

PIPESTONE

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WHAT BRAD GREENWAY DOES TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT

"I understand why some producers don't want to talk about how well they run their operations," explains Brad Greenway, System shareholder and National Pork Board member. "It sounds too much like tooting your own horn." This South Dakota producer says setting the record straight is now vitally important—even if it means building yourself up to strangers and friends.

"We're all consumers. The crop farmer down the road may know nothing about what you do," Brad continues. This spring, representatives of all U.S. ag commodity organizations met together for the first time to consider beaming a unified message toward consumers. Pork Board representatives believe different segments of agriculture shouldn't work against each other.

And although pork is most important to you, Brad hopes you realize where it ranks with shoppers. "Your neighbors are eating beef first and chicken second," he points out. Maybe you shouldn't be surprised if they look more favorably on cattle producers.

Maybe they're hoping you'll act more neighborly. When Brad and his wife, Peggy, decided to put up their grow-finishing barn two years ago, they reached out to everyone who lives nearby. "My wife is a city girl who said, 'There is no way I'm going to have people first learn what we plan to do when they read the notice of a zoning hearing!'"

Brad, Peggy, and Dr. Luke Minion visited neighbors and answered questions one-to-one. "It was so much better for them to hear our explanations in their own homes, before the zoning meeting. Sure, you won't convince everybody that way, but I prefer personal conversations to discussions in front of a crowd."

"Luke and Gordon (Dr. Gordon Spronk) have always been a big help when I need to communicate what we're all about." And Brad has done plenty of communicating on behalf of the pork industry.

In his role as an on-call ambassador for Operation Main Street, a Pork Board project, Brad stands before civic groups to display the very human side of pork production. He's addressed 68 groups so far. Some audiences deliver "softball questions" but others—dietitians or county commissioners—expect him to provide more complex answers. "Don't be afraid to say you don't know. Don't be afraid to say you'll talk to Luke or Gordon and get back to them."

Everywhere he goes, Brad meets consumers looking for answers. On behalf of his family farm—and yours—he's always prepared to set the record straight.

WHEN YOU'RE READY TO SHARE YOUR STORY HERE'S WHAT BRAD GREENWAY SUGGESTS

Start talking.

- Start close to home. If you hear mis-information being spread in your local coffee shop, join the conversation and let the truth be known.
- If you're not shy in front of a group, volunteer for Operation Main Street. Personalize a basic PowerPoint presentation with photos of your family and your pigs. The idea is to give family farms a face and a voice.

This issue of Swine Line focuses on a single topic: Consumers' perceptions of pork producers. You can do something to counteract misconceptions. We asked other Pipestone System shareholders to help you find your voice and your role in the current scrutiny of our industry.

Dr. Luke Minion
CEO

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SWINE LINE

DEFINE YOUR MESSAGE: SOUTH DAKOTA SHAREHOLDERS OFFER TALKING POINTS

If you were asked to provide your own rebuttal to accusations against pork producers, how would you respond? We put the question to these South Dakota shareholders.

Swine Line: The term “factory farm” gets bandied about these days. What would you say to someone who mistakenly puts that label on your family operation?



Linda Jones: I'd tell people ours is not a factory farm because we own each pig. And we take care of them with compassion. Even though there are thousands of pigs, we pay attention to each one, walking through the pens every day to check on their health and comfort.

Larry Klumb: I hate the idea of someone thinking our operation is a factory farm. Yes, this farm isn't the same as it was 30 years ago, but the reason we've grown is to include our two sons at the table and support their families. If our buildings seem larger, it's because we need

more dollars coming in to match the dollars going out for our expenses.

Swine Line: What about concerns that there is something sinister going on behind the doors of your barns? What would you like every neighbor and every animal-welfare activist to know about the way you treat your animals?

Linda: I'd want them to understand how much more comfortable the pigs are inside in a controlled environment. We had eight inches of rain in the Mitchell (SD) area recently. I wish everyone could understand what it would be like for our pigs to live outdoors in that much mud. And what about during a snow storm? An old-style open building doesn't provide much shelter once it's covered by a snow bank!

And what about South Dakota heat? Sprinkler hoses can't cool a full-grown sow when the temperature hits 102°. She wouldn't survive outdoors! But in our shareholder-owned sow barn, she's cooled by fans. That's true compassion for animals.

Larry: I wish could take animal activists on a walk back through time—back across my life as a pork producer. I think then they'd realize we're so much more animal-friendly than hog production even 30 years ago.

I wish they could go all the way back to the 1950s and early '60s when I was a little guy. My dad and grandpa kept pigs on three or four acres where there were hog wallows—big mud holes that filled up with rainwater and manure and smelled so bad! Every day between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m., it was a battle—not a friendly game of king of the mountain, but a battle—to see which pig got the coolest spot. You could hear the screaming. Naturally, the strongest pig got the best place!

They lived all day in this ugliness where nothing should live. Then when it turned cooler they went inside, covered with all that muck and tried to rub it off on the barn walls. Naturally, the building filled with dust. As a kid, I could be inside our hog barn and not be able to see my dad and grandpa through the clouds of dust. How can that be a good environment?

Now, as Linda points out, when it gets hot in our buildings, fans and misters come on. Our pigs have better protection against heat than some of the people living in Mitchell, SD! It's absolutely beautiful in our barns, and I wish everyone could understand the evolution. I'd swear on a Bible we're much more animal-friendly than when pigs were raised outdoors.

CERTIFICATION OFFERS

THE CONSUMER PEACE OF MIND

Swine Line: Pork industry organizations back PQA Plus, TQA, and We Care® as a means of reassuring consumers that producers are meeting the best animal welfare standards. What should consumers know about your compliance to these standards?

Linda: I'd want consumers to know we are compliant. We are PQA Plus certified and our haulers are TQA certified. But I'd also want to assure shoppers and advocates that we didn't need these guidelines to set our values. We were already doing everything described in PQA Plus!

Oh, maybe I did change one thing: After PQA Plus training,

I posted signs on our buildings in case someone needed to get in touch with us in an emergency. But overall, the point of PQA Plus is not to teach us how to care for livestock; it's meant to provide peace of mind for consumers.

In addition, we make the extra effort to keep our confinement facilities clean and looking good for people who drive by. We add stuff to the manure pits to limit odor, and we've built a compost building, which also helps control any smell.

Larry: We didn't do anything new as a result of PQA Plus. We didn't need to be told how to treat animals; it's something you just know if you grow up on a family farm. When I was maybe two years old, my grandma taught me that you don't kick a dog or a pig. I want consumers to understand how well I learned that lesson! ■



Pat, Larry, Ben, and Shannon Klumb.

TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT Continued from Page 1

Make yourself available.

- Everybody likes to complain about the media, but who makes an effort to tell local reporters the true story? Call the editor of your local paper and volunteer your expertise. Say something like, "If pork production is in the news, I'd be glad to provide you background information." Folks at your nearest TV or radio station also have airtime to fill; why not help them fill it with your version of the story?

Be more social.

- Work social media in your favor. Brad says, "My wife has a Facebook page, and she puts photos from inside our barns on it. During one major snowstorm last

winter, her city friends commented, 'The pigs look really comfortable!'"

- Be proud of what you do and the way you treat your livestock. If you can Twitter, supply friends with updates on your life and your work.

Request an audit.

- While it's great that 60,000 producers are PQA Plus certified, that's only the first step. "Request a site assessment. We all need to do it because inviting an expert to look inside our operation will give us more clout," Brad Greenway insists. "It's not enough to tell consumers, 'Yeah, we're on it.' We need to prove we can be open." ■



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INSIDE
Shareholders Offer Talking Points
For Defending Pork Production



YOUR ACTIONS CAN OPEN DOORS



Terry Wolters

Our industry is certainly under increased scrutiny. Since you and I want to maintain our license to be self-regulating, the whole circle of things we do—our production practices—becomes more important. Our dedication to sound practices and ethical care is a story each of us needs to tell.

A rancher may have 1,000 cows, and yet the public perceives his operation to be family-owned because those cows and the rancher caring for them are visible.

But a pork producer with a 1,000 sows gets labeled a “factory farm” because consumers don’t have an accurate picture of what’s behind the closed doors of our hog buildings.

To do away with that cloud of mystery, we can choose to give the public a better sense of what’s happening in our buildings. Naturally, we can’t physically open the doors (and still protect our animals from disease), yet we can allow our neighbors to see us for who we really are.

We need to affirm our obligation to safeguard natural resources and the environment by carefully managing manure as the valuable resource it is. We want to reassure our neighborhoods and the larger local community that we’re concerned about the air we all breathe and about water quality. Without coming across as self-centered, we need to clarify our fundamental beliefs.

If we don’t provide livable conditions for our animals, we won’t be able to make a living as pork producers. Our commitment to public health is a message we need to share. We want breathable air for our employees. We also want safe water for our families. We want safe food. Pork producers want all the things other consumers want!

We also want to be welcomed and trusted within our local communities. The good reputation we create close to home can spread by word of mouth in the same way a bad reputation travels. Offend your neighbors and you’ll find your life getting more difficult.

Let’s acknowledge our neighbors’ concerns in an honest and sincere manner. Yes, some of them may not know a lot about modern agriculture. Why don’t we share the real story? If non-farmers don’t know the value of what we do and don’t understand the care with which we treat our animals that might be because we haven’t taken the time to help them understand.

Here’s my best advice to any producer who wants to defend our right to self-regulation: 1) Take actions to protect the environment and ultimately build trust. 2) Acknowledge local concerns and address those worries honestly. 3) Be considerate. For example, avoid spreading manure on weekends when your neighbors are outdoors enjoying the weather.

There are those in our industry who continue claiming it’s our right to do whatever we want to do, whenever we want to do it. Those of us in Pipestone System take a different view. We believe we have a moral obligation to live up to the standards in PQA Plus and TQA.

When we apply a We Care sticker to the barn door, it’s because on the other side of that door, we’re doing right by the animals. On the other side of the door, we’re working to provide for our families without harming our neighbors.

Yes, I know you’re busy and you’ve been hit hard by tough financial times. Yet occasionally we all need to step out from behind the door and tell the story of our good production practices. ■