



What TVNZ's Sunday programme didn't tell you

TVNZ's Sunday programme on May 17 presented a portrayal that was not representative of the NZ Pork industry and the footage presented is not typical of NZ pig farming conditions.

The New Zealand pork industry operates under the Animal Welfare Act (1999) and the Pig Code of Welfare (2005) developed by the government-appointed independent body the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC).

The New Zealand pork industry did not write the code, but like SAFE, Open Rescue and the SPCA all of whom took the opportunity to provide input into the code.

New Zealand Pork Industry commitment to welfare

The industry committed in 2005 to a 10 year pig welfare programme which includes:

- Restricting the use of sow stalls for the first four weeks of pregnancy only. This is for the pigs' own safety.
- A strong focus on welfare in training – a specific programme called Prohand that helps farm workers to understand pig psychology, and welfare and how they can be best managed.
- A scheme whereby concerned farmers can report fellow producers who they believe aren't providing adequate welfare. An industry support network is also in place to ensure welfare issues are quickly remedied. We have a Memorandum of Understanding with MAF welfare on how any issues are dealt with.
- Monitoring compliance with the code in a range of ways and monitoring the transition of producers to new housing methods
- Seminars, workshops and literature to help farmers assess their own practices.
- In 2008, an independent review of sow housing options which confirmed the scientific evidence in regard to sow housing systems is still equivocal,

concluding that “no housing system is perfect and that each has its limitations”.

- Significant funding and resources committed to a three year project comparing new housing methods specifically within the New Zealand situation that do not use stalls. This research is programmed to start in the early 2009. We've consulted SPCA in the development of this project.

Farming systems in NZ

- About 40 per cent of New Zealand's breeding sows are outdoors.
- The remainder are housed indoors in systems varying farm by farm from open barns, to sheds with curtains that are raised or lowered to control temperature, to controlled atmosphere sheds. Every shed is slightly different depending on farmer preference and climate.
- Accommodation for growing pigs varies from straw barns through the other options to controlled atmosphere sheds. Close to 40 per cent of grower pigs are in straw based barns.
- The indoor outdoor balance is generally climatically driven in that almost all of the outdoor systems are in the Canterbury area (approx 50 per cent of industry) where climatic conditions and soil type (free draining) allow outdoor farming.

Use of sow stalls

- In 2005 the industry committed to phase out the use of sow stalls to a maximum of the first four weeks of pregnancy by 2015 for the welfare of the sows.
- The first four weeks is driven by welfare/productivity considerations. Female pigs are hormonal, aggressive and hierarchical by nature and more so during early pregnancy. During this period bullying and fighting takes place between sows which endangers both the sow and her unborn piglets and bully sows will often keep others away from feed. The stall ensures protection and ensures that the sow gets her daily feed requirements and secures the pregnancy. Sows are then returned to groups in larger pens.

Comparison with other countries that export to NZ

- About 40 per cent of the pork products consumed in NZ are imported. (700,000 kgs a week) The biggest exporters to NZ are Canada, US and Australia.
- Canada and US have made no commitment to phase down sow stalls. Much of their production has sows in stalls for their entire pregnancy. The US does not have animal welfare legislation.
- Australia is retaining sow stall use for longer than NZ (six weeks) and is having a longer phase down period.
- All three use hormones and antibiotics extensively to boost production efficiency. The chances are that if you're buying imported products they could have hormones in them. The NZ industry does not use growth hormones.
- US and Canada have had a variety of subsidies supporting production which enables them to sell their pork cheaper on international markets.

What can you do?

- Support New Zealand producers by buying only locally-produced pork. If there is no local pork industry, you will be eating imported pork that is
 1. produced in countries with no animal welfare checks and balances
 2. from animals contained in sow stalls for much longer than NZ plans, and
 3. fed with growth hormones – which is not a NZ practice.
- Look for the 100% NZ Pork, 100% NZ Bacon and 100% Ham NZ labels.
- Most fresh pork in New Zealand shops is produced here. Most processed pork such as in bacon and ham is imported.
- If you prefer free range pork it is available; simply ask your meat retailer.

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