

Manitoba Clean Environment Commission
Hog Industry Review
Weldon Newton

Thank you for the opportunity to present my thoughts on the Hog Production Industry Review. I operate a grain and hog farm in partnership with my brother west of Neepawa. It consists of about 2300 acres of grain production and a 90-sow farrow to finish hog operation. We have one full time employee.

I have had the opportunity and responsibility to serve as an elected representative on Manitoba Pork est. as well as the Canadian Pork Council. More recently I have served as an elected representative on Keystone Agriculture Producers and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. The comments and criticisms that I present today are not made lightly and only after careful consideration and thought.

Our farm is located 7 miles from the Springhill Farms processing plant and about 50 miles from the Maple Leaf plant. We produce all our feed grains and peas. We bring in canola meal and the base premix for our hog rations. We manufacture most of our feed. We use a least cost computer program to formulate our rations along with advice from the nutritionist from the feed company. It is made using peas, barley, hullless barley, canola meal and premix. We buy a commercial starter ration to feed till the pigs are about 6 weeks of age. We test our manure to determine its nutrient content.

We have had hogs on this farm since our Dad established it in 1957. It is a small hog operation by the standards of the industry today and probably will expand in the future. We have one neighbor within one mile of our barns. We raise our sows in group pens on straw bedding. The manure from the dry sow barn is piled in the winter and then spread in the summer. In the summer the manure is held in shallow concrete pit, then spread and incorporated on a weekly basis. The rest of the operation is liquid manure. We spread manure from one storage pit about once a month and from a second pit about every 3 months. These pits are concrete and also have concrete covers on them. Obviously the ability to winter spread is essential for this operation at this time.

We own or rent 12 of the 16-quarter sections of land, which are within a one-mile radius of our barns. In the summer we keep one field in summerfallow to spread manure. The manure is surface spread and then incorporated the same day with a cultivator. We sow winter wheat on the summerfallow field in late August. When this operation expands in the future I expect to be able to provide sufficient manure storage to eliminate winter spreading. I would prefer not to spread in the winter, but I have no alternative at this time.

We soil test most fields every year to determine what the fertilizer requirements for the next crop on that field will be. We have no field that has more than 20 ppm of phosphorous on the basis of the soil tests taken last fall. I hope that helps to explain some of my frustration with the process you are asked to carry out and the accompanying moratorium, which the Manitoba government has placed, on the expansion of the hog industry. The soil tests with higher levels of P are due to the spreading of manure on parts

of those fields that year or the previous year. However, you will note that in all cases the following year the soil test levels of P were substantially reduced and back to the normal levels for those fields.

I was asked to be part of the Phosphorous Expert Committee, which was mandated to examine the need to regulate manure application on the basis of phosphorous as well as nitrogen in the fall of 2002. This committee did look at the science behind the movement of phosphorous off agriculture land. Certainly we found some surprising results in the research literature. The amendments to the Livestock Manure and Mortalities regulation registered on November 8, 2006 incorporated the practical recommendations that were developed by the committee. I believe those amendments are sufficient to address the issue of phosphorous accumulation in soils from the spreading of livestock manure.

In fact I believe it is quite probable that clay or clay loam soils may be able to absorb higher levels of phosphorous before the risk of environmental loss becomes significant. Each soil type has a different ability to absorb phosphorous. However, we don't have that data for all our soils at this time. Until we have this additional research data the current proposal is acceptable.

It has become obvious that a small part of the province may have a problem meeting the new regulations based on phosphorous. This will affect chicken and dairy producers as well as hog producers. The rest of the province has lots of land to spread all livestock manure on the basis of phosphorous as a crop fertilizer.

Lets get past the grandstanding and unsubstantiated accusations and deal with the real environmental and financial issues in a manner that will allow agriculture and in particular the hog industry to continue to be a positive economic contributor to the economy of Manitoba.

Agriculture does produce noise, dust, odor and light which can be aggravating to some people under some conditions. That is the reality of rural life. We may argue over what are acceptable levels but they are a fact of life and to me the needs of agriculture are more important than the idealistic view of country life that many in our society have today.

We are doing a better job today of protecting the environment than agriculture has ever done. We will also continue to improve in the future.

There has been considerable new scientific evidence published in the last 2 years that has started to show how phosphorous moves from the landscape. It appears that a large amount of phosphorous moves off the landscape from vegetative matter. The role of freeze thaw cycles on the green vegetation appears to increase the movement of phosphorous in the spring run-off. That is when the largest movement of phosphorous occurs in Manitoba.

More than thirty years ago most farms changed to zero or minimum till to reduce soil erosion and to increase soil organic matter content that tillage destroys very quickly. This

also significantly improves soil water holding capacity. This change in soil management practices has probably contributed to a significant increase in the amount of phosphorous that moves off our fields. We also chop all the straw today and the new straw choppers produce much smaller particles than the ones from 20 years ago. I suspect this also makes a contribution to the increased phosphorous movement off our fields.

I expect you have already seen some of the material published by Dr. Andrew Sharpley of the USDA Agriculture Research Service and the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville on phosphorous movement from the landscape. His recent work on the role of freeze thaw cycles should be of particular interest. Research in Manitoba by the Soil Science Department, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Manitoba has verified these processes also occur in Manitoba. I assume you will or have talked to Dr. Don Flaten and others at the University of Manitoba to understand these processes.

We can not achieve zero nutrient movement off the landscape. We must be sure that the expectations for agriculture to reduce nutrient movement off our fields are actually achievable. It is essential that any new regulations recognize the published research that is applicable to Manitoba as well as the ability of producers to implement them on their farms.

I have a 3-step evaluation process for any new regulations or the adoption of new management practices.

1. Will these changes actually make a measurable impact?
2. Can I make the necessary changes in my management practices to make the best use of this new information?
3. Can I afford to make the appropriate changes in management practices?

When these three conditions can be satisfied I will do my best to adopt new management practices.

Needless to say I was astounded to see a moratorium placed on the construction of new or expanded hog barns on December 7, 2006. It is essential that this moratorium be removed as soon as possible so we can plan for the future of not only the hog industry but also the whole agriculture industry in Manitoba. To me the imposition of this province-wide moratorium was one of the most uninformed, most unnecessary and political opportunistic pieces of agriculture policy ever implemented in Manitoba.

I expect and believe we deserve a better and more informed decision making process by people who choose to serve in elected public office.

It also sends the message to young people considering a career in agriculture that in Manitoba their career or their job can suddenly be put on hold if a controversial issue emerges in their chosen field of employment.

I can't expand my hog barn but my neighbor can develop a 1000 head feedlot. Does not make sense. I can't plan for the future of my farm operation until you have reported to the

minister and he and his cabinet colleagues decide if there is to be a future for the hog industry in Manitoba. If there is to be another generation on our farm it will be necessary to expand the hog operation. Fortunately no one from the next generation had an interest in being apart of this operation last fall or will this year. Unfortunately, if they had been interested they could not have been accommodated, as we could not expand the hog barns. The only other way is to out bid a neighbor to rent additional grain land and I am not prepared to do that.

I have provided you with a summary of soil test phosphorous levels on our farm for the last 10 years. I have the records back to 1975 for most of our fields. We use the fertilizer recommendations from the soil test labs as the fertilizer program for our farm. If you examine the summary you will see we don't have an excess accumulation of phosphorous in our soils. In addition we buy over 40 tonnes of phosphate fertilizer (11-51-0) every year to meet our crop requirements. We also purchase in excess of 70 tonnes of anhydrous ammonia each year to supply the crop nitrogen requirements.

Land Use Planning

The new planning act came into effect on January 1, 2006. It removed the ability of local municipal councils to make any decisions regarding the construction and development of manure storage structures. They can only place 2 conditions on these structures – plant trees around the structure and/or cover the storage structure.

It is essential that the local municipal councils do not have any more authority over these manure storage structures or its application in the future. Many have shown they were not capable of making good decisions about manure storage structures and manure application in the past and none must have that opportunity in the future. It is essential that producers in different areas of Manitoba treat similar environmental issues in a similar manner. This can only be done with provincial oversight. The majority of people living in rural areas are not involved in active agriculture. However, many expect agriculture to meet their idealistic view of rural life. Agriculture practices must be protected.

The new development plans required by the Planning Act must have livestock operation policies. It is essential that similar environmental risks be addressed in a similar manner throughout Manitoba. Provincial oversight in the development of these new development plans is essential. Public Land Use Policy #2 must continue to be the basis for the separation distances and location of new and expanded livestock operations.

We must also ensure that municipalities are not successful in finding new creative ways to hinder the development or expansion of livestock operations as these new land use policies are developed. As an example, the one I live in is trying to require new or expanding livestock operations into an open-ended request process for impact studies before they are allowed to proceed.

The hog industry has significant processing capacity in this province and there appears to be interest in increasing that capacity. The Maple Leaf plant is a world scale plant and Springhill Farms while smaller has the potential to be a niche market plant. They are also relatively new plants. We must find ways to stop exporting unprocessed grain around the world and letting everyone else realize the benefits from processing that grain.

It is obvious to everyone in the agriculture community that the railways, CN and CP, and their employees are only interested in moving bulk grain and special crops when it suits them and under conditions which they wish to dictate. To me it makes a lot more sense to keep that car load of feed barley or feed wheat in Manitoba and export a container of pork which has a value probably 10 to 20 times that of the feed barley. It can also provide a job and a respectable income for several families in Manitoba.

Scale of Agriculture

There is room for both small and large operations. Operations must be able to provide the equivalent living standard and income that the rest of society enjoys. It is not unusual to have grain farms that are 5000, 10,000 or 15,000 acres in size. These farms once provided the living for many farm families. However, if you decide that you only wish to operate a smaller grain farm and also have a hog operation or a feedlot which requires attention every day of the year and provides full time employment for people in the community you may also have to deal with the unfounded fears of everyone within miles around. In the case of the hog industry we now must also deal with the lack of understanding of agriculture by the cabinet of the Manitoba government. Some how we need some serious attitude changes.

I would suggest to you that there are currently sufficient regulations in place to govern the hog industry and I hope you will come to the same conclusion when you finish your work.

SOIL TEST P (ppm)

NEWTON FARMS

Field	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	FIELD
1	12	10	8	4	3	13	13	11	8	5	1
2	19	14	50	SF	>54	12	12	9	SF	12	2
3	25	18	16	5	18	18	18	11	12	11	3
4	18	36	33	5	SF	18	18	11	9	11	4
5	24		SF		48	12	12	SF	25	6	5
7		52	58	>51		SF		31	16	19	7
8	26	59	>60	29	>54	15	15	>60	17	14	8
9	26	SF	>60	29	>54	15	15	>60	32	14	9
10	17	48	13	5	>54	16	SF	27	19		10
11	17	48	13	5	>54	16	16	15	17		11
12	17	48	13	5	>54	16	16	15	17		12
13	17	48	13	5	>54	16	16	15	12		13
14	17	24	29	14	12	17	17	16	8	8	14
15	17	24	29	14	12	17	17	16	8	8	15
16	17	12	12	14	12	17	17	16	8	8	16
18	17	12	13	5	18	6	6	16	6	3	18
19	17	6	13	5	18	6	6	16	3	3	19
20	18	12	16	12	10	15	15	39	16	8	20
21	11	8	>60	12	8	12	12	27	5	12	21
23	13	16	36	10	23	4	4	16		8	23
24	12	31	18	10	12	12	35	12	35		24
25		12	13	2	39	12	12			SF	25
26		8	11	2	30	7	7	11	12	9	26
27		16	36	13	18	9	9	12	6	15	27
28			37	10	11	10	10	24	12	9	28
29	18	19		19	35	10	10	9			29
30				19	35	10	10	9			30