Australian Pork Limited is Caring for the Future of Australian Pork

Australian Pork Limited (APL) is a unique producer-owned organisation supporting and promoting the Australian pork industry. APL delivers integrated services that enhance the viability of our nation’s pig producers at a domestic and international level. This is achieved through the development of marketing, export development, research and innovation and policy development, to help secure a profitable and sustainable future for Australian pork.

APL is funded primarily through statutory pig slaughter levies collected under the Primary Industries (Socio) Levies Act 1997, with additional research specific funds provided by the Australian Government.

Pigs and the Environment

The Australian pork industry is serious about environmental stewardship. The industry believes it has a duty to ensure that Australian pork is produced responsibly while also remaining competitive and sustainable. The Australian pork industry has taken proactive steps to help ensure its producers carefully manage the nation’s precious resource and environment. In efforts to continually reduce the industry’s environmental footprint, ongoing industry research and development is focused on the continuous improvement of overall security, production waste minimisation, pollution prevention and beneficial reuse of effluent.

Environmental issues pose both a challenge and an opportunity for the Australian pork industry. The industry has tackled this challenge head-on and is making important progress in addressing these issues – especially in acknowledging and addressing Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions. The industry was the first in Australia to have developed and approved a methodology for the government’s Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI).

GHG emissions produced by the pork industry are significantly lower than other agricultural sectors, such as beef cattle, dairy cattle and sheep. Currently, the industry’s GHG emissions produced by the pork industry are significantly lower than other pork producing countries. This is why on-farm biosecurity and product integrity continues to be one of the most important aspects of Australian pork production.

The pork industry has responded quickly to growing consumer demand for top-quality produce that is safe to eat. The Australian Pork Industry Quality Assurance Program (APQAP®) is an on-farm quality assurance program that allows producers to demonstrate good farming practices using the principles of Hazard Analysis and managing Critical Control Points for management, food safety, animal welfare, biosecurity and traceability. Update of APQAP® by producers throughout Australia has reached 90 per cent of the national herd, and is increasing.

Australia’s pork industry is also leading the world to ensure its pork products are fully traceable from paddock to plate. This has been realised through traceability systems (PigHealthPlus™) and the Pig Health and Marketing Information (PHMIN®) provides key information that can be used to trace pigs or pork back to the property of origin in the event of an emergency such as an animal disease outbreak or a food safety incident. Visibility systems like the pork industry’s PhysiTrace™ and the Pork Information System (PIS™) are being developed, that will enable industry to rapidly trace back pork sold in supermarkets and butchers to farm of origin.

Future of Australian Pork

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How Pigs are Farmed

Pigs grown for pork are housed in different used groups depending on their age and weight. A sow raised for breeding will have her first litter when she’s about one year old. The gestation period (the time from conception to birth) for a sow is about 116 days give or take a few days either way. She can have just over two litters each year and usually weighs in around 90-120 kilograms. The piglets suckle from their mother for three to four weeks before being weaned and grouped with other piglets the same age. They are then housed in weaner facilities on the same farm or taken to a weaner finisher farm on a designated site.

Pigs are fed on mostly grain-based diets and continue to grow until they reach between 24-35kg per pig or weaners. Pigs that grow larger than 51-55 kg per pig are sold as ‘barrows’ or finishers.

There are a number of pig farming methods in Australia - indoor housing, deep litter free range and outdoor systems. Indoors pigs are normally for pigs from birth through to finisher (for sale or slaughter) as well as lactating and weaned sows. This type of housing protects the animals from climate variation, predators and sunburn and can accommodate pigs of similar age and size to be housed together in small, medium and large groups.

Deep litter housing systems are usually large open-sided sheds or hoop-like structures with deep litter footing (tile, huils, straw, sawdust). These systems are used extensively for growing pigs and for group housing of dry sows.

APIQ free range means that pigs are kept permanently outdoors for their entire lives with shelter from the elements provided furnished with suitable bedding. All paddocks should include areas for rooting and foraging as well as areas for wallowing. All free range pigs should have access to paddocks at all times of their lives.

APIQ outdoor bred means that adult breeding sows live in open spaces with free access to paddocks for their entire adult life with rooting and foraging areas, wallows, where conditions and local regulations allow. Breeding sows and their piglets can be moved into indoor growing-out units until sale or slaughter usually these are deep litter.

Mating stalls are individual enclosures in which a sow is kept for the purpose of mating. Sows undergoing their first litter will typically be back in heat within a few days. A sow that is “on heat” can be successfully mated by artificial insemination or by access to a boar (an entire male pig). The role of the mating stall is to protect the sow during the early stages of fertilisation and embryo development. Once pregnancy is established she is then moved in with a group of sows for the duration of her pregnancy.

Gestation stalls: In November 2010, the industry overwhelmingly agreed that Australia would move closer to the world in voluntary phasing out the use of all gestation stalls by 2017. This means sows and gilts must be kept in loose housing from day five after mating until one week before farrowing. The reason producers have used them in the past is because pigs can be extremely aggressive animals especially during the early stage of pregnancy. The best and safest way to ensure sows get enough food and aren’t bullied, bitten and injured has been to protect them in individual stalls. However research and development into sow housing has allowed Australian pork farmers to minimise the confinement of individual sows for the duration of a sow’s pregnancy thereby complying with the voluntary phase out.

Farrowing crates (also known as piglet protection pens): The farrowing crate is an individual enclosure in which a sow is kept for the purpose of farrowing. A sow that is “on heat” can be successfully mated by artificial insemination or by access to a boar (an entire male pig). The role of the mating stall is to protect the sow during the early stages of fertilisation and embryo development. Once pregnancy is established she is then moved in with a group of sows for the duration of her pregnancy.

www.pork.com.au and look for 'Australian Grown' products made from free range pork from places included like Denmark, the Netherlands, Canada and the United States. When buying Australian pork, look for one of three things:

• The bright pink Australian Pork logo
• The padlet label states ‘Product of Australia’
• The padlet label states ‘Australian Grown’

Visit the Australian Pork consumer website: www.pork.com.au and look for a label that you tell which Australian grown pork to make ham, bacon and smallgoods products.

Looking After Our Pigs – We’re Leading the World

Australian pig producers have the same concerns you do when it comes to taking care of their pigs. To demonstrate that they are listening to consumer sentiment, in November 2010 the industry announced the voluntary phase-out of sow stalls by 2017. Australia’s pork farmers are the first in the world to make such a voluntary commitment. Producers understand more than anyone that providing excellent pig care results in healthier and higher-quality product – pig producers’ livelihoods depend on it. The industry invests millions of dollars each year to research and develop new technologies and practices to improve pig welfare, and provide valuable education and training to stock people throughout Australia.

The Model Code of Practice for Welfare of Animals (2007) Pigs (– the Model Code) is a guide that has been developed in consultation with all levels of industry regulators, RSPCA and scientists to detail the acceptable practice for the management of pigs. It outlines all responsibilities involved in caring for pigs – including their housing, food, water and special needs. Standards in the Model Code have been incorporated into the Model Code of Practice for Welfare of Animals (2007) Pigs (– the Model Code) and are independently audited each year to ensure producers comply.
The main source of food for Australian pigs is cereal grains such as wheat, barley and sorghum, resulting in a white fat around the outside of the meat. The feed component (mainly grains such as wheat, barley and sorghum) makes up about 40 per cent of the total cost of producing pork. Around 8 per cent is exported to countries like Singapore, New Zealand and Hong Kong, and 25 per cent is sold through restaurants and other food service outlets in Australia.

**Crackling Facts!**

- Australian produced around 140.6 million tonnes of pig meat every year. A little over 10 per cent of that goes to Australia's domestic market, up from 9.5 per cent in 2000 (Source: Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics, 2013)
- During 2013–14, pork products accounted for around 10 per cent of Australia's total fresh meat retail consumption and had a forecast gross value of production (GVP) for 2013–2014 of more than $1 billion. (Source: Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics, 2013)
- Australian farmers produce about 4.85 million pigs (forecast number of pigs produced to the end of June 2015) from an estimated sow herd of around 267,000 (Source: Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics, 2013)
- Pigs are unable to perspire and they lose heat through their mouths. Their ideal growing temperature for older pigs is 20–22˚C.
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- Pigs have colour vision but they can't focus both eyes on the same spot. Pigs have a very wide angle of vision (310 degrees).
- The average growth rate of Australian pigs is around 600–650 g a day from birth to sale.
- Weaners are pigs at weaning age and are weaned between 4 and 6 weeks old.
- Weaners can be transferred from the farrowing accommodation to other areas for sleeping, eating and dunging. This myth is probably linked to their liking for mud. Because pigs don't sweat, when it's hot they cover themselves in mud to help keep cool and it also doubles as a sun block.
- **PORKY PIE!** Pork is difficult to cook
  - **TRUTH:** Pork can be quick and easy to cook. Take a 2 cm boneless pork steak for example – a pan-grilled or BBQ plate just like you would for any other steak. Cook on one side without turning for 6 minutes. Turn it over once and allow it to cook for 2 more minutes. Take the steak out of the pan and rest it for a minute – this allows the juices to settle so it will be tender and juicy.
- **PORKY PIE!** Pork needs to be cooked all the way through
  - **TRUTH:** The idea that Australian pork needs to be cooked all the way through is a myth. Captain Arthur Phillip obviously showed some of his farming background (Lundyhurst Hampshire) in selecting only healthy pigs to transported to Australia. As a result, Australian pigs do not have the Trichinella spiralis parasite that causes trichinosis (the round worms our mothers all told us about when we were kids). (Source: http://www.aap.org.au, Australian Pork Council) So whilst it might feel unfamiliar, fresh Australian pork can be eaten medium (with a hint of pink).
- **PORKY PIE!** Pork is a fatty meat
  - **TRUTH:** There are a number of pork cuts that when trimmed of external fat can be very lean. A 200 g uncooked serving of lean, trimmed pork fillet for example contains 2.2 g of fat which means pork fillets have less than half the fat of beef fillets, less fat than snapper fillets and are leaner than chicken breast fillets. They’re also a valuable source of iron.
- **PORKY PIE!** Pigs are dirty animals
  - **TRUTH:** In fact, pigs are very clean animals. They’re known for keeping separate areas for sleeping, eating and dunging. This myth is probably linked to their liking for mud. Because pigs don’t sweat, when it’s hot they cover themselves in mud to help keep cool and it also doubles as a sun block.
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