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1. Happy New Year

OK, so maybe we are a little late ringing in the New Year, but I wanted to take this opportunity to thank all of you that have subscribed and contributed to this newsletter. We are already entering our 3<sup>rd</sup> year of production, and continue to get more people signing up (currently we are at 392 recipients). Please continue to provide us with your feedback regarding issues to cover, format and content of this newsletter, or any other items you would like to see us address or explore.

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2. Are you PQA Plus certified?

According to a recent letter sent to its supplier, Cargill will soon be requiring all hogs processed at its facilities to be purchased from PQA Plus certified suppliers. Are you certified? If you were certified under the old PQA level III program, your certification continues to last 3 years from the date of certification. If you haven't undergone any PQA or PQA Plus certification in the past 3 years, you are no longer certified. The PQA Plus program merges the concepts of the previous PQA program, food safety and animal well-being. Individuals can become certified under the program by attending a PQA Plus educational program from a PQA Plus certified advisor. Additionally, a farm site can receive status through an on-farm site assessment. By completing the PQA Plus program, producers demonstrate their commitment to the industry to ensure "quality assured" pork production management and handling prior to the processing plant. Call the Pork Checkoff Service Center at (800) 456-PORK(7675) to find an advisor available to provide training in your area. Several UMN Extension educators are also trained to provide PQA Plus training and certification.

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### 3. Time to evaluate market weights

The combination of low hog prices and high feed costs are, at the very least, pressuring producer margins. It was only a few years ago that hogs were selling at \$75/cwt carcass and corn was \$2/bu. Under those market conditions, it didn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that marketing pigs towards the top of your packer's price/weight matrix meant more profit. However, with hog prices below \$65/cwt carcass and corn prices around \$4/bu, the decision of what weight to market your pigs has changed drastically. Fortunately, John Lawrence with Iowa State University has published an article and spreadsheet describing how to evaluate when to time your marketing of pigs. Access the information at the Iowa Pork Industry Center website at [http://www.ipic.iastate.edu/information/Market\\_weight\\_adjustment.pdf](http://www.ipic.iastate.edu/information/Market_weight_adjustment.pdf).

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### 4. "Prioritizing Your Energy Investment" PorkCast program February 5th

Rising energy costs eat into already tight profit margins for swine producers. Capital investments in energy-efficient upgrades can pay off quickly, but other investments may not offer similar returns. Where do you get the most bang for your energy buck? University of Minnesota Swine Extension and Minnesota Pork Board will again be sponsoring a PorkCast webcast presentation, "Prioritizing Your Energy Investment", to be presented by Dr. Jay Harmon, Agricultural Engineer with Iowa State University, on February 5<sup>th</sup> from 1 - 2 pm. Dr. Harmon will be addressing a number of areas related to barn management that can save producers significant dollars otherwise going towards energy costs. Areas covered include ventilation management, lighting, insulation, and rebate programs. PorkCast is a quarterly online seminar series aimed to provide management level information in a timely and efficient manner. There is no cost to take in a PorkCast program. Information on connecting to the upcoming PorkCast presentation, alongwith past programs, are available at [www.extension.umn.edu/swine/porkcast](http://www.extension.umn.edu/swine/porkcast).

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### 5. Pork Futures Summit to be held January 29<sup>th</sup> in North Mankato

A Pork Futures Summit will be held January 29<sup>th</sup> from 1 - 4 pm at the South Central College, Conference Center A, in North Mankato. Topics include:

- "Knowing Your Real Cost of Production" by Jim Marzolf, South Central College, and Gary Thome, Riverland Community College
- "Managing the Price and Source of Feedstuffs" by Brian Buhr, University of Minnesota, and Mark Greenwood, AgStar Financial Services
- "World Perspectives on the Agricultural Economy" by Dermot Hayes, Iowa State University.

There is no cost to attend this workshop, but pre-registration is requested. Contact the Minnesota Pork Board at 1-800-537-7675 or [mnpork@mnpork.com](mailto:mnpork@mnpork.com) to register or receive more information.

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### 6. Wean to Finish Management course in Morris February 7 & 8

Wean-to-Finish Management is a day and a half workshop that will address the day-to-day management activities relating to growing and finishing pigs. By fine-tuning details and improving daily practices, producers can improve production and reduce costs associated with

bringing hogs to market weight. The course will be held February 7 and 8, 2008, at the West Central Research and Outreach Center in Morris. Classroom presentations occur the first day of the course, while a hands-on session occurs from 8 am – noon on the second day.

Topics covered in the Wean-Finish management course include:

- Comparison of wean-to-finish and conventional nursery-to-grow-to-finish systems, advantages and disadvantages, management requirements
- Equipment and facility maintenance and repair, cleaning and disinfecting, pest management, space allowances, biosecurity
- Feeding strategies, feed budgets; feed quality, feed sampling and quality assurance, managing feeders and waterers, proper diet processing
- Temperature, air quality, ventilation management, sanitation, manure management
- Herd health program development, proper use of pharmaceuticals, control of existing herd health challenges, health monitoring, and treatment options

First registration from a farm is \$100. Additional participants from the same production system may register for \$50 each. Individuals wishing to participate should call Minnesota Pork Board at (507) 345-8814. The workshop is relevant for people with limited pork production knowledge as well as experienced pork producers seeking refresher information and updates on recent developments. Class participants will be automatically certified or recertified under the Pork Quality Assurance Plus program by completing the course.

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## **7. PorkBridge and SowBridge distance learning programs ongoing**

The PorkBridge and SowBridge distance learning programs are underway, but individuals wishing to register and participate in one or both of the programs can still do so. PorkBridge focuses on grow-finish production topics, while SowBridge focuses on the breeding, gestation, and farrowing units. Programs allow owners, managers and employees to increase knowledge and skills in their production areas without having to leave the comfort of their home or the farm. The programs combine electronic information viewed on computer with live oral presentations via phone by experts in topic areas. The week before each session, subscribers receive a CD containing that session's topic-specific presentation, along with information on accessing the live speaker presentation. Subscribers call into a toll-free conference line to listen to speakers, and may ask questions anytime during or after the presentation. Each session is 1 ½ hours in length, beginning either at noon or 7 p.m. central time. In addition, a group discussion email list is available for individuals to post questions between sessions.

The PorkBridge program is sponsored by the University of Minnesota, South Dakota State University, Iowa State University, University of Nebraska, Ohio State University, and the U.S. Pork Center of Excellence. Those interested in registering or learning more about the program and remaining presentations can access material at the U of MN Extension website at [www.extension.umn.edu/swine](http://www.extension.umn.edu/swine).

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## **8. Intro to Animal Ag online program available through UMN Extension**

University of Minnesota Extension now has six "Introduction to Animal Agriculture" presentations available on its Web site, with slides and narrative. The topics are: Swine, dairy, beef, crops, manure and poultry. Presentations run from 15 to 20 minutes in length, and help describe basic production practices to individuals with limited or no farm background. They are located on the Web at: [www.manure.umn.edu/animalag.html](http://www.manure.umn.edu/animalag.html).

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## Questions?

It is our goal to bring University research to the Minnesota Pork Industry, ensuring the continued sustainability and competitiveness of producers and allied industry. Periodically check our events calendar on the U of MN Swine Extension website ([www.extension.umn.edu](http://www.extension.umn.edu)) for upcoming workshops and seminars. Please email or call me if I can be of assistance:

Mark Whitney, PhD  
Swine Extension Educator / Assistant Professor  
Extension Regional Center, Mankato  
1961 Premier Drive, Suite 110  
Mankato, MN 56001  
(507) 389-5541  
[whitn007@umn.edu](mailto:whitn007@umn.edu)



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