2006 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: http://www.ipic.iastate.edu/
- IPIC news releases: http://www.ipic.iastate.edu/newsreleases.html
- Midwest Plan Service: 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/
- Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture (ISU): http://www.leopold.iastate.edu
- Value Chain Partnerships for Sustainable Agriculture (ISU): http://www.valuechains.org
A Cut Above. Did you know that Iowa State University (ISU) has a federally inspected Meat Laboratory with the capability of harvesting and processing animal and poultry meat? All animals harvested at the Meat Lab come from ISU research farms, and products from the meat that's harvested and processed at the ISU Meat Laboratory are available for sale to the public. The public retail sales outlet is located at the north end of the Kildee Meat Lab Atrium on the ISU campus, and is open on Wednesdays and Fridays from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. According to Matt Wenger, program coordinator for the ISU animal science department, the ISU Meat Laboratory is more than just a store. "It functions for three reasons: teaching, research, and extension," Wenger said. Courses that address a variety of food safety topics as well as ways to improve product quality are offered not only to students, but to the public as well. "Last year we conducted 22 short course and training courses in Iowa and around the country," Wenger said. "We utilize both university and industry personnel as speakers for these courses. For example, the 'Sausage & Processed Meats Short Course,' focuses on the technology of sausage production and is celebrating its 30th year of teaching."

For more information, contact Matt Wenger, animal science program coordinator, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011; (515) 294-9279; mwenger@iastate.edu

Berkshire Swine Production Resources Available The U.S. 100% Berkshire pork niche market continues to expand to meet both the Japanese export trade and domestic demand. To help producers learn more about the breed and its marketing possibilities, Iowa State University Extension swine field specialist Larry McMullen developed a set of educational materials. A 24-page production and marketing guide, a PowerPoint presentation, and an Excel spreadsheet called "Berkshire Decision Aid" are available for viewing and/or downloading from the Pork Niche Market Working Group (PNMWG) Web site www.pnmwg.org and from the National Pork Board Niche Market web site www.nichepork.org. The production and marketing guide provides information about the Berkshire breed, types of herds, pork quality, and how to become a grower for the 100% Berkshire program. The Berkshire Decision Aid is an Excel spreadsheet that allows a producer to compare the economics of Berkshire production with commodity pork production. The presentation can be used to facilitate a discussion on the Berkshire niche market. The materials were developed through assistance from a grant from the PNMWG (supported by the Value Chain Partnerships for a Sustainable Agriculture using funds from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation).

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

Hog price outlook as industry expands. Pork supplies continue to grow as more swine are produced in the U.S. and imported from Canada. According to the Sept. 29, 2006 USDA Hogs and Pigs Report, Iowa farms had about 16.9 million head of swine as of Sept. 1, an increase of almost two percent from a year ago. Producers can expect profitable hog prices for the rest of 2006, and barring an escalation in feed costs, probably for the next 12 months. Consumer demand for pork, both in the U.S. and foreign markets, continues to hold strong partly as a result of consumer perception and preference.

For more information, contact Shane Ellis, Iowa State University Extension Livestock Economist, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011; (515) 294-8030; shanee@iastate.edu
Changing the Look of Pork. What color do you like to see when you buy your pork chop? Would you be willing to alter your color choice if you knew the product would be more tender, juicy, and flavorful? Iowa State University Food Science professor Ken Prusa noticed while doing research at a meat packing plant that the Japanese export buyers always chose the darker color pork. Prusa's research showed the Japanese were selecting not by color, but what color indicated: pH. Darker pork has a higher pH than lighter pork. A higher pH means there is less acid, which damages muscle proteins and causes the meat to be pale and watery. "Through sensory testing, we found pH to be a pretty strong driver of ultimate pork quality. Higher pH products are more tender, juicy and flavorful," Prusa said. "It tuned us in to an opportunity to add value to pork products in the marketplace." Genetics, processing, and stress can lower the pH. Efforts are currently being made to heighten awareness of the effects of pH. "We hope that through our work with packers and processors, we'll see higher pH products on the market soon. We're looking at ways of marketing products on the basis of the deeper, richer color and flavor. People can see the difference. Once they taste it, the better quality is obvious," Prusa said. 

For more information, contact Ken Prusa, Food Science and Human Nutrition Professor, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011; (515) 294-4323; kprusa@iastate.edu

Corn, Soybeans, Pigs, -- and Plastic? When you think of Iowa, three words easily come to mind: corn, soybeans, and pigs. Richard Larock, University Professor of Chemistry at Iowa State University, is about to add plastics to that list. Larock has invented and patented a process for producing various bioplastics from corn and soybean oil. These plastics have excellent thermal and mechanical properties, as well as the ability to dampen noise and vibrations. Larock and industry collaborators will use these tough new plastics to develop, test, and manufacture new hog feeders. The biggest initial advantage to this type of feeder is the cost of materials: corn and soybean oils are significantly cheaper than commonly used petrochemicals. Designs for a bioplastic hog feeder include radio frequency identification technology that can monitor and record the feeding habits of individual hogs. Molds for the feeders should be completed this year and prototypes ready for testing next spring. Larock is hopeful that the product should be ready for market by the end of 2007. 

For more information, contact Richard Larock, University Professor of Chemistry, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011; (515) 294-4660; larock@iastate.edu

Peas, Pigs, Profit. Farmers looking to increase profits, break disease and pest cycles in crop production, and provide an alternative feed source to their pigs should look no further. Field peas may just be the ticket. Field peas are already being used in swine diets in Europe and are increasing in popularity in Canada. Compared to soybean meal, peas have lower levels of protein and higher energy levels. “We saw no differences in the average daily gain in pigs fed a ration that included field peas. In fact, when considering feed efficiency the pigs performed as good as or better on those diets than on the conventional rations,” said Tom Miller, Iowa State University Extension Project Planning Specialist-Agriculture. Peas provide benefits in the field as well. Peas fix nitrogen for the following crop which reduces future input needs, and peas have a short season so double cropping is an option. Peas are harvested with the same equipment as soybeans and they have a huge market potential in Iowa. The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture awarded a three-year grant in 2004 for the field pea project because it offers a practical way to get more diversity in Iowa's two-crop production system, and has the potential to lower feed costs for Iowa hog producers. The project has since received matching funds from the USDA's
Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program to include more farmer-cooperators in the project. A chart that compares income and expenses of several cropping plans is on the Leopold Center web site at: www.leopold.iastate.edu/pubs/nwl/2006/2006-2-leoletter/costs.htm.

For more information, contact Tom Miller, ISU Extension project planning specialist, Iowa State University, 209 S. Marion Ave, Washington, IA 52353; (319) 653-4811; tmiller@iastate.edu

**PorkBridge educational series expands.** Thanks to strong subscriber support and growing demand, the PorkBridge 2006-07 educational series is expanding. The original group of five host universities increases to six, and the length of each session will increase to 1 1/2 hours. Even with these changes, Iowa State University animal science associate professor Ken Stalder assured producers that the focus of this unique offering will remain the same. “PorkBridge provides relevant and accurate information on specific topics to people who own, manage or work in swine grow-finish facilities,” Stalder said. “We know producers want this type of information and this program helps us deliver it right to where they are.” The program combines electronic information viewed on computer with live oral presentations by topic experts via phone. The cost for participating in this subscription-only series is $125, the same as last year, Stalder said. The fee covers materials and phone calls for all six sessions, which are scheduled on an every other month basis from December 2006 through October 2007. Each session is 90 minutes in length, beginning either at noon or 7 p.m. An informational brochure with subscription information is available on the IPIC Web site at www.ipic.iastate.edu/PorkBridge/2006brochure.pdf An informational brochure with subscription information is available on the IPIC Web site at www.ipic.iastate.edu/PorkBridge/2006brochure.pdf Iowa residents who want more information can call Stalder at (800) 808-7675.

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

**What does it take to make "natural" or "organic" pork into cured meats?** Because organic and natural meat cannot contain added nitrates or nitrite, which serves in curing meat, vegetable juices or powders are now being used in the process of cured meat. Vegetable juices and powders have high nitrate levels. Through a microbial conversion, the naturally occurring nitrate in vegetables is converted to nitrite for use in the curing process. Cured meats typically are derived from pork products: bacon, sausage, cold cuts, and ham. "It was once stated that 70-75% of a pig carcass ends up in cured meats," said Dr. Joe Sebranek, University Professor of Food Science and Human Nutrition/Animal Science at Iowa State University. There is concern, however, in using this type of curing process because microbial control is difficult and might reach unsafe levels. Nitrite also can form carcinogens when overheated for too long, another difficult area to control. Recently, the USDA has responded to ISU's concerns about the safety levels of these products by approving a grant that will help researchers investigate the microbial safety that results from the process of curing "natural" and "organic" pork products.

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