2007 Pork Month Story Ideas and News Sources
Iowa Pork Industry Center
Iowa State University, Ames, IA
http://www.ipic.iastate.edu

Thank you for your interest in Iowa Pork Industry Center and Iowa’s pork industry. We hope the following information and links listing will be helpful to you as you prepare articles for October, Pork Month. We also want to make sure you’re aware that the story ideas are appropriate for use at any time of year. The list is not an inclusive list of projects, research, and programs coordinated or led by Iowa State University and ISU Extension specialists, but rather a brief look at the wide range of activities in which our specialists are involved. Please contact any of the listed specialists using the numbers and addresses provided, or contact me for more information. I’m happy to help you provide your audiences with the latest pork-related information.

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Iowa State University Web sites for news and story ideas

Iowa Pork Industry Center
IPIC news releases
Midwest Plan Service
ISU Extension, Ag & Natural Resources
ISU Extension news releases
ISU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences news releases
ISU Ag & Biosystems Engineering
ISU Food Science & Human Nutrition news releases
Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture (ISU)
Value Chain Partnerships for Sustainable Agriculture (ISU)
**Minimum price insurance programs for hog producers.** Two insurance programs offer minimum price guarantees on futures contracts. Pork producers face high financial risks from volatile markets. Those who want to manage their risks more efficiently might want to learn about two programs that can help establish a floor under hog prices. Both currently are available through private insurance agents. Livestock Gross Margin (LGM) insurance and Livestock Risk Protection (LRP) insurance both offer several levels of minimum price guarantees based on lean hog, corn and soybean meal futures contracts. Unlike futures contracts, though, these policies allow producers to insure any number of hogs for any marketing month. More information on both insurance programs is available in this online fact sheet [http://www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/livestock/pdf/b1-50.pdf](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/livestock/pdf/b1-50.pdf) on the ISU Ag Decision Maker web site. An electronic decision tool that compares the risk protection available from Livestock Revenue Protection to results from futures contracts, options contracts, and the cash market is also available on Ag Decision Maker, at [http://www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/livestock/xls/b1-50lrpanalysis.xls](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/livestock/xls/b1-50lrpanalysis.xls) Since 2005, more than 3,500 U.S. swine producers have purchased either LGM or LRP policies to insure a selling price for over 2 million head of market hogs.

*For more information, contact William Edwards, Department of Economics, Iowa State University, Ames, IA; (515) 294-6161, wedwards@iastate.edu*

**Hog market outlook for 2008 and beyond.** Iowa pork producer returns have been profitable in 41 of the last 43 months, but are expected to be in negative territory this fall. Pork production has increased modestly since last year and processing capacity has declined, setting up the risk of sharply lower prices if hog supplies tax the available packer capacity. Profitability next year will depend on volatile grain prices, pork export markets, and the pace of expansion from farmers. Additional wild cards in the industry include exports to China, growing poultry supplies, and imports from Canada.

*For more information, contact John Lawrence, Department of Economics, Iowa State University, Ames, IA; (515) 294-6290, jdlaw@iastate.edu*

**Pork production -- past and present.** Continuing research by ISU ag economist John Lawrence and Glen Grimes, Professor Emeritus of Agriculture Economics from the University of Missouri, provides an historical look at pork production in the U.S. Two decades ago the pork industry was made up of hundreds of thousands of hog enterprises that often were part of diversified farming operations. Today, it’s been estimated that fewer than 200 operations marketing at least 50,000 hogs a year sold 64 percent of U.S. hogs in 2006. Another 1,450 firms with annual sales of 10,000-50,000 head marketed 21 percent and the remaining 15 percent of hogs were sold by firms marketing less than 10,000 hogs a year.

*For more information, contact John Lawrence, Department of Economics, Iowa State University, Ames, IA; (515) 294-6290, jdlaw@iastate.edu*

**SowBridge brings experts to the farm.** SowBridge, a new distance learning program, offers live presentations from top swine experts directly to producers. The program conforms to the busy schedules of pork production managers, owners and employees by providing a way for people to learn without needing to travel. As change in the pork industry continues, more specific and current information is needed to improve understanding and productivity. ISU extension swine specialist Ken Stalder says, “We’ve selected topics and speakers based on
information from those associated with sow unit production, including new technology, research, and management techniques related to breeding, gestation, and farrowing management.”

SowBridge is modeled after the popular PorkBridge program, and requires only a computer with CD drive and phone to access. The program features 45-minutes sessions once a month, and is offered on an annual subscription basis.

For more information, contact Ken Stalder, Associate Professor, Animal Science, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011; (515) 294-4683, stalder@iastate.edu

Back by popular demand. The third year of the educational PorkBridge series is scheduled to start in December. The series is a distance learning program geared toward people involved in the grow-finish production stages of production. Past participants have found the program to be a highly beneficial use of their time. ISU Extension swine specialist Ken Stalder encourages independent and contract growers, owners, employees and technical service providers to take advantage of this program. Participants receive a packet of information including a CD with the respective session’s presentation about a week before each session. Everyone calls a toll-free phone number to take part in the sessions that are offered every other month. As a subscriber, you have access to university faculty and industry professionals with a variety of expertise. You can share in their insights, and ask questions of them and other producers throughout the year-long series. The schedule for the 2007-08 series will be available soon.

For more information, contact Ken Stalder, Associate Professor, Animal Science, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011; (515) 294-4683, stalder@iastate.edu

Taking care of business with new software. Sow Group Tracker is an Excel-based program that will track breeding, farrowing, inventories and management for five or fewer sow groups, and is targeted toward the niche pork producer. It offers planning assistance for breeding and farrowing data of each sow group, as well as providing potential pig marketing information. A calendar with management activities and practices is incorporated into the program. As an optional tool, producers have the capability to track individual sow and boar information for selection and culling purposes. Depending upon the needs of the producer, this program is designed to range from simple group inputs to a more advanced individual sow and boar data base. Sow Group Tracker will be available in early 2008 through the Iowa Pork Industry Center at a cost to be determined.

For more information, contact Larry K. McMullen, Iowa State University Extension swine field specialist, 605 East Main, Anamosa, IA 52205; (319) 462-2791; lkmcmull@iastate.edu

Scanning team makes the rounds. Take five ISU animal science graduate students and one staff person, add 3461 head of hogs, 31 county and one state fair, spread over 8731 miles and more than three months, and what do you get? The 2007 ultrasound scanning team’s summer schedule. In what has become an annual traveling road show of sorts, students Ben Isaacson, Kyle Schulte, Ashley Bushman, Rob Fitzgerald and Jeremy Burkett, along with IPIC program specialist and scanning coordinator Colin Johnson spent literally weeks on this project. The scanning measurements (typically loin eye area and back fat depth in swine shows) can be used by individuals and families to aid in genetics decisions for their operation, and are used by Extension staff members who hold post fair result/evaluation programs for hog show youth entrants to learn about the pigs they showed. The results also are used to help determine carcass
placings in the fair contests. The service has been offered on a cost basis to Iowa county Extension staff since at least 2001.

For more information, contact Colin Johnson, program specialist, Iowa Pork Industry Center, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011; (515) 294-2340, colinj@iastate.edu

**PQA Plus™ program now in place.** Most pork producers have at least heard of the new Pork Quality Assurance Plus™ program that was introduced in June by the National Pork Board. It combines and refines the previous PQA and SWAP (Swine Welfare Assurance Program SM) program guidelines, procedures and processes. However, this voluntary program has a slightly different look and format. To help producers better understand PQA Plus™, the Iowa Pork Industry Center has worked with Iowa Pork Producers Association to develop a fact sheet on it, and to establish a schedule of PQA Plus™ certification sessions for producers.

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