250 sow hog production unit which produces 30,000 weanlings annually of which 16,000 are finished at home and the remaining sold as iso wean pigs. We also have a 200 cow/calf herd where our calves are sold as finished stock.

In addition to our livestock, we grow oilseeds, cereals and forages on 5300 acres of land of which 800 acres are rented.

I would like to take this opportunity to enlighten you, and the audience, about the way we operate our colony in the context of the issues you outlined in your presentation guide. In doing so, I hope I can dispel some of the myths and misconceptions that the public has about the hog industry and show you that hog producers are responsible stewards of the land.

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

As I stated earlier, we are a new colony but we are very receptive to new technologies and techniques when it comes to hog production practices.

In accordance with Manitoba's Nutrient Management regulations, we contract an independent third party, Agri Trend Agrology Ltd., to test our soil, water and manure regularly and to make recommendations on manure application rates to improve overall crop fertility. Ron Curtis, our agri-coach from Agri- Trend, provides us advice on how to balance the nutrients from our manure and supplemental commercial fertilizer with crop plant nutrient needs in order to minimize nutrient

loss and maximize crop fertility and yields.

We view manure as a valuable resource for our crops. Just like commercial fertilizers, we are concerned with the way we manage our nutrients because over-application can negatively affect our crops, our financial "bottom-line" and our environment.

Our fields are soil tested every year and we use the information to make science-based decisions for manure application.

MANURE MANAGEMENT

Manure management on larger livestock operations is tightly regulated under the Manitoba Livestock Mortalities and Manure Management Regulation. This regulation is relatively new to Manitoba and provides strict rules on how our manure and mortalities are handled.

While smaller livestock operations are still exempt from the rules, larger operations like ours are REQUIRED to file an annual Manure Management Plan.

Using our colony as an example, part of OUR plan requires that our fields be soil tested at depths of 0-6 , 6-12 and 12-24 inches as recommended by Agri-Trend which is more than the minimum requirement for a manure plan. We also test our manure for each field so that we can track the rate at which manure is being applied. Furthermore, all of the manure is injected to reduce nitrogen loss and to reduce odours.

In addition, all of the equipment that we use to seed crops, fertilize, spray herbicides and fungicides and inject manure is equipped with the latest GPS technology and auto steer, which prevents over-lapping and over-application of manure and chemicals. Larger operations are more likely able to purchase this technology than smaller operations, therefore, we are better equipped to manage the environmental risks.

GROUND WATER SUPPLY

A good supply of good quality water is vital to the livelihood of any agricultural operation and our community is no exception. In Manitoba, we are fortunate that groundwater supplies are managed by Manitoba Water Stewardship under the Water Rights Act. The department carefully considers and balances the water needs of all users in an area with the aquifer's ability to recharge and issues water use licenses only if the supply can meet the demands.

Currently, domestic uses or small agricultural operations which use less than 5,000 gallons per day are exempt from licencing, however, larger users are required to have a water rights licence. We have a water licence from the Province of Manitoba which allows us to use 25,000 gallons of water per day from the Birnie Aquifer. Our community currently uses 15,000 gallons per day on average. We are as concerned as anyone about the ability of our water supply to continue to meet our quality and quantity needs well into the future.

SOIL QUALITY

With regards to soil quality, I am pleased to say that our land is in better condition now than it was before. By applying manure to the land in accordance to regulations and crop needs, our land is producing higher yielding, better quality grain.

Yearly testing shows that the soils on our land are in better condition AFTER than BEFORE manure application. We are a minimum till farm and so we return as much residue to the land as possible and we don't burn straw. The organic and moisture contents in our soil are improving and with this, so are the crop yields.

Remember, our land is our future...we need to be able to produce 200,000 bushels of grain annually for feed for our livestock.

ODOUR

Odours are inherent in any agricultural operation - whether it is from cattle, dairy, poultry or hogs. Odour is one of the biggest concerns that the general public has about hog operations but please be aware that the hog industry has made HUGE advances in technologies and farm practices in those areas which tend to cause problems - such as manure storage, handling and disposal.

Injecting manure into the ground significantly reduces the amount of odour produced when compared with surface spraying techniques. As an example, our neighbour visited us this year to see when we would be injecting manure on the land, and when we told him that we were already finished - well, he was pleasantly surprised. So you see, odours can be managed.

GROUNDWATER QUALITY

I can't stress enough the importance of water quality to us and the value of our manure as a natural fertilizer source. We use manure wisely to reduce commercial fertilizer costs and to minimize risks to groundwater quality, however, the cost of properly storing manure and applying it doesn't come cheap either. We estimate that it costs us $60,000 annually to apply manure in accordance with provincial regulations.

Furthermore, to help increase public confidence in the protection of our water supply, our manure is stored in two concrete above-ground tanks each having a holding capacity of ~~6~~ 3 million gallons. These tanks ALONE cost us $800,000 - which works out to **$12,300** for every man woman and child in our community. This is a long, long term investment for our community and we are here for the duration.

Let us compare this with the $100 million price tag that the City of Winnipeg will have to bear to upgrade their wastewater treatment system - this works out to only **$200** for every man woman and child in Winnipeg. I think you would find it hard to convince people in Winnipeg to spend **$12,000 each** for the sake of the environment, but the hog industry in Manitoba is already doing it. I think this demonstrates our commitment to the environment and our water

resources.

Ground water quality is important not only to our members and neighbours but also our livestock. If our groundwater supply was ruined, we could never haul enough water to meet our needs. With the amount of time, money and effort we have invested in our buildings and operations, we are as concerned about contamination as anyone is, regardless of the source.

This is why we work with accredited agrologists to help us with hog production and manure management decisions and have invested in excellent manure storage facilities.

SURFACE WATER QUALITY

Surface water quality can be easily affected by all kinds of activities that take place on or near a surface water body.

At our site, we protect our surface water bodies (as small as they are) by injecting manure only in the fall. We do NOT winter spread. And we have adequate storage so that we can store manure throughout the winter and spring months without having to interrupt or delay our seeding program in the spring.

Our cattle use water troughs as we have no large water bodies nearby. Our cattle do not have access to creeks which they might want to wade into.

DISEASE TRANSMISSION

Our barns have high health herd standards which requires that everyone must shower in and shower out for the health of both the livestock and the workers. These protocols are strict to prevent the occurrence of diseases.

In addition, at Rolling Acres, we have a 2 site system to reduce the risk of transmitting diseases between animals of different ages - one barn for farrowing and a separate barn for finishing.

Hog mortalities are frozen and then picked up at the site by_____.

ENVIRONMENTAL LIABILITY

As you can see, meeting or exceeding the regulations has been very costly in our community. We are very concerned about keeping our location as pure as when we got there because there our future generations will be required to clean up our mess if we leave one.

Our goal is to maintain an economically feasible community but also keep it environmentally friendly. Common sense is an important factor in accomplishing this and most situations dictate that common sense be used.

Let's works together to put in reasonable workable and affordable solutions for the hog industry.

Ladies and gentlemen - thank you for listening.

Irvin Gross
Rolling Acres Hutterite Colony