

PORK INDUSTRY AHEAD ON STALL FREE MOVE

The Australian pork industry's voluntary move away from the use of sow stalls by 2017, is making substantial progress, with around one in three sows now spending their pregnant lives sow stall free.

This finding came from the most recent nationwide survey of pig producers, conducted by the industry's peak representative body, Australian Pork Limited (APL).

APL CEO Andrew Spencer said that the survey is part of the industry's ongoing monitoring of the progress being made on this extremely important issue.

Back in November 2010, at the APL Annual General Meeting, a resolution was overwhelmingly supported by Australian pork producers to voluntarily commit to the phase out of the use of sow stalls by 2017. No other pig industry in the world has voluntarily moved to undertake such action. The results of this first survey, taken some 12 months later, are resounding proof that Australian pork producers are strongly committed to "walking the talk".

The survey also showed the peak use of sow stalls is occurring at between one and four weeks after mating with around 67 per cent of sows still being in stalls at this time. Thirty three per cent (or one in three sows) are not being housed in stalls at all during pregnancy.

Additionally, around 80 per cent of production already complies with the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals - Pigs (3rd Edition, 2007) which requires by 2017 that sows can only be housed in stalls for up to six weeks of a pregnancy.

Mr Spencer said "This actually means 80 per cent of the industry is five years ahead of the regulations. The other clear indicators of progress are the fact that on average, two thirds of sows, at any one point in time during pregnancy, are not in a stall at all and are housed in groups.

"The Australian pork industry has given a strong commitment to make the phasing out of sow stalls a reality. Clear indications are now showing the industry is well ahead of its 2017 target."

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Senator Joe Ludwig welcomed the action to date. "The industry is making real progress towards phasing out sow stalls," he said.

"I look forward to this level of commitment continuing as they work to achieve their end goal."

RSPCA Australia CEO, Heather Neil, said "It's good to see this commitment by Australian pork producers and a third of sows already benefiting from a stall free environment. The RSPCA appreciates the significance of the commitment these pig producers have made and we look forward to monitoring the industry progress towards a complete end to the use of sow stalls in Australia."

Australian pork producers will continue to closely monitor the progress made on sow stalls through varying types of producer surveys carried out throughout the year.

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