



MEDIA RELEASE

## **NZPORK LAUNCHES AUDIT RESULTS AND PIGCARE ACCREDITATION LABEL**

*November 5, 2010*

New Zealand Pork CEO Sam McIvor today announced the results of the much anticipated independent welfare audit of pig farms and the launch of the PigCare Accreditation labelling for pork that has passed the audit.

The audit of 123 New Zealand farms was in response to pig farmers wanting to provide independent assurance to customers their pigs were well cared for.

NZQA certified auditors, with knowledge of the pork industry and pork industry practices, assessed the farms to determine the competency and skill of the farmer in how they handle the pigs, the condition and behaviour of the pigs themselves and the environment in which the pig lives including, feed, water, temperature, space and on outdoor farms shade and shelter.

Mr McIvor says the 115 farms that passed the audit can have their meat labelled "100% New Zealand Pork, PigCare Accredited". Labelled meat will appear in retail and wholesale outlets from 1 December. Only farms which have passed the audit will be able to use that label.

"It's important to provide consumers with transparency. By purchasing pork with the Pigcare Accreditation, they can be reassured the animals have been well cared for. The same can't be said for the 700,000kgs of imported product arriving on our shores every week, there's no similar guarantee."

Auditor Selwyn Dobbinson, a past member of the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC), a veterinarian and past president and life member of Otago SPCA branch says:

"As a pig specialist, this audit is a tremendous initiative from the industry to ensure the herds in New Zealand are compliant with the pig code of welfare developed by NAWAC. I have been very pleased to find that the herds that I have audited have been of a very high welfare standard."

He says farmers who did not pass the audit now have a strong incentive to improve their practices.

"Non-compliant farmers have been given the message that they must get their act together in order to be accredited. Otherwise their meat cannot carry the 100% New Zealand Pork labelling.

"As part of the audit, the farmer and auditor agreed actions and re-inspection timelines for these improvements to be made. In extreme cases or where the farmer fails to correct the issues the auditor will report the issue to MAF enforcement for further action."

Mr McIvor says the audit and labelling is an important step in responding to consumer needs.

“For example there is concern amongst consumers about sow stalls. The industry has committed to phasing out the use of sow stalls and the first step is ensuring that by the end of 2012, sows will be kept in stalls for no longer than four weeks of their pregnancy.

“However, it is important to realise that, on any given day, less than four per cent of New Zealand's pigs are housed in sow stalls.

“And international science shows the use of sow stalls in early pregnancy has welfare benefits. It prevents fighting between sows when they become aggressive, it reduces stress and ensures they get adequate food and water to maintain their pregnancy.

“Should consumers prefer products from non-sow stall farms there are good New Zealand brands such as Freedom Farms, Apple Tree Farms and Harmony to choose from, available through major retail chains. Many smaller producers also offer these products through butchers and farmers markets,” says Mr McIvor.

#### *About the PigCare audit*

- PigCare is the name of the New Zealand pork industry's independent welfare audit programme.
- The annual independent audit also aims to identify opportunities for farmers to continuously improve their animal welfare and farm management
- The PigCare audit was developed by animal welfare experts at Massey University with input from pig farmers, pig veterinarians, and representatives from NZPork, , and MAF. It was independently reviewed by members of the Animal Welfare Science Centre at Melbourne University
- PigCare is administered by an independent audit organisation AsureQuality.
- PigCare auditors are NZQA certified auditors with knowledge of the pork industry and pork industry practices.
- AsureQuality moderates auditor assessments to ensure consistency and fairness of audit decisions.

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