2005 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 be able 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: http://www.ipic.iastate.edu/
- IPIC news releases: http://www.ipic.iastate.edu/newsreleases.html
- MWPS: http://www.mwpshq.org/
- ISU Extension, Ag & Natural Resources: http://www.extension.iastate.edu/ag/
- ISU Extension news releases: http://www.extension.iastate.edu/newsrel/
- ISU College of Agriculture news releases: http://www.ag.iastate.edu/aginfo/news/
- ISU Ag & Biosystems Engineering: http://www.abe.iastate.edu/
**Price outlook on an expanding hog market.** Increased carcass weights, imported hogs from Canada, and expansions in pork production have combined to produce a record pork supply. Even with the large supply, high pork demand made pork producers’ 2004 profit their largest since 1990. According to the Sept. 30, 2005, USDA Hogs and Pigs Report, Iowa farms had about 16.5 million head of hogs and pigs as of Sept. 1, up less than a percent from a year ago, but up almost two percent since June 2005. ISU ag economist John Lawrence says that while prices are slightly lower than a year ago, if demand remains strong and production costs don’t increase significantly, Iowa pork producers could continue to see profits for the next 6-12 months.

*For more information, contact John D. Lawrence, Extension Livestock Economist, Iowa State University, Ames, IA; (515) 294-6290; jdlaw@iastate.edu*

**Economic Assessment of PRRS.** Currently, Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS) is one of the most important viral diseases in the swine industry. PRRS is characterized by respiratory disease and/or late term abortions in sows and gilts. Iowa State University conducted an analysis of swine farms across the country and a Delphi survey of swine veterinarians to assess the economic impact of PRRS in the United States. Results showed that PRRS is one of the most financially devastating diseases in the U.S. swine industry: annually the disease causes American swine producers to lose an estimated $560 million. The control and eradication of this disease is high priority for much of the swine industry.

*For more information, contact Colin Johnson, Extension Program Specialist, Iowa Pork Industry Center, Iowa State University, Ames, IA; (515) 294-2340, colinj@iastate.edu*

**Think Iowa has pigs?** Iowa is the pork capital of the United States, producing 26 million market pigs per year. Similarly, Denmark produces nearly 26 million hogs per year. Iowa’s 26.8 million acres of farmland average .56 pigs per acre while Denmark’s 5.7 million acres have 2.3 pigs per acre. How does this small country with significantly less farmland produce so many hogs? How can they so efficiently produce pigs on their farmland? Their well coordinated industry is supported by the government and the public, giving farmers opportunities to develop production and increase exports. Iowa can learn a lot from Denmark’s hog industry. In fact, this fall, the IPIC is leading a trip for extension swine specialists to Denmark in order to learn more about the industry and its members.

*For more information, contact Colin Johnson, Extension Program Specialist, Iowa Pork Industry Center, Iowa State University, Ames, IA; (515) 294-2340, colinj@iastate.edu*

**Development of training tools for gilt selection.** Many swine producers use internal multiplication to replace females within their operations. Until recently, producers had little if any training on how to evaluate the feet and leg structure, feet and leg defects, and reproductive soundness of the replacements they chose. Selecting gilts with problems in these areas can contribute to increased mortality rates in commercial breeding swine herds, so several entities worked together to create easy-to-use tools. ISU and IPIC faculty and staff, National Hog Farmer, National Pork Board’s Pork Checkoff program, and other parties collaborated to develop a series of posters and pocket guides to assist farmers in selecting structurally and reproductively sound replacement animals.

*For more information, contact Ken Stalder, Associate Professor, Animal Science, Iowa State University, Ames, IA; (515) 294-4683, stalder@iastate.edu*
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. These insurance programs, originally available for a limited time beginning in late 2002, were reinstated effective Oct. 1, 2004. A spreadsheet to help estimate the premiums for LGM is available on the Web site of the Center for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD) at this URL www.card.iastate.edu/ag_risk_tools/lgm/ More information on both insurance programs is available in this online fact sheet www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/FM1871.pdf

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

Sensory Preference of Consumers for High pH, low pH, and Berkshire Loins. ISU Extension swine field specialist Larry McMullen led this consumer research project sponsored by a grant from IPIC. He conducted sensory evaluation and a consumer survey on pork loin tenderness, juiciness, flavor, and overall acceptance along with consumer preferences, attitudes, and acceptance of pork. A consumer panel attended pork selection workshops where they participated in sensory evaluation and educational sessions on selecting pork, food safety, pork storage, recipes, and learning of additional nutritional and health attributes of pork. In addition to the sensory evaluation, consumers also indicated their willingness to pay premiums for differentiated pork, such as specific breeds and that produced with certain specified production practices. For instance, 85 percent of the consumers were willing to pay more per pound for increased taste, tenderness, and juiciness. Also, high pH pork was preferred by 89 percent of respondents, compared to 11 percent preferring the low pH pork. Complete study results are available and the information will be included in the 2006 ISU Animal Industry Report.

For more information, contact Larry McMullen, ISU Extension Swine Field Specialist, Jones County Extension Office, Anamosa, IA; (319) 462-2791, lkmcmull@iastate.edu

Sow longevity spreadsheet help pork producers around the world. In response to high replacement rates and associated costs of taking females out of breeding herds prematurely, a series of sow longevity spreadsheets has been developed. Producers enter operation specific financial and production information and the spreadsheet calculates how long breeding herd females need to remain in the herd to be profitable. The spreadsheets assist farmers in making decisions regarding the replacement rate and length of herd life required for a sow to be a profitable investment. The spreadsheets are known around the world: Customized farrow-to-finish and breed-to-wean spreadsheets in English and Metric units of measure have been distributed to producers in at least 15 U.S. states and 33 countries. The spreadsheets have influenced decisions by owners and managers of more than 25 million sows in the 18 months the spreadsheets have been available.

For more information, contact Ken Stalder, Associate Professor, Animal Science, Iowa State University, Ames, IA; (515) 294-4683, stalder@iastate.edu
**Wanted: niche hog farmers.** IPIC recently received a $400,000 grant from the USDA National Research Initiative (NRI) program for a project designed to help niche pork farmers with specific production issues. The Niche Pork Herd Health and Production Cost Management Project currently is recruiting farmers to participate. The project has two primary parts: production cost management and herd health diagnostics and management. The cost management portion will help niche pork farmers find ways to lower costs and increase profits, and the diagnostic portion (including routine and intensive subdivisions) will help farmers learn to use test results to address and perhaps minimize disease pressures. The intensive subdivision will be comprised of a limited number of certified organic or antibiotic-free farms. Private veterinarians will work with ISU to run tests, analyze results, and develop and implement strategies at both diagnostic levels. Other project collaborators are ISU College of Veterinary Medicine, ISU College of Agriculture, ISU Extension, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, University of Nebraska Department of Animal Science, Practical Farmers of Iowa, and Iowa Farm Business Association. 

*For more information, contact Dave Stender, ISU Extension Swine Field Specialist, Cherokee County Extension Office, Cherokee, IA; (712) 225-6196; dstender@iastate.edu*

**Update on Air Emissions Laboratory.** In September 2004, the Air Emissions Laboratory opened at ISU. One of the primary uses for this research facility is to study the effect of diet on air emissions. The first study investigated the feeding of reduced crude protein diets to grow-finish swine. Preliminary data showed that by reducing crude protein through the inclusion of supplemental amino acids, ammonia emissions could be reduced 20 percent (lysine, methionine, and threonine included as supplemental amino acids) to 45 percent (lysine, methionine, threonine, tryptophan and valine or isoleucine included as supplemental amino acids) compared to a typical industry diet (lysine, only, included as supplemental amino acid). The reduced crude protein diets did not have an impact on weight gain or feed intake of the pigs. Since that study was concluded, the facility has housed laying hens and currently is being used for a broiler chicken study. In the spring of 2006 another swine study is set to begin that will look at feeding corn co-products and air emissions. See the lab’s Web site [http://www.ans.iastate.edu/research/emission/](http://www.ans.iastate.edu/research/emission/)

*For more information, contact Wendy Powers, ISU Environmental Extension Specialist, Iowa State University, Ames, IA; (515) 294-1635, <wpowers@iastate.edu>*

**PorkBridge educational opportunity available for pork producers.** Pork production operation owners, managers and employees in Iowa, Nebraska, Minnesota and South Dakota are invited to participate in the 2005-06 PorkBridge educational series set to begin in December. PorkBridge combines electronic information viewed on computer with live oral presentations via phone by experts in the topic areas. The week before each session, subscribers will receive a CD containing that session’s topic-specific presentation and information on accessing the live speaker presentation. Each session is one hour in length, beginning either at noon or 7 p.m. Session times will be filled on a first-requested, first-filled basis. IPIC is coordinating the program. An informational brochure with subscription information is available on the IPIC Web site at [www.ipic.iastate.edu/PorkBridge/2005brochure.pdf](http://www.ipic.iastate.edu/PorkBridge/2005brochure.pdf).

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