

Pork Checkoff Advances 2012 Pork Industry Research

The National Pork Board's six producer-led science and technology committees recently met in Dallas, Texas, to make decisions on how to advance pork producers' research priorities. Many of the committees reviewed research proposals to select projects that the Pork Checkoff would fund in 2012. In all, the groups reviewed more than 100 proposals, ultimately selecting those that would be of greatest benefit to the overall industry.

Everett Forkner, a producer from Richards, Mo., and president of the National Pork Board, said it's exciting to see producers, along with allied industry and government, work together to set the course for new pork-specific research.

"We know that the Pork Checkoff's involvement helps spur advances in science, but what's particularly gratifying is how this investment in research helps make a difference in how farmers produce food in an efficient and socially responsible way," Forkner said.

"Providing unique scientific and technical information that will benefit the entire industry is a major goal of the Pork Checkoff," said Paul Sundberg, the Checkoff's vice president of science and technology. "Producers take many things into account when determining what proposals get funded each year, including ensuring that the research is not being done elsewhere, the project will impact the industry and the results will be publicly available."

Some of the new information and action, coming from the respective science and technical research committees, included:

- Animal Science - Research results, addressed by the Checkoff's Nutritional Efficiency Consortium, are published at pork.org. The committee asked for a more comprehensive summary of this research to be available later this year. The committee has dedicated resources to work on pork quality, as it relates to on-farm factors that could affect tenderness.
- Animal Welfare - Proposals on pain management related to castration and euthanasia were funded. Work on the next version of Pork Quality Assurance[®] Plus also was discussed, with the launch of the updated program slated for mid-2013. Housing and transportation research remain as key priorities.
- Environment - The committee discussed the additional work on the carbon footprint that will be released in 2012, including a baseline report and improvements to the calculator tool. In 2013, an economic component for the calculator is expected, along with a water footprint baseline and calculator and an air emissions model.

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- **Pork Safety, Quality and Human Nutrition** - Several proposals related to how the quality of fat affects overall meat quality were funded. The objective of the projects is to help producers raise animals that will provide high-quality pork to help increase consumer demand. For human nutrition, the committee identified priorities for the next call for research, including satiety, body composition, weight loss/maintenance, cognition function and pork's role in a healthy diet.
- **Producer/Public Health and Worker Safety** - This newly formed committee approved its mission statement: "To acquire and provide science-based information that will protect and improve producer and public health, promote a safe farm-work environment and enhance consumer confidence in U.S. pork production." Research funded included environmental movement of antimicrobial and resistant bacteria and resistant genes, as well as a study on the impact of pig health on public health.
- **Swine Health** - The committee funded research on the transmission and vaccine development for influenza and diagnostics and intervention strategies for swine dysentery, mycoplasma and rotavirus. Also funded was research on foreign animal disease that could assist in the development of better vaccines for diseases, such as foot-and-mouth disease. While not discussed at this meeting, PRRS remains a top concern, and a special call for PRRS research proposals will occur later this year.
- **Sow Lifetime Productivity Working Group** - This group, which included producers from across the science and technology program areas, as well as other producers with a high interest in breeding herd productivity and allied industry representatives, met during a separate meeting in Dallas to discuss a multidisciplinary approach to improving sow lifetime productivity of the U.S. herd. The group discussed the road map to achieve the specific research needs of the multi-year effort, with a goal of a 30 percent improvement in sow lifetime productivity over the next seven years.

Completed Checkoff-funded research results are available at pork.org.

The National Pork Board has the responsibility for Checkoff-funded research, promotion and consumer information projects and for communicating with pork producers and the public. Through a legislative national Pork Checkoff, pork producers invest \$0.40 for each \$100 value of hogs sold. The Pork Checkoff funds national and state programs in advertising, consumer information, retail and foodservice marketing, export market promotion, production improvement, technology, swine health, pork safety and environmental management. For information on Checkoff-funded programs, pork producers can call the Pork Checkoff Service Center at (800) 456-7675 or check the Internet at pork.org.

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