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Presentation

The Fairholme Colony Hog Barn is committing itself to a sustainable and productive future for us and for our children. In the last couple of years we have taken a number of steps to ensure better manure management and proper disposal of dead livestock.

Last year we started to build a lagoon, even though our current slurry store system has passed all government inspection. The lagoon is being built to last for one year, which means we have to empty it out annually. This is in keeping with the law that was enacted to ensure that the lagoon is properly maintained and can easily be fixed if something goes wrong.

We regularly take soil samples, so that we can stay within provincial regulations on the amount of manure we apply to our land. This manure is used as fertilizer, of course, and its application is controlled by the flow of the pump and the speed of the tractor.

Previously, we gauged ourselves by how far the slurry store levels receded in a certain period of time, but now we have accurate gauges telling us exactly how much we are injecting.

About six miles down the road from us, our neighbours have installed a separator in their hog barn. This separator is not only made for hogs, but chickens as well. The end products are in a solid state and the liquids are pumped out into a lagoon. These solids are good fertilizer for gardens and lawns, but they do stink for a while, so they are unattractive to the consumer.

Another option is to purify the manure into pure phosphorus and pure nitrogen, then turning around and selling it to fertilizer companies. Unfortunately, this is an expensive way to go. Our neighbours, who own this separator, have offered to pump our manure down to their separator and sort of split the cost of handling it. However, we have to think about our herd health and the transfer of diseases.

Inside the barn, we try to keep our pits as clean as possible. This way, they stay free of any debris and do not plug up the sewers. If that happened, we would have a spill and contamination of the environment would take place.

Our herd is Canadian Quality Assurance verified and we follow its guideline rigorously. This program is set up for the consumer and producer alike. The CQA requires keeping hog barns clean and safe. It was implemented to help us produce pork in an environmentally safe manner. Manitoba processors offer decent levies for herds that are CQA certified, because it requires a little extra work, but we feel in the end we are producing a better product.

The CQA program involved adding improvements, such as the newly set up tractability program, which allows us to trace the pork chop on the shelf back to the farm. This program allows producers, vets and processors to work together, if there is a disease outbreak, which helps us control any problems that might arise.

To conclude, as hog producers we are always looking for viable ways to improve our manner of animal husbandry here on the farm: this is where we live and where we want our children and their children to live in the future. Farming is not just another job to us; it is our lifestyle and our vocation, which we want to conduct in an ecologically viable and sustainable manner. Thank you.

Cameron Maendel
March 14, 2007