

PUTTING THE PIG BACK INTO PORK

For 41 years the Ontario Pork Congress has supported pork producers

By Emily Manns



It will take more than the threat of a swine virus or closure of a major packing plant to keep pork producers from attending Stratford's annual Ontario Pork Congress (OPC) in June.

What began just over 40 years ago as the endeavor of a small group of pork producers and industry workers to promote the growing pork industry, has now gained recognition as the largest pig show in Canada.

Working under the guidance and leadership of the current president, Frank Hogervorst, the OPC continues to emphasize the importance of maintaining relations between all sectors of the pork industry and promoting the health and quality of Ontario's pork production.

The OPC will do "whatever we can do to help the industry," said Hogervorst, who has been involved in one way or another with the industry since the late 1970s.

Moments and memories captured from last year's Ontario Pork congress event, include the annual Hog Jog for a Cause (above), the newly labelled Bacon Maker Classic (below), some of the tasty treats being served up (bottom left) and the masterpieces of the Pig Art Competition (bottom left).



Producing more pork than the country can readily consume, Canada has grown into one of the largest global exporters of pork and pork products, extending their patronage beyond the U.S. and into the foreign markets of countries such as Russia, Taiwan and South Korea. This is a giant leap forward from what the industry used to look like.

"The industry has changed," commented Richard Smelski, one of OPC's past presidents and a veteran of the organization since it first began back in 1973.

"In the past, it was a battle between the producers and the packers, but that battle isn't there anymore. The producers are now tremendously good managers, providing tremendous value in the pork they're providing to consumers."

Smelski also noted the decline in the number of pig farms in Ontario to date, which has not only impacted the industry but also the contents of the OPC show.

"Pigs were a big part of it for the first 10 to 15 years, drawing in more than 10,000 producers."

In spite of this decline in numbers, the pig farms that remain are of a substantially larger size, producing pigs in far greater quantity than what was seen 40 years ago.

"It's not so much a cost factor, it's more a management factor," Hogvorst explains when addressing the changes to the industry. "Farms have had to get bigger in order to keep up with the costs, but the management has improved."

The Ontario pork industry continues to undergo drastic changes as it adheres to new and more stringent policies, the most notable to date being the new animal housing requirements outlined in the recently updated Code of Practice (COP) for the Care and Handling of Pigs.

"The new pork Code of Practice is fairly realistic," says Hogvorst. "We have to be looking at the end user. Our goal in the end has to be to satisfy our customers."

Based on the new COP, all new barns as of 2014 are required to have loose housing for gilts and sows in order to provide the ideal conditions for better and safer pig productivity, reducing the potential for injury or disease contamination.

It is being strongly recommending

that all pig farmers adhere to the COP's Herd Health Management Program, which outlines various steps of disease prevention, including vaccination protocols, pest control and sanitation practices.

Another change in the pork industry over the years has been the realization of a need for more open and efficient communication between all sectors of the industry. That goal led to the establishment of the Ontario Pork Industry Council (OPIC) which has teamed up with the Pork Congress in recent years.

Made up of volunteers from various fields, OPIC is dedicated to the planning and implementation of a number of projects which will benefit the pork industry as a whole.

"Where OPIC is more of a strictly tradeshow affair, OPIC is a project based organization working across all sectors of the industry," explains Lori Moser, the managing director for OPIC.

It is a not-for-profit organization run by local volunteers from across Ontario, and has been around for the past 12 years. It was supported in its inception by the OPC, having shared a similar goal at the time which continues to drive both organizations today.

"The reason we elected to provide management support for OPC is because we support that which supports the pork industry," says Moser.

OPIC has had a hand in the success of the show for the past three years, providing administrative assistance and general support for the organization.

"They keep us on track, doing all the paper work behind the scenes," says Hogvorst.

OPIC is also in charge of the annual Hog Jog event which takes place during the first day of the OPC. This year, they have rallied together 500 participants, raising both money for this year's cause – the Wellspring Cancer Centre – as well as celebrating those who have made the pork industry the success that it is today.

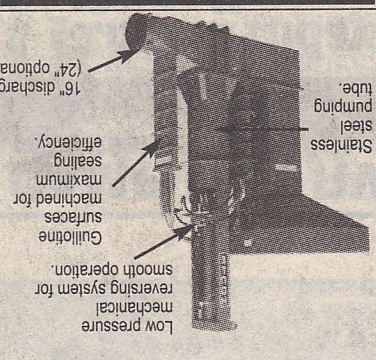
Moser has been with the organization for seven years, and having been raised on a pig farm herself, she is no stranger to the delicate balance of conditions required to maintain the health and

GEA

THE FIRST CHOICE OF NORTH AMERICAN FARMERS

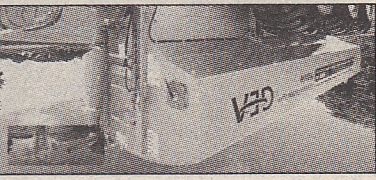
Magnum
Field proven for over 25 years to evacuate daily manure.*

Magnum with Standard Discharge
Used when top of reservoir is lower than the barn floor.



Hopper
Different models of hopper to suit installation with 1 or 2 barn cleaners.
Also available for manure scraped by a skid-steer loader.

* Water addition may be required. Straw bedding up to 40 lbs. per 10 milking cows per day.
Performance varies according to installation, manure consistency, quantity and type of bedding.



GEA Farm Technologies
Performance, reliability and durability

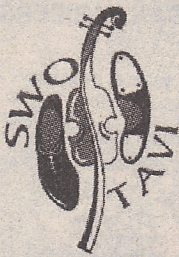
- E48 Series offers many models with capacities ranging from 3200 to 7900 gal. imp. Power steering patented system is unique in that it matches the turning angle of the tractor.
- Hydraulic suspension allows for smoother travel over irregular terrain and reduces stress to the reservoir.
- Spreader tanks available in stainless steel for a better resistance against corrosion.

For the Best Quality Money can buy! Buy GEA. • Stabling • Manure Pumps • Buildings • Gutter Chains • Down Cow Lifts

SALES & SERVICE INSTALLATION & PARTS
KEITH SIEMON FARM SYSTEMS LTD.
R.R. 4, Walton
519-345-2734 (anytime)
email: keithsiemon@fsc.on.ca
Manure Handling Specialists

CANADIAN CULTURE AT ITS BEST!
31st Annual Fiddle & Stepdance Championships

Tavistock and District Recreation Centre



Preliminaries:

Friday, July 4 - 6 pm • Saturday, July 5 - 9:30 am

FINALS & SHOW: Saturday, July 5 - 7 pm

THERE WILL BE NO ADMISSION FEE

FOR THE SATURDAY 7 PM FINALS/SHOW!!!

Tickets available at the door for each program.

For camping or info please call contest secretary Marianne at 519.271.6115 or email huitema@cyg.net

CAMP-OUT RV
 sales • rentals • service • store

since 1962
 Stratford, Ontario www.campoutrv.com 1-866-667-6615

**52nd Birthday
 Open House**

Fri., June 6 9-6 pm

Sat., June 7 9-4 pm

Sun., June 8 10-3 pm

ALL TRAILERS, 5TH WHEELS, TRUCK
 CAMPERS AND PARK MODELS WILL
 BE UNLOCKED FOR VIEWING
 THROUGHOUT WEEKEND.

RECEIVE UP TO \$1,000. OFF
 ANY TRAILER PURCHASE
 THROUGHOUT THE WEEKEND.

Special Finance Rates
 Available



Bouncy Castle
 for the kids
 Saturday
 from
 11 am - 3 pm



15% off
 all regular
 priced
 parts &
 accessories

Up to 50% off
 select parts
 & accessories

Special parts demonstrations
 throughout the weekend

Visit our website for full details!
 2 km W. of Stratford on Hwy. 8

519-393-5938

www.campoutrv.com



Silent Valley
 AYTON

Cottage and RV Resort

Call 519-665-7787 to book your
 getaway today!

Visit www.parkbridge.com for
 more information.



Lindsay Country Jamboree

July 17-20, 2014

Lindsay Agricultural Society

Grounds & Facility

354 Angeline St., Lindsay, ON

WEEKEND CAMPING PASSES

AVAILABLE

Thursday, July 17

Riki Knox, Bill White, Houseband,
 The Hughey Band, Montana Sky

Friday, July 18

Stacey Zeger, Dave Barber,
 Chuck Simms, Marven James,
 Diane Chase, Jamie Warren

Saturday, July 19

Wendy Snider, George Hillier,
 John Fraser, Mark LaForme,
 Eddie Eastman

Sunday, July 20

Gospel Hour featuring:
 The Garrett's, Paul Jones,
 Gord Youmans, Gloria Downer Pearson

kawarthabattery@gmail.com
info@lindsaycountryjamboree.com
 or visit our website at
www.lindsaycountryjamboree.com

quality of a pig herd, and how easily that balance can be broken.

Swine farms in Canada recently experienced a devastating blow when a case of the porcine epidemic diarrhea (PED) virus was discovered to have infected dozens of pig farms in Ontario.

As of mid-May there had been 58 confirmed cases of the virus since January of this year, resulting in the deaths of thousands of piglets as it makes its way not just through the nurseries.

PED devastated the U.S. hog industry, drastically reducing the amount of pork being produced with the shortage raising pork prices by 10 per cent, helping those farmers fortunate enough to be able to remain healthy and at full production. Ontario producers are hoping to avoid a similar experience.

Due to this outbreak, the OPC has altered its itinerary to prevent further spread of the virus. The usual Bacon Maker Classic has been turned into a more virtual experience, utilizing a combination of pictures and videos in lieu of bringing in the live pigs.

"We let local vets make the call that we would not have hogs at our show this year," says Hogervorst. "It has, however, opened up new venues for us."

These new venues include a new educational pavilion for the children, where they can judge the pigs via video while also being educated on different aspects of the pork industry, from feed and nutrition to animal health and biosecurity.

"We're trying to make it a community event," Hogervorst continues, "to involve more of the general public and educate them about where their pork comes from."

Although loss of live pigs at the show may seem like a set back, the executive members of the OPC take pleasure in this opportunity to get the youth more involved in the industry and to help them understand the pig farming process.

"We have taken this opportunity to turn that situation into a learning opportunity," explained Christine Schoonderwoerd, vice-president of OPC.

A growing emphasis on biosecurity in modern hog production has been one of the bigger changes that has

Perth COMMUNICATIONS
it's time we talked!

400 Huron St., Stratford, ON N5A 5T5
 Office (519) 273-3307
 Toll Free 1-800-565-9983
 www.perthcomm.com

MOTOROLA
 Authorized Two-Way Radio Dealer

Your reliable source for:
 Motorola two-way radios • Remote status monitoring systems
 P.A. Systems • Wide-area two way radio networks • Fire Radio Communication

Two-Way Radio Communication

How to be in six places at once!

TRADITION
 MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY
 Sebringville

519-393-6402 • 1-800-263-1961
 www.traditionmutual.com

- Residential
- Commercial
- Auto
- Farm

Cory McGill Construction

Cory McGill
 519-327-9615

Concrete forming and pads
 Renovations
 Roofing - Steel or Asphalt
 Siding
 Soffit and Fascia
 Seamless Eavestrough

PACKERS: WE BUILD

Order Now

RUBBER TIRE PACKER SPECIALISTS

Also large fold-up steel drum packers, lawn & estate rollers, custom manufactured

HAROLD JONES ENTERPRISES

RR #2, Arthur, Ont. (519) 848-2799

taken place over the show's 40 years as the participation of live pigs was reduced due to the risk to the rest of the herd of returning a show pig into the barn that might have picked up a virus from the other animals being displayed.

Last year, the OPC celebrated its 40 year milestone, a grand event which gave birth to more positive changes in the show, such as pushing back the date of the main event a few days so it could segue into the three day Blues and Ribfest event, creating what is now being heralded as "hog wild week".

"The intent was to link OPC with the Stratford Blues and Ribfest to create a week-long celebration of pork in Stratford," Moser explained. "Stratford is in close proximity to our two largest pork producing counties - Perth and Huron - so it's an ideal place to celebrate the product."

The big show kicks off on June 18 at the Stratford Rotary Complex. It was originally held at the Stratford Fair Grounds, but because the buildings were reaching the end of their days, the OPC made donations towards the construction of the new complex, where the show has resided for the past few years.

For a second year in a row, the OPC will be bringing back the Taste the Best event, where local chefs will have the opportunity to tempt the tastebuds of the pork producers and Congress attendees with succulent appetizers made from fresh pork donated by SOFINA Foods, just one of the many sponsors the show has attracted over the years.

They took a big risk in the beginning trying to get this show off the ground, having to overcome the limited available financing for the show and the uncertainty of hosting new events, but its continued success year after year has inspired the OPC to take on new challenges, pushing forward new and innovative changes for the future of the show.

"It was originally set up as an exhibitors' show, but we've turned it into a show welcome to both exhibitors and hog farmers," said Hogertvorst.

For more information on this year's show, you can visit the OPC website at www.porkcongress.on.ca.