

THE MODERN PRODUCER

2025 HOG EDITION

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Building at 'The Ranch' with Platte Colony

Network Security - is your farm data protected?

AITC-SK Kids Corner

pH - New Barn Disease?

MYTH-Conceptions of Group Housing

+ More!



A NOTE FROM THE CEO



JEREMY HILDEBRAND

Thanks for taking a few moments to read our latest edition of the Modern Producer. Since it started some 10 years ago, this publication has been committed to providing insight and knowledge to producers. Our original focus was the hog sector and we are pleased to announce a more deliberate expansion of this focus to include poultry and dairy. Beginning in 2025 we will produce an annual edition dedicated to each of these sectors and expand our circulation from two to three editions per year. We could not do this without capable editors, photographers and compelling contributors. In this Hog Edition of the Modern Producer you will find a wide range of topics being discussed by our contributing experts. Each edition seeks to expand on essential knowledge to make your farm more efficient, healthy and profitable. In this edition you will gain perspectives on Group Housing, pH management in your manure storage facilities, CAPEX and ROI planning, new uses of data and analytics for decision making on the farm and product information on assisting newborn piglet health and robustness. On behalf of all of our partner companies at AgriHub, we could not be more pleased to support your farming lifestyle and your investments in agriculture. Enjoy the read. Use the QR code to subscribe, and to provide feedback on ideas for content or on questions and follow-up about what you have read.

- Jeremy

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THE MODERN PRODUCER

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pH & NEW BARN DISEASE

By Tim Kurbis

New Barn Disease, does that term register as something you're familiar with or did that title catch your attention because you haven't heard it before? It's an interesting thing; I've found both responses to be relatively common when talking to pig people. To have everyone start from the same point before we get into a deeper discussion, new barn disease has been a reference I've come across for the 20+ years I've been working with hog barn construction. The term refers to the problems as related by barn staff that tend to manifest with pigs in the weeks following populating a new construction barn. Most of the complaints would center around stiffness and lameness in the animals. The issues tend to affect finisher pigs, gilts and sows alike while not being seen much in younger pigs that are placed on plastic flooring. This has led most who encounter the issue to attribute the problems to the concrete slats the pigs are placed on. Theories (and attempts at mitigation) have ranged widely regarding causes and solutions. The rough edges on new concrete have been a favorite villain and a lot of mitigation efforts for that perceived problem would have focused on applying a topical coating of some form of oil like linseed oil to the surface. Others knew the problem existed but just assumed that time would heal that wound and chose to let nature take its course.

A few years back, while building the sow barn for Goldenview Colony in Salem, SD, I witnessed something that led me to believe new barn disease as an issue is related more to the caustic nature of concrete and can be addressed with minimal effort. I want to make clear up front; I cannot take credit for this idea. The guys at Goldenview Colony deserve full attribution for bringing



this to my attention; I simply wanted to do something to validate the theory. I am sure there are others who also have discovered this, but I want to credit those who educated me.

I remember a time back in school where we performed scientific experiments with the requisite categories such as "theory, hypothesis, research, abstract, results and discussion. I'm not going to go into that great of detail, but let's start with some background. I knew from visual observation that anyone who works with raw concrete has hands that look rough and damaged. I didn't know the pH of concrete, but it was obvious from the guy's hands, that it was a problem. Google tells me now that concrete when still uncured has a pH of 12.5 to 13, which puts it pretty close to the end of the caustic scale. My curiosity led me to wonder, could we measure the surface of cured concrete to determine if there is an effect on the pH of other objects like, perhaps, pigs' feet that are in contact with slats? If it proved possible to measure the caustic nature of the concrete surface, then, could there be a way to neutralize the pH? Goldenview

Colony used a mixture of apple cider vinegar and water for their treatment protocol, so that formed the basis of my experiments.

OLA Precast was kind enough to provide six concrete blocks for testing. Again, with knowledge from the treatment that Goldenview Colony used on their barns, I purchased apple cider vinegar, (ACV) and to create some contrast and additional validation, I also purchased white vinegar. With the addition of a simple pH tester and some distilled water, I was set up. For a baseline, ACV at full concentration has a pH of 2.8 while the white vinegar is 2.1. I started with a test to determine how the pH of the water would be changed by the untreated concrete. I filled my control concrete bowl with distilled water which has a neutral pH of about 7.25. After one minute in the concrete bowl, the pH had risen to 8.9. At the one-hour mark, that same water had a pH of 9.7. As the trial progressed, I kept track of the pH in the same untreated bowl. The water was dumped out between tests to remove the particles that had dissolved into the water to see if washing/rinsing would influence the pH

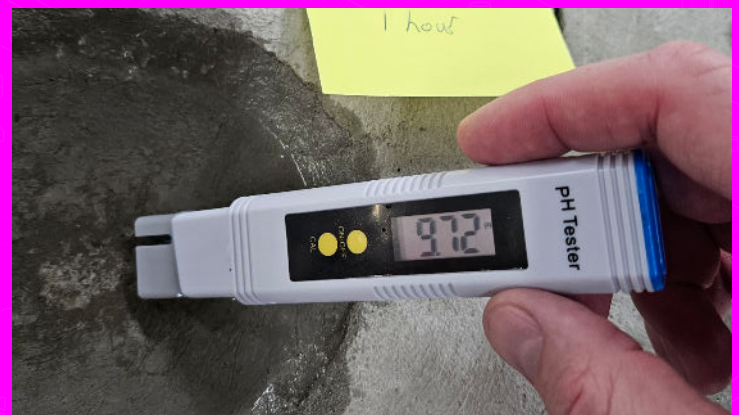
of the untreated concrete. As the trial progressed, I did measure a decrease in the pH of water placed in the control concrete bowl to a pH of 8.4 after water was run through the control bowl 3 times.

I ran 4 different topical treatments to provide some indication of the strength of impact between the different vinegars. For each type of vinegar, I used both a full-strength application and an 50/50 mixture of vinegar, and distilled water. The treatments were sprayed on the designated concrete bowls, allowed to dry and then distilled water was placed in the bowl to measure the pH after treatment. The water sat in the bowl for one hour prior to measurements being taken. Each bowl had been rinsed once with distilled water prior to the treatments to remove the initial residue from the concrete. One day after the first treatment and test, I applied a second treatment of the same mixtures and repeated the procedure for adding water, waiting an hour and tested again. The results are shown in the table below.

Treatment	Prior to Treatment	After First Treatment	After Second Treatment
<i>pH as measured in distilled water that was in concrete bowl for 60 minutes</i>			
Control - no treatment	9.7	9.61	8.41
ACV/water 50/50 mix		8.96	8.13
White vinegar/water 50/50 mix		9.07	7.53
ACV full strength		9.00	6.89
White vinegar full strength		8.26	5.26



Baseline pH - Distilled water in concrete bowl after 1 minute.



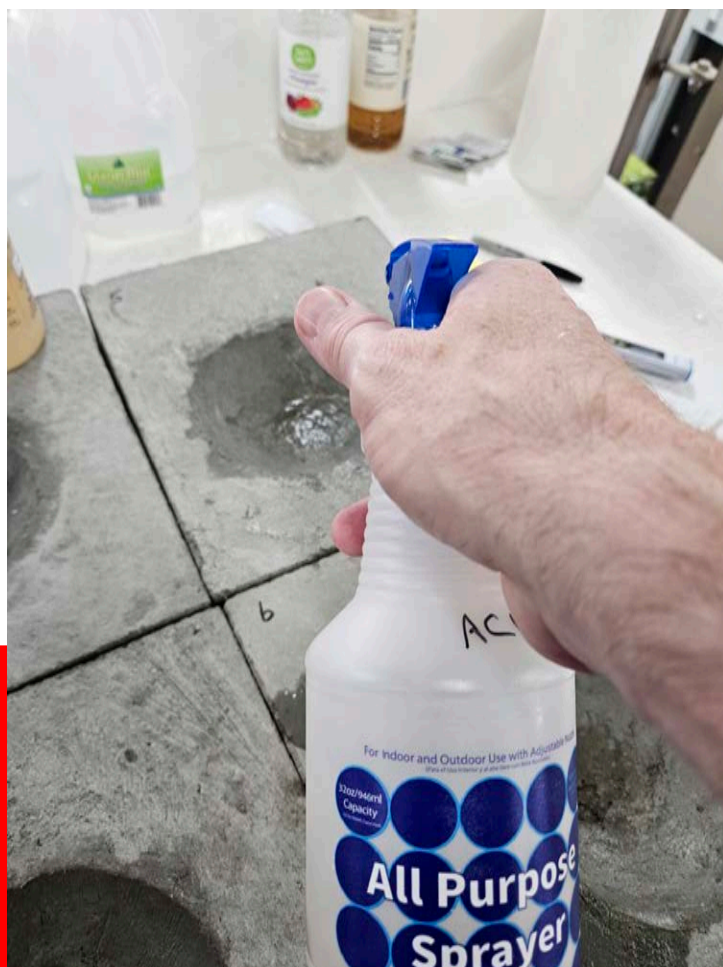
Baseline pH - Distilled water in concrete bowl after 60 minutes.

As can be seen, there was a marked reduction in surface pH that increased with the applications of lower pH treatments. One can deduce from this that there is a strong case to be made that we can lower the surface pH of new slats in a hog barn and reduce the impact on pigs as they are placed in a barn. Further tests with better controls and equipment might reveal a more precise method of treatment but I would conclude that the best approach would use a combination of high pressure washing prior to treatment to remove the loose concrete dust that is sitting on the slat surface and then a single treatment of a full-strength vinegar. This would lower the surface pH enough to start the barn well and then the swine urine (pH of about 5.5) that is going to be treating the slats after populating the barn can neutralize any remaining high pH emissions from the slats.

I'd love to hear your thoughts on this. As this information will be released in different forms, feel free to comment or contact me with your own experience with new slats and how you managed the startup. Having been involved with numerous new barn startups over the years, I can personally share that the amount of leg and foot issues that I witnessed at Goldenview when we brought the sows and gilts in was a small fraction of what I had grown accustomed to in new barn startups.

On a related but somewhat separate note, this testing for slat surface pH has led to the formation of another thought. If slats have an ability to affect the pH of anything that are in contact with them, what is the effect of new concrete on aerobic bacteria in the manure in a deep pit. Could there be a case to be made that monitoring the pH of the manure, especially for the first year might help the pit function better? Stay tuned and watch for further information. I'm always wanting to learn more, so we're going to be running live tests at a new finisher through the first year of production to see what the pH levels are and to see if there are treatments we can do to provide optimum conditions for the bacteria to flourish.

pH measures if water is acidic or a base - it also measures the amount of free hydrogen and hydroxyl ions in water. A measure of less than 7 indicates acidity, more than 14 indicates a base, with 7 being neutral.



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Biogas Benefits in Agriculture



Biogas is a renewable energy source produced from the anaerobic digestion of organic materials such as manure, crop residues, food waste, and other biodegradable materials. This process occurs in a controlled environment where microorganisms break down the organic matter, producing a mixture of methane and carbon dioxide. The resulting biogas can be used for heating, electricity generation, or as a vehicle fuel, providing a versatile energy solution for farms.

Harnessing Manure for Environmental Sustainability

Organic waste, often perceived as a byproduct of farming, holds immense potential when used for biogas production. By utilizing manure, farms can significantly reduce their environmental impact and promote a circular economy. This practice not only helps manage waste effectively but also supports the generation of renewable energy.

Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions.

One of the key environmental advantages of biogas is its ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The anaerobic digestion process involved in biogas production captures methane—a potent greenhouse gas—and converts it into usable energy. By

doing so, farms can prevent methane from being released into the atmosphere, reducing overall emissions.

Effective Waste Management

Biogas provides an effective solution for waste management. Agricultural residues, manure, and food scraps can be utilized in biogas production, reducing landfill accumulation. That helps lower the environmental footprint of waste disposal, turning potential waste into a valuable resource.

Renewable Energy Source

Biogas serves as a renewable energy source that can replace fossil fuels. Using biogas, farms can decrease their reliance on non-renewable energy sources and contribute to a sustainable future. This shift reduces carbon emissions and supports global efforts to combat climate change.

Enhanced Soil Health

The byproduct of biogas production, known as digestate, is rich in nutrients and can be used as a natural fertilizer. Digestate improves soil quality and reduces the need for chemical fertilizers, promoting healthier crops and reducing agricultural runoff. This not only benefits the environment but also translates to cost savings for farmers.



Energy Independence and Security

Generating energy locally through biogas can enhance energy independence and security for farming communities. By producing their energy, farms can reduce dependence on imported fuels and ensure a stable energy supply, even in times of external disruptions.

Odor and Pathogen Reduction

Biogas production through anaerobic digestion helps reduce odors and eliminates pathogens in organic waste. This process leads to cleaner and healthier environments, improving farm workers' and surrounding communities' quality of life.

Biogas presents a multifaceted solution for farms aiming to enhance their environmental sustainability. Farmers can turn waste into a valuable resource by adopting biogas systems, reducing their carbon footprint, and contributing to a more sustainable future. So, investing in biogas promotes economic growth and securing a greener tomorrow for generations to come.



Toolbox Talks:

Carbon Monoxide



Carbon Monoxide is/can be produced whenever carbon-based fuels such as diesel fuel, gasoline, natural gas, heating oil, wood, or other similar products are burned. The danger not only exists in homes with natural-gas powered furnaces, water heaters or stoves, but also in sheds, garages barns or shops where work is being performed with internal combustion engines or being heated with fuel-powered heating systems.

Background

CO enters the body through the lungs during the normal breathing process. It replaces oxygen in the blood and prevents the flow of oxygen to the heart, brain, and other vital organs. When you inhale carbon monoxide, it reduces your body's ability to carry oxygen in your blood. The health effects can be very serious, even resulting in death. It's important to note that carbon monoxide is dangerous at any level. Even low exposure can result in damage to your health.

KEY POINTS

Farms are dedicated to making sure health and safety are a priority. Please feel free to discuss any issues with a supervisor that you feel are affecting your health and safety. Carbon monoxide interferes with the blood's ability to transport oxygen to body organs and can result in death at even very low levels. Because it is colorless and odorless, it is impossible to detect without instruments. Carbon monoxide is often called the silent killer because it gives no clear warning to its victims. Symptoms of CO poisoning are similar to cold, flu, and allergy symptoms. Low levels of CO poisoning can result in headaches, lethargy, weakness, nausea, and muscle aches.

Higher levels can cause paralysis, impaired judgment, coma, and death if left untreated. What can you do to prevent exposure to CO?

- 1) Before starting any farm equipment do a pre-operational inspection to make sure that exhaust fumes will not enter the cab.
- 2) If you notice any farm equipment with damaged exhaust systems, please inform a supervisor and avoid using that equipment until it is safe to do so.
- 3) Do not use gasoline-powered tools in an enclosed or partially enclosed space (this includes under tarpaulins or plastic sheeting). Use alternatives when you need to do work inside, like electric tools or tools with engines that are separate from the tool and can be located outside and away from any air intakes.
- 4) When working with gasoline powered engines outside, make sure the exhaust cannot enter any buildings through windows, doors or air intakes. (Example: When working inside a grain bin using a gasoline-powered grain auger, the exhaust needs to be vented away from the door of the grain bin.)
- 5) If you have symptoms of CO poisoning, immediately turn off equipment and move away from the area. Inform a supervisor and seek medical attention immediately.
- 6) Watch your coworkers for any sign of CO poisoning.
- 7) Report any potentially hazardous situations to a supervisor.






IMPORTANT: NEVER IGNORE SIGNS OF CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING.

About Canadian Agricultural Safety Association

As a national, non-profit organization, CASA promotes farm safety in the agricultural sector. CASA works with partners in government, business, and farming organizations across the country to support initiatives that equip producers, their families and their workers with the information and tools needed to make farms a safe place to live, work and play.

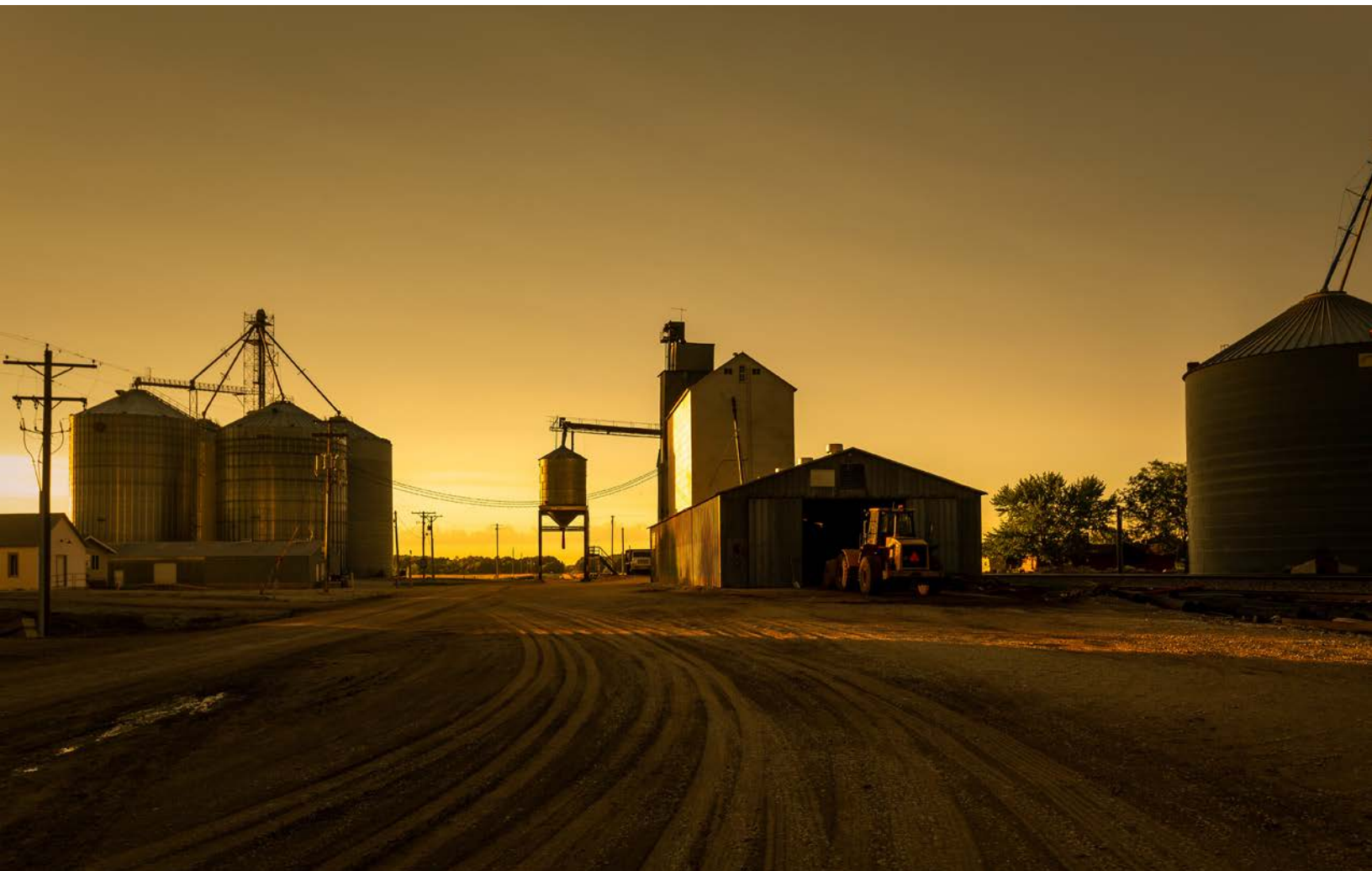
CASA is governed by a seven-person Board of Directors drawn from a membership base that includes individuals, organizations, governments and businesses.

VISIT <https://casa-acsa.ca/> for more information, resources, and toolbox talks.

-  **We believe Safety and Health in Agriculture is a Priority.**
-  **We believe in Respect and Integrity.**
-  **We believe in Sustainability.**
-  **We believe in Collaboration and Consultation.**
-  **We believe in Accountability and Transparency.**



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Contributed Content by ELO CPAs & Associates

How to Analyze the ROI of Capital Expenditures on Your Farm: A Farmer's Guide

Running a farm means making important decisions about big purchases—buying new equipment, upgrading irrigation, or building storage. These large expenses, known as capital expenditures (CAPEX), help grow your farm and improve efficiency. But how do you know if these purchases are worth it? To figure that out, you need to understand Return on Investment (ROI).

ROI helps you measure the benefit (profit or savings) you receive from your investment compared to what you spent. Here is an easy guide to help you assess the ROI of your farm investments.

Step 1: What is ROI and How to Calculate It

The basic formula for ROI is:

$$\text{ROI} = (\text{Investment Cost} / \text{Profit or Savings}) \times 100$$

For example, if you spend \$200,000 on a new irrigation system and it helps you make \$50,000 more each year, your ROI would be:

$$\text{ROI} = (50,000 / 200,000) \times 100 = 25\%$$

This means the irrigation system gives you a 25% return on your investment every year.

Step 2: Look at the Total Cost

It is important to think beyond the initial price tag. For example, are there other expenses, like maintenance, fuel, repairs, and even labor, which can add up over time? If a tractor costs \$150,000 and you spend another \$150,000 on upkeep over the next 10 years, the total cost is \$300,000. This Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) gives you a clearer picture of the cost of the investment.

How to Analyze Capital Expenditure ROI on Your Farm

Step 3: Consider Cost Savings

There are investments that do not increase your profits directly, but they can save you money in other ways. For instance, a grain storage facility can reduce crop losses by preventing spoilage, and precision farming equipment can help you save on fertilizer or water. These cost savings should be part of your ROI calculation.

Example:

Cost of precision farming system: \$100,000

Annual savings: \$20,000

Without increasing your crop yield, these savings provide a 20% yearly ROI.

Step 4: Factor in Tax Benefits

Farm equipment loses value (depreciates) over time, but this depreciation can work in your favor at tax time. Farms can use tax benefits like Section 179 or bonus depreciation to deduct a sizable portion of the cost upfront, which improves the return on your investment.

For example, if you spend \$250,000 on a combine and can deduct \$50,000 in taxes, the actual cost drops to \$200,000, making your investment even more valuable. Producers should only consider this deduction as it makes sense for their operation, just because something is eligible to for a deduction does not mean they should take it. The farm should also consider the amount financed for each item and how long the producer intends to keep the equipment.

Step 5: Think About Other Benefits

Not every benefit shows up in your profits, investments may bring other important advantages. For example, upgrading your irrigation system might help you avoid losing crops in a drought, or buying new equipment might save you time and reduce your workload. These non-monetary benefits are worth considering when deciding on a purchase.

Step 6: Check the Payback Period

In addition to the ROI, it is helpful to know how long it will take for an investment to pay for itself, known as the payback period. If you spend \$80,000 on a grain dryer that saves you \$20,000 a year, it will take four years to recover your investment. The shorter the payback period, the faster you get your money back, which helps with cash flow.

Step 7: Prepare for Uncertainty

Farming can be unpredictable, with changes in weather, crop prices, or costs. That is why it is a smart idea to consider different scenarios when looking at ROI. For example:

What happens if corn prices drop?

What if fuel prices go up?

By running these “what if” situations, you can better prepare for the unexpected and make smarter decisions.

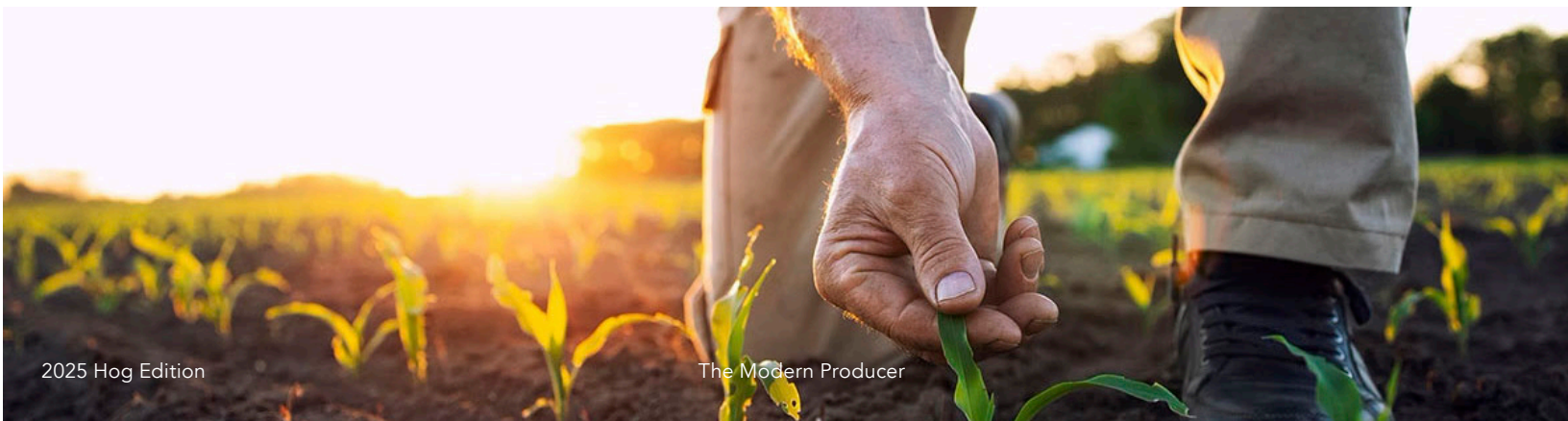
Step 8: Keep Tracking Your ROI

After you have invested, review its performance over time, comparing the results to what you expected and adjusting, if necessary. This ongoing tracking will help you make more informed decisions about future purchases.

Conclusion: Make Smart Investments for Your Farm

Big investments on the farm can feel risky. However, understanding ROI and looking at the total cost, cost savings, and payback period, assisting you in making the best decision for your operation. Accounting for tax benefits and reviewing long-term benefits such as time savings or risk reduction will help you grow your farm while staying financially healthy.

By carefully analyzing the ROI of your capital expenditures, you will ensure your investments are working hard for you and, as such, helping your farm succeed both now and in the future.





Yoghurt: A Piglet Miracle Maker?

With today's sow genetics we get a lot of live born piglets. While average litter numbers are up, the challenge is keeping them alive, especially the small ones that require additional attention. One farm in Denmark is keeping their weakest piglets alive with a unique yoghurt product showing impressive results.

The weakest and smallest piglets in the litter can have a birth weight below 1 kg and the smallest ones under 700 grams, far below a healthy average. However, with quick action and the right dietary support they can become normal well-growing pigs.

"There is a great focus on small and weak piglets out in Danish herds and here we have found the recipe on how we keep them alive," says Karina Mikkelsen, adviser and owner of Farestalds Eliten in Denmark. In addition to her own farm, Mikkelsen is also experienced as a consultant for approximately 80 Danish and international sow herds.

"In my world, the weak new-born piglet deserves a chance as long as it is able to walk. And if you give it a good yoghurt product you can also save the piglet, even if it lies down," she underlines.

Recommends one specific yoghurt-product

The recipe for saving weak piglets involves a quick supply of energy and lots of warmth.

When it comes to providing an energy boost to ensure a stable blood sugar, a very specific product is unsurpassed, says Mikkelsen, based on her experience.

"Some pig producers give the mini-piglets sugar water, cola and other fancy substances, but they only get a quick boost from that. The weak piglet quickly loses the energy again and when it gets cold in the pen, it will die," she says.

Instead, Karina Mikkelsen recommends giving the weak piglets yoghurt in form of the curdled milk product YoghurLac® from R2 Agro.

"It is impressive how YoghurLac® just works. There are other yoghurt products on the market, and this is what works the best."

"I have seen that my customers have used other yoghurt products in vain, and when they switched to YoghurLac® it worked and kept the mini-piglets alive," Mikkelsen added. After seeing success with YoghurLac® she recommends the R2 Agro product to her customers.



Piglets Perk up 20 minutes Post Consumption

Karina Mikkelsen emphasizes her point by sharing a recent experience saving a weak piglet.

"There was a very small and weak piglet after farrowing, and I thought that it might be too optimistic to keep it alive. We tried to mix some yoghurt anyway, even though the customer did not think she had the time. The employees are busy too, but sometimes you just have to slow down," Mikkelsen explains.

"We gave the weak-piglet YoghurLac® and within 20 minutes it went around, and there we looked, because we both thought it was a very optimistic attempt. It also just tells that when the piglet gets a stable blood sugar, and the muscles are provided with energy and it is thoroughly warm, then it can survive. If those factors are not right, it will die."



Typical weakened piglet – before allocation of YoghurLac® from R2 Agro.
Photo: Karina Mikkelsen



Same piglet 20 minutes after allocation of YoghurLac®
Photo: Karina Mikkelsen

Weak born piglets must be offered colostrum from the sow, whenever possible!

Day 0 (Newborn piglets)

- Newborn piglets with birthweight under 700 g: Assign 10-15 ml YoghurLac® solution in 4-6 pump strokes into the back of the mouth using the dosing gun
- Place weak piglets in the covered creep area for up to 2 hours
- Check piglets every 20-30 min and administer 10-15 ml YoghurLac®
- Repeat process until piglets suck milk at the udder or eat YoghurLac® solution from the Pig-LET Starter feeder
- Remaining piglets fed in the warm creep area
- Piglets are offered YoghurLac® solution from the Pig-LET Starter feeder.
- Pig-LET Starter feeder with YoghurLac® should be app. 1/3 full the first afternoon to feed piglets until the next morning.



Day 1-2

- Ensure Pig-LET Starter feeder is cleaned before new supply of YoghurLac®
- YoghurLac® should be fed ad libitum in Pig-LET Starter feeder; increase amount day by day up to one bottle on day 2

From day 3

- YoghurLac® is supplied ad libitum in feed bowls.



For more information on, or to order, Yoghurlac, email webuildfarms@agrihub.ca



Cheesy Bean Skillet



2 servings



25 minutes

INGREDIENTS

8g Parsley

1 cup Monterey Jack Cheese

1/3 cup Parmesan Cheese

1 package (300g) Cherry Tomatoes

1 can White Kidney Beans

1 Tbsp Garlic

2 Tbsp Tomato Paste

1/2 Shallot

1/2 tsp Smoked Paprika

1/2 tsp Oregano

1/2 tsp Chili Powder

DIRECTIONS

1. Turn oven on to 475F.
2. Trim ends, peel, and thinly slice shallot.
3. Wash tomatoes and cut in half.
4. Wash parsley, pick and chop the leaves.
5. Drain and rinse the butter beans in a sieve.
6. Heat 1 Tbsp olive oil in a large oven-proof skillet over medium-high.
7. Once hot, add tomatoes and shallot, cook for 3-4 minutes, stirring often until tender.
8. Add garlic and cook for one minute, until fragrant.
9. Stir in tomato paste and spices, reducing heat to medium.
10. Add butter beans and 3/4 water, stirring to combine. Cook for 4-5 minutes, until slightly reduced.
11. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
12. Sprinkle monterey jack and parmesan cheese over top of beans.
13. Place skillet in oven and bake for 8-10 minutes, until cheese is golden.
14. Carefully remove skillet from oven and let cool for 5 minutes.
15. Garnish with parsley.

contributed by Kristen Mills

As with many things in life, if someone's incorrect information or understanding about group housing of sows is repeated often enough it becomes "true". I have been hearing some of these same things for the last two decades, which is surprising since you would think that eventually the actual truth would prevail. But sadly, since we still have to constantly combat the inaccurate information out there I decided to put together a list of the

that includes a poor design and either wastes space on alleys getting to a pile of small pens or doesn't maximize the floor space for pig usage then this could be true. But the reality is that with over 200,000 sow spaces converted the experience I have is that you would most likely maintain your sow inventory to what it would be with crates. The biggest factor now making this a reality is if the barn is being designed to comply with Prop 12, then it is unlikely

Group Housing *Myth-conceptions*



by Kevin Kurbis

common misconceptions about groups sow housing. I call them Myth-conceptions as they are based on stories that never seem to have an actual reference, just "a friend of a friend who knows a guy once heard" type of references. So, let's separate some reality from all the rest of the noise out there.

The most common one I hear is that "I will have to give up production if I go to group housing." On this one, I will admit there is some truth behind it. If you choose a system

that you will maintain your current inventory. But even in those scenarios we do see an increase in efficiency and production so some of that inventory loss is offset and you are not losing as much as you may think.

Another statement I hear regularly is that the sows fight more in a large dynamic group than they do in a static group. To properly address this one we first need to understand that some fighting will happen when you introduce new sows into a group, the amount of fighting and how that

MYTHS OR FACTS?



In May 2023, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favour of states passing their own laws surrounding the health and welfare of animals. Prop 12 was born in California, prohibiting restrictive confinement of breeding pigs, egg-laying hens (raised in California).



gets resolved can be mitigated but not fully avoided. So, if we are trying to mitigate it we actually want the larger groups as that gives more room for the submissive sows to remove themselves from the area of the dominant sows, as well as building a group mentality that doesn't include challenging every new animal. It is also true that the fighting that occurs during the introduction period happens because of the sows that are establishing a new pecking order and trying to claim their space. So, in a static group the fight happens between the new animals (i.e. all of them) and in a dynamic group it is also limited to the newly introduced animals which makes it completely equal. The weirdest defence I have heard of this statement is that in a static group they only fight for a couple of days each week, which is true but doesn't differentiate it from a dynamic group. The only difference is that you are subjecting the sows to a layout wherein it is more likely that the fights continue due to the smaller space to share. There are also management practices that can be used to cut down on the fighting, as well as designs that ensure the sows that are new and have eaten are in a separate area from the ones trying to access the feeding area.

The amount of training required to get sows operating in a group housing layout is also a subject that gets misrepresented regularly. If someone tells you they have a system to feed sows in groups that requires no training, then they either are selling you on dumping feed on the floor (wasteful and not recommended) or they don't understand what training is. When introducing new animals to any environment and equipment you require some training, as by definition that is "the action of teaching a particular skill or type of behaviour". There's simply no way to throw animals into a group and expect that they know the correct way to behave or how to operate within that space. If you understand what you are wanting the animals to learn and how they should behave then you can design a training area and program around those needs, and after that it is simply making small adjustments to their environment and rewarding good behaviour.

If we look at the ESF options on the market and focus on what the sows need to know, it is simply how to operate some basic gates for access to feed. That is true across the board as the entire reason for an ESF is to provide a protected area for the sow to eat her specific portion, therefore entry and exit to a machine is the basis of the training and the reward is their meal. Sows are very intelligent and will learn amazing things if allowed, physical interaction is not required but some patience will go a long way.

The last myth-conception I will address is that there is a "simple ESF" and complicated ones. As mentioned above, the purpose of all ESF's is the same, so the design can vary but will inevitably include an entrance/exit, an antenna to identify the animal, and a method to dispense feed.

The backout versions of ESF save one gate and the mechanism that goes with that compared to a forward exit ESF, but they both will have an antenna per station and the feed dispensing motor(s). Unfortunately, the part that is often overlooked is that it requires a minimum of three backout units to replace one forward exit, so saving one gate is negated very quickly. To have a system that feeds 45-60 sows on a forward exit ESF requires one station (2 gates, 1 antenna, 1 feed dispenser) and the backout version would have three units (3 gates, 3 antennas, 3 feed dispensers), so you can see that as a system the total wear/break points is much higher on a backout system. There are also several other advantages that can be implemented on the forward exit versions such as weight collection, automated separation, heat detection, lost tag identification, and other management tools that help with the overall operation of the farm.

This list could be much longer and include such things as increased sow mortality, flooring requirements, ability for different genetics to adapt, etc. but I just wanted to highlight some of the higher level things that continue to be discussed as true when in reality the majority of these stories are just playground rumors that have continued to spread. If you want my best advice, make sure you fact check any stories you hear about group housing, it could be that you are just being told another **myth-conception**.



BUILDING AT 'THE RANCH' ON PLATTE COLONY

By Tim Kurbis



FARM SPOTLIGHT

Platte Colony in South Dakota is at the stage in their history where it is time to develop a new place and build the infrastructure and revenue generating business to allow the new place to be self-sufficient. They've purchased what used to be a cattle sale barn with some buildings in place for beef cattle rearing to the south of the home place. This new place is generally referred to as "The Ranch" or "River Hills" and just like Platte Colony, will boast of amazing scenery that comes with living beside Lake Francis Case on the Missouri River.

At the home place, the colony runs a large precast concrete business called OLA Precast. In 2023, New Standard was honored to be asked by Platte to assist in the engineering the ventilation for a finisher barn that could incorporate a total precast design while still managing to provide optimum conditions for weanling pigs. This would allow expansion of revenue at River Hills while showcasing the capabilities of the precast side of the business. We love a good challenge and didn't hesitate to join the planning team.

One of the largest hurdles to overcome with the building design that Platte wanted to use was the need to bring in fresh air through the sidewall without drafting the pigs, especially the very young ones. Sidewall intakes in climates that see temperatures below 20° F (-7° C) typically do not allow for good control of the air or mixing of incoming air when it is too cold as the weight difference between cold incoming air and very warm interior air causes the incoming air to drop no matter what speed it enters. The colder it gets outside or the warmer the air inside, the worse the problem gets. Our solution

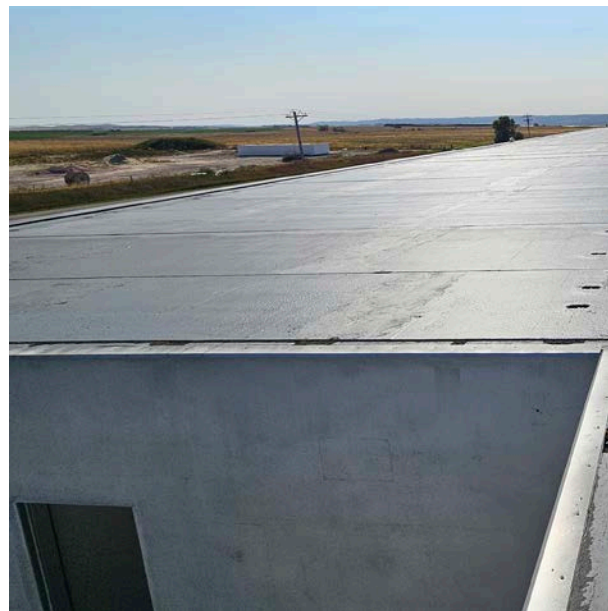


to this challenge was to create a system that doesn't use sidewall intakes until it is warm enough outside that the weight difference between incoming and interior air allows mixing prior to contacting the pigs. The system we developed for the coldest parts of the year uses a forced air, heated intake that will preheat the incoming fresh air at low levels of ventilation and distribute through ductwork. This will provide precise control of the air temperature as well as provide even distribution at low levels of air exchange.

If you've worked with ventilation at any point, you've likely picked up on the fact that we now have an odd combination of pushing air into the barn, (positive pressure) while still having a need for exhaust fans, (negative pressure). In previous times, with older controls, this would be impossible to control as the barn will need to operate at positive pressure under the lowest levels of air exchange while converting to a negative pressure ventilation once we switch to using the sidewall inlets. This is where the Fusion control that we are incorporating will have its own moment to shine. The Fusion control already has programming specifically designed around positive pressure ventilation, and it also has a very powerful suite of process options to allow us to build out a unique ventilation program that is still user friendly.

As is typical for most colony capital expenditures, Platte wanted to create something that is still generating revenue 40-50 years from now. This barn, with a complete concrete structure, stainless steel penning and dedication to installing equipment that is the best available should definitely meet that goal.

PLATTE COLONY



LIFE ON 'THE RANG



CH'

PLATTE COLONY

River Hills aka 'The Ranch' aka Platte Finisher Barn

WEAN TO FINISH: PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

- 2400 head
- 2 rooms of 1200 spaces each
- Designed to double in length
- Future capacity is 4800 head
- Entirely made of precast panels (including hollow core slab roof)



THAT'S A SPEEDY PIG!

- Barn focuses on 'speedy alley' pen design from Colony Custom Metals
- Pen size of 75 pigs

THAT'S THE PITS

- Manure storage pit is 10' deep
- Pit aeration system to pump air into manure, allowing aerobic bacteria to flourish, promoting nitrification of ammonia gas
- Water storage cistern under parking garage



NOT TOO HOT, NOT TOO COLD - JUUUUST RIGHT

- Ventilation engineered by New Standard Ag
- Provides tempered incoming air even on the coldest of winter days
- Keeps the temperature at a comfortable state on the hottest days

IT'S ALL ABOUT CONTROL.

- Entire barn is controlled by the Fusion Controller
- This includes exhaust pit chimneys, intake heater fans, exhaust wall fans - all of which are variable



WOULD YOU PREFER POSITIVE, NEGATIVE, OR TUNNEL?

No need to choose - three ventilation system for cold weather (positive, preheated air injection); moderate weather (moderate weather (negative, sidewall inlets, drive fans); or hot weather (tunnel, with curtain opening and drive fans). Hot water preheats air, as well as provides auxillary heat to rooms.

What's In Your Truck?

Service Van Edition: Ilian Schlak



15 Colored Pens



1092 Lely Parts



Black Coffee



Custom Hard Hat



Fire Extinguisher



Tire Wash/Disinfectant





Change of Clothes



30 Tool Boxes



Gloves, Boot Covers



**Music: Christian, Country
or Russian**



Buckets



Box of Nuts



A Model for Modern Poultry Farming

By Kodi Munro



The Canadian poultry industry is committed to quality, sustainability, and animal welfare. With these strict regulatory standards, Canadian farmers are often faced with the need to renovate their barns to meet industry requirements and market demand. Renovations also allow farm owners to explore new technology and increase the ecological efficiency in their barns. Harhil Farms completed its renovation in the fall of 2024, standing as a benchmark for modern poultry farming by combining innovative equipment with thoughtful design to ensure optimal welfare and productivity, setting a high standard for other farms to follow.

Located just outside Lacombe, Alberta, Harhil Farms underwent a significant renovation, resulting in a state-of-the-art layer barn equipped with the

latest innovations in poultry housing systems. This impressive upgrade, completed by Craig Van Stryland, the owner of Harhil Farms, with Penner Farm Services, in collaboration with Vencomatic has transformed the existing structure into a layer barn showpiece, serving as a model of efficiency and advanced technology in egg production.

A Showcase of Innovation

The project at Harhil Farms is Penner's first Eco Zero barn in Alberta, marking a major milestone in the province. Despite the challenges of renovating an existing barn, expectations were exceeded by housing more birds than originally planned. The project integrated a variety of Vencomatic equipment, making the facility a true showcase of poultry innovation



The Vencomatic Systems

At the core of the Harhil Farms renovation is Vencomatic's Bolegg Gallery, an innovative system designed for barns with low ceilings. This system maximizes the use of vertical space, allowing for more birds per square meter while maintaining easy inspection and access. The Bolegg Gallery is renowned for promoting natural bird behavior, resulting in optimal laying performance.

Key specifications of the Bolegg Gallery installed at Harhil Farms include:

- Two tiers equipped with egg belts for automatic egg collection.
- Manure belt drive and return with platforms on the first level.
- A chain feeding system with 10 circuits and a total length of 540 meters.
- A fully integrated drinking system featuring 8 drink lines, pressure regulators, and stainless steel nipples.

The barn can now house 24,449 birds, a significant increase from its previous capacity, without compromising animal welfare or operational efficiency.



The Eco Zero System

One of the standout features of this renovation is the integration of the Eco Zero system, a highly efficient ventilation system that requires no additional air inlets or outlets. Using a combination of heat exchange and indirect evaporative cooling, the Eco Zero system helps maintain optimal temperatures inside the barn while significantly reducing energy consumption—saving up to 75% on heating costs.

The system also improves overall air quality by lowering ammonia and fine dust emissions, creating a healthier environment for both the birds and farmers. The automatic washing system within the Eco Unit ensures it operates at peak efficiency with minimal maintenance.

Advanced Egg Packing and Handling

The barn is also equipped with the compact and easy to operate Prinzen 70, a system designed for efficient and gentle egg packing on 30-cell trays. With a points-down setting ratio of 99.7%, it ensures the careful handling of eggs.

Alongside the Prinzen 70, the barn features the Ergostack 70, a semi-automatic stacker that maximizes processing capacity by stacking trays up to six high. Paired with the P110 Palletizer, it offers fully automated tray stacking for increased efficiency in egg handling.

Additional equipment includes the Meggsius Egg Grader and Meggsius Detect Leaker Detection Module, which ensures no further contamination from leaking eggs by stopping the egg conveyor for manual removal. This innovation reduces cleaning time and ensures a clean, high-quality product.

A Model for Modern Farming

In addition to climate control and feeding systems, Harhil Farms also features:

- A Hercules Cross Conveyor for manure

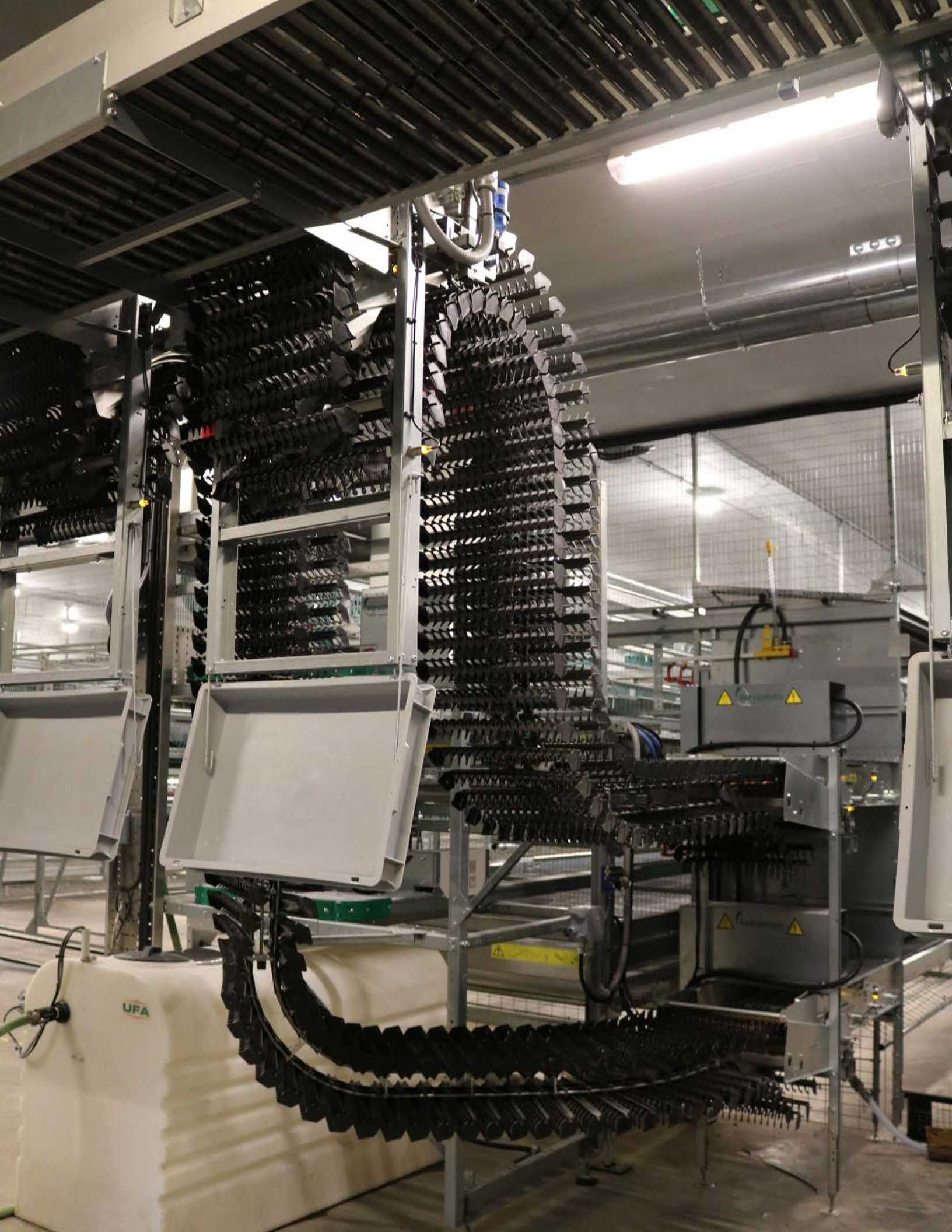
management.

- An advanced Vencobelt Egg Conveyor that seamlessly connects to the Bolegg Gallery.
- High-quality LED lighting systems designed to provide optimal light distribution and minimize bird stress.

When asked about the Harhil Farms project, Toews states “We are proud of this project as we were able to house even more birds than the customer was expecting and fit a lot of new equipment into the existing space. This was our first Eco Zero barn in Alberta, and although it was a learning curve, we overcame the obstacles with the support of Harhil Farms and Vencomatic”.

The Harhil Farms renovation showcases their family’s commitment to reducing their carbon footprint, increasing biosecurity, and most importantly - being mindful of animal welfare, without compromising high quality production that Stryland is known for. This project has garnered attention by being nominated for Vencomatic’s prestigious Golden Egg award, an honor reserved for top-tier barns using their equipment.





HOW SMART IS YOUR BARN?

IS YOUR INTERNET AND HARDWIRING PROTECTING YOU?



INTERNET CONNECTION

- Allows service team to remotely support.
- Enables applications and devices to stay up to date.

Hardware Need:

1. Network Router (handles the main networking functions.)



ISOLATED NETWORK

- A quality network installation to ensure data safely transfers from one device to another.
- The good user interaction with each device relies on a quick connection.
- These networks are typically unsecured.

Hardware Need:

1. Network Switch (communication bridge for connected devices.)

IT Tips:

Separate networks according to function / access (Management, Servers, WiFi, Guest).



QUALITY WIFI

- Allows you to manage your herd from your phone.
- Makes up for a lack of cell service in the barn.

Hardware Need:

1. Wireless Access Points - for wireless communication (WiFi)



FIREWALL PROTECTION

- Have a dedicated computer for large amounts of data being sent to the cloud for insights and KPIs. Keeping the security and firewall intervention to a minimum prevents data from being blocked.
- Keep other internet tasks to devices that can be protected without obstructing daily operations

IT Tips:

1. Only give networks / users access to what they need to complete their job.

Introducing

your barns' new best friend.



FREEDA

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- Freeda Dynamic Group ESF
- Freeda Pig Performance Testing
- Freeda Sorting
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Designed with the sows needs first



The Value of Data

by Brian Debrot

Why subscriptions for software, and data storage, add flexibility to your farm.

In today's digital age, subscription fees have become the norm for accessing and using all sorts of everyday technologies. When it comes to farm data software, there might be more pros than cons to a monthly subscription model versus a one-time payment model.

Subscription models are sold for a variety of products including premium features on agricultural machinery, TV streaming services (ex. Netflix) and even office software (ex. Microsoft 365). While some may be wary of ongoing payments versus a one-time payment, there are compelling reasons why subscription models offer significant value, especially when it comes to software and data storage.

Cost-Effectiveness and Flexibility

Although subscription fees may seem like a recurring cost, they often provide better value than one-time purchases, particularly when considering the total cost of ownership.

Subscriptions can eliminate the need for large upfront investments in software licenses, purchasing and maintaining a server, building a back-up server and program, and let's not forget anti-virus software. Instead, the costs are spread over time, making it easier to manage budgets and maintenance needs.

This financial flexibility is also an important consideration for a farm. Instead of committing to expensive upfront purchases, farmers can opt into data subscription plans that fit today's needs with the ability to scale as the farm grows. Think of it like renting a storage locker that holds those tools you need access to from time to time, but don't have the space on your farm. As you accumulate more tools, you can opt into a larger size storage locker.

Enhanced Security and Data Protection

Security is a top concern in today's digital landscape, and subscription-based services often provide superior protection with constant updates and improvements.

Cloud storage providers like Microsoft Azure and Amazon Web Services invest heavily in security measures such as encryption, multi-factor

Data Subscription Fees

authentication, and regular security audits. These features are critical for protecting farm data and systems from unauthorized access and ensuring compliance with industry regulations.

Subscription models also ensure that users are always protected with the latest security updates. Cyber threats within the agriculture sector have grown in the last few years. News articles describing instances of Ransomware, where hackers take over a farm's control system and lock out the farms ability to control their barn equipment, and demanding payment before releasing control are much more frequent than in years past. Security requirements evolve rapidly, and outdated software can become vulnerable quickly. Within subscription models, security patches and updates are automatically applied, reducing the risk of breaches.

For additional support, many cloud storage subscriptions include features like automated backups and disaster recovery, which is often overlooked when considering the upfront costs of self managing your software and data storage.

Sustainability and Ongoing Development

Subscription fees also support the continuous development and improvement of software and storage services. This steady revenue stream allows subscription providers to invest in research and innovation, ensuring that their offerings remain competitive and relevant.

By subscribing, you're not just paying for access—you're supporting a sustainable model that encourages ongoing improvement in your product and user experience. This results in a better, and more reliable product that evolves to meet your changing needs, and the changes in the Ag industry over time.

As a final thought, paying a subscription fee for software and data storage offers numerous benefits that justify the monthly fee. From continuous access to the latest features and security updates to financial flexibility and enhanced data protection, subscriptions provide ongoing value that far exceeds that of one-time purchases. As our reliance on digital tools, data and data analytics continues to grow, the advantages of subscription models become even more compelling, making them a smart investment for both individuals and businesses.

Hey kids! Let's have some fun and learn about agriculture in Saskatchewan!

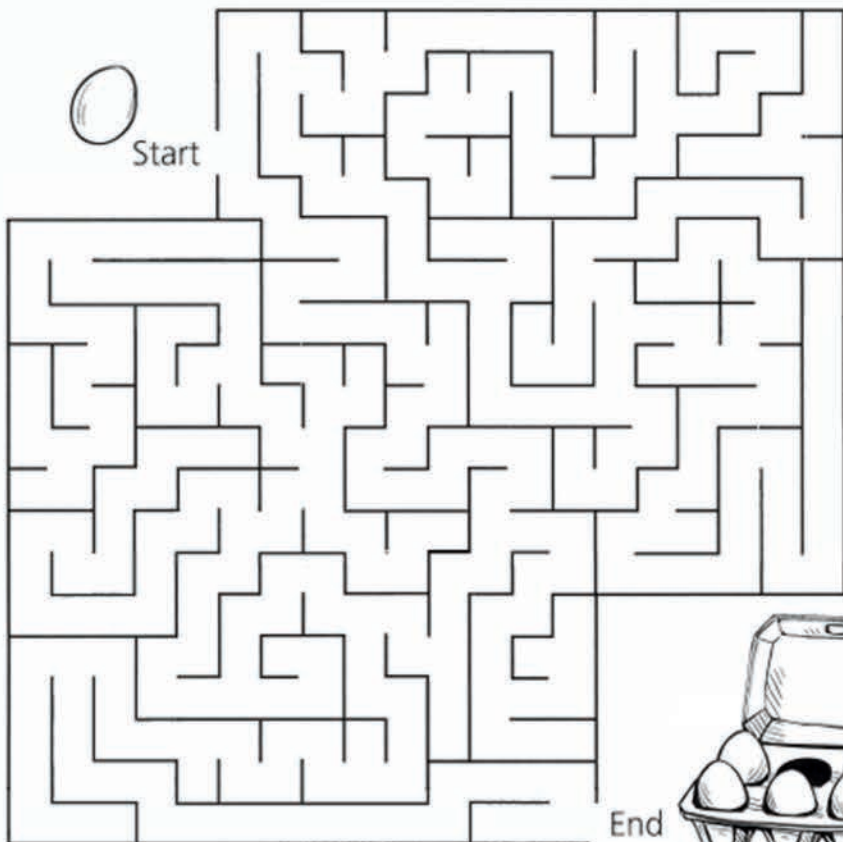


pig



COW

Animal Dot-to-Dot
Connect the dots to find the farm animal!



Egg-Mazing
Find the correct path so the carton of eggs can get to the store!
Answer key on the next page!

Explore Sask AG
Find more activities and agriculture information on AITC-SK's kid-friendly website: ExploreSaskAg.ca

Inspiring the Next Generation Through Agriculture Education



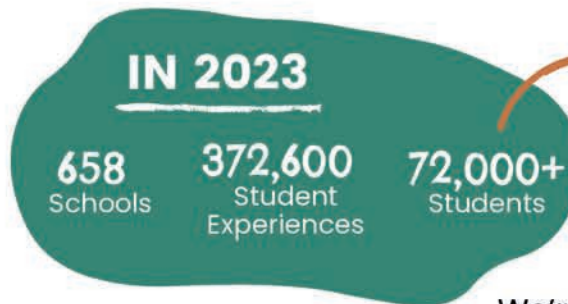
Why Agriculture Education?

Education ignites an interest in agriculture and its impact on our daily lives. By engaging students in agriculture education initiatives, we are:

- inspiring them to know more and care more about our food system,
- building understanding and support for modern farming practices, and
- opening their eyes to careers in an exciting and rewarding industry.

How it Works

AITC-SK provides agriculture learning experiences to K-12 students throughout the province that include classroom activities, field trips, presentations, and more. With each student agriculture learning experience we are building the pathway to agriculture literacy, and a stronger future for our industry.



That's about 1/3 of Saskatchewan students!

We Need Your Help

We're moving the dial on an agriculture literate future, but there is still work to do!



aitc.sk.ca/donate

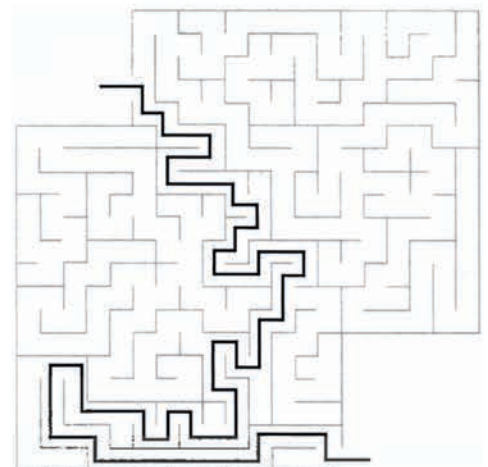
Making a charitable donation to agriculture education is an investment in the future of agriculture and your business. Help us connect students and agriculture, make a donation.



Western Ag Systems proudly supports agriculture education in Saskatchewan!

With the support from organizations like Western Ag Systems, we are able to reach more students and provide more critical learning experiences that bring students closer to agriculture.

Egg-Mazing Answer Key



What are you listening to?

In the digital age of farming, producers are hungry for information. If you find yourself with some free listening time, our team has narrowed down the list with a compilation of ag themed podcasts that highlight important issues in today's agriculture sector. (Podcasts are listed in random order, not based on preference or affiliation.)



The Truth About Ag

The Truth About Ag offers a refreshingly honest look at various issues in Canadian ag. Hosted by Kristjan Hebert and Evan Shout, The Truth About Ag is a “raw, off-the-cut discussion” about the on-going issues in agriculture, with a focus on farm management, productivity, and tech adaptation. The podcast was launched in April of 2024 and has since published over a dozen episodes, averaging two per month and about 50 minutes per episode.

About the hosts: Kristan Hebert is a well-known farmer, speaker and ag entrepreneur who was recently presented with the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal for his contributions to agriculture in Saskatchewan. Hebert is also the Managing Partner of Hebert Grain Ventures, a 30,000-acre grain and oilseed operation in southeast Saskatchewan. Evan Shout is the president and co-founder of Maverick Ag Ltd, a business risk management and consulting firm focused on insurance and data analytics. He also sits as chief financial officer at Hebert Grain Ventures (HGV).

Sector: Agriculture (crops, farm management, livestock, tech, financing, commodities)



Manitoba Pork Chop Talk

Manitoba Pork Chop Talk showcases a key issue in Manitoba's (and beyond) hog sector every two weeks, from some of the voices who work passionately in the sector. The show is produced by Manitoba Pork and hosted by Joey Dearborn, Danielle Dolyniuk and Rhea Teranishi.

Topics on the show range from showcasing local college swine programs, breaking down hog sector economics, and guidance on biosecurity and manure application, to name just a few. The episodes range between 20 and 40 minutes.

One episode that caught our attention is titled How to Build a Barn in Manitoba, published August 7, 2024. In this episode, Peter Mah from Swine Infrastructure Development Corporation and Grant Melnychuk from Manitoba Pork chat with host Danielle Dolyniuk about all that goes into building a new hog barn or operation in the province.

Sector: Hog

Listening to?



By Spencer Myers



The Rural Woman Podcast

The Rural Woman Podcast is a storytelling podcast that shares interviews from women with a passion for agriculture, homesteading and rural life. Katelyn Duban created The Rural Woman Podcast to celebrate the voices of women in agriculture. Duban brings a mix of experiences between living in big cities to homesteading and starting to farm. Her podcast brings to light various topics, struggles, challenges and successes of women in the ag community. Duban strongly believes in the power of stories and her weekly show does a great job at showcasing different issues and perspectives through her interviews.

Sector: *Agriculture, homesteading, women in agriculture*



Impact Farming

Impact Farming is a show dedicated to helping Canadian farmers excel in the business of farming with a goal of introducing people and ideas that will make an impact on farming businesses. Hosted by Tracy Brunet and produced by Farm Marketer, the topics on Impact Farming can vary between Farm Succession to Hackers Targeting Canada's Food Supply with episodes published at least once a week and averaging about 60 minutes. Brunet is the CEO of Farm Marketer, and her experience in both business and farming give her a unique perspective when interviewing hosts on various agribusiness topics.

Sector: *Agriculture, Agribusiness*

RealAg Radio

RealAg Radio is your Monday-to-Friday agricultural news show covering anything interesting that affects the local and global agriculture industries.

Hosted by Shaun Haney, RealAg Radio provides a balanced look at crop production, markets, global trade, machinery innovations, livestock trends, animal welfare, and more. While RealAg Radio is available online through platforms like Spotify and Apple Podcasts, it's also a live broadcast from Monday-Friday at 4:30PM EST, available though Rural Radio Channel 147 on SiriusXM Radio before being published elsewhere. So, if you're curious about ag and are looking for a "to-the-point" show with a traditional radio feel, you're in luck.

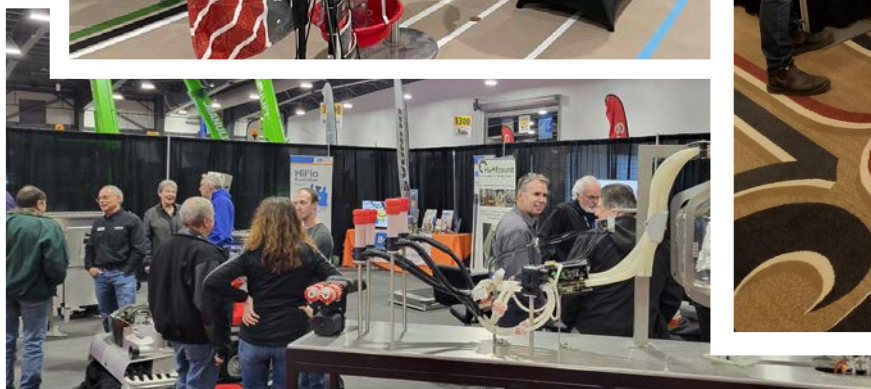
Sector: *General Agriculture*



TRADESHOWS & CONFERENCES

2025 JAN - JUNE

Banff Pork Expo	Jan 7 - 9, 2025	Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel	Banff, AB
Crop Production Show	Jan 14 - 16, 2025	WTC at Prairieland	Saskatoon, SK
South Dakota Pork Congress	Jan 15 - 16, 2025	Ramkota Exhibit Hall	Sioux Falls, SD
Ag Days	Jan 21 - 23, 2025	Keystone Center	Brandon, MB
Iowa Pork Congress	Jan 22 - 23, 2025	Iowa Events Center	Des Moines, IA
Pacific Ag Show	Jan 23 - 25, 2025	Tradex	Abbotsford, BC
Manitoba Swine Seminar	Feb 5 - 6, 2025	Victoria Inn	Winnipeg, MB
National Poultry Show	Feb 5 - 6, 2025	Western Fair District	London, ON
Crop Connect Conference	Feb 12 - 13, 2025	Victoria Inn	Winnipeg, MB
North American Seed Fair	Feb 26 - 28, 2025	Agri-food Hub & Trade Centre	Lethbridge, AB
Western Canadian Dairy Seminar	Mar 4 - 7, 2025	Red Deer Resort & Casino	Red Deer, AB
London Farm Show	Mar 5 - 7, 2025	Agriplex	London, ON
Ottawa Valley Farm Show	Mar 11 - 13, 2025	EY Centre	Ottawa, ON
Canada's Farm Show	Mar 18 - 20, 2025	REAL District	Regina, SK
Canadian Dairy Xpo	Apr 2 - 3, 2025	Stratford Rotary Complex	Stratford, ON
World Pork Expo	June 4 - 5, 2025	Iowa State Fairgrounds	Des Moines, IA



AGRIHUB

Family of Companies



A leading provider of livestock equipment, supplies, and services. Since 1956, livestock producers have relied on Penner Farm Services to provide their entire scope of automated equipment for efficient farm management. Locations: Blumenort, MB, Lacombe, AB, Lethbridge, AB, Thunder Bay, ON



Established in 2005, has a strong following with the Hutterite Brethren community within the prairies. While their focus has largely been Hog, Grain and Poultry, since joining AgriHub they have expanded to serve the Dairy industry as well with Lely Automated solutions. Locations: Swift Current, SK Saskatoon, SK



A prominent name in the Poultry industry, setting standards for Poultry houses, controls, ventilation and more. Established in 1998, they are a well respected and pivotal partner in poultry, grain and dairy. Locations: Abbotsford, BC



Founded in 2006 in Manitoba, Canada, setting the industry standard for group housing within the Hog sector. Since then, they have expanded into poultry, becoming the trusted providers to Hutterite Colonies in both Canada and the United States. Locations: Winnipeg, MB, Sioux Falls, SD, Brandon, MB



An established, family owned, and operated company launched in 1981 to serve Dairy Producers of Eastern Ontario. As a prominent provider of Lely and Boumatic systems, and well-regarded expert in milking, DAS currently is privileged to serve over 250 dairy farms in the Eastern Ontario region. Locations: Brinston, ON



Providing General Contracting services specializing in Agricultural, Commercial, and Multi-Family Housing buildings. Since 1995, Penfor Construction has designed, built and renovated Hog Barns, Dairy Barns, Poultry Barns, Horse Facilities, and Commercial projects.



Since 1996, Horizon Livestock & Poultry Supply has provided quality products and services to the local agricultural industry. Our experienced and knowledgeable staff partner with you to select the best product lines to maximize animal care, operating efficiency, and return on investment. Locations: Steinbach, MB



Data driven, farmer first, technology solutions provider for producers of any size. Whether producers are looking for software to assist in feed planning, or the ability to connect their legacy equipment for insights into their data, Cortex can help.



We Build Farms.

From concept through production, our experienced team of agriculture experts are there for you. We have built a legacy of knowledge and reputation by helping producers run an efficient operation, first by understanding your business and providing you with state-of-the-art system design, durable equipment, reliable service, and supply.

