



How COVID-19 has Impacted our Food Supply Chain and Iowa Pork Producers

The impact COVID-19 is having on Iowa's pig farmers has been unlike anything we have experienced in our lifetimes. The virus spread makes planning for food production, health care and business a challenge everywhere.

Iowa pork producers raise one-third of the pigs in the United States, but that doesn't happen overnight. It takes approximately 10 months from conception for a pig to be ready to go to market. While we are strategic planners, no one knew 10 months ago that today would look like this. This has disrupted the food supply chain and has led to difficult decisions on the farm.

Before the impact of COVID-19, an average workday in Iowa would see 150,000 pigs delivered to pork processing plants in the state. The key engines in those plants are their employees. As employees contracted the virus, their absences significantly reduced processing capacity, and led to some temporary plant closures. The result: an ever-growing bottleneck of pigs at the farm.

Pigs continue to reach market weight on our farms in numbers that are normal in a pre-COVID-19 world. Those numbers were supported by consumer demand here in the U.S. and around the world. With pork processing down by nearly 40 percent, we are in an unprecedented situation where farmers cannot get pigs processed so pork cannot get to grocery stores and to our end customer, you.

Iowa's pig farmers have explored every effort to find innovative solutions to process pork and feed local communities. Despite these efforts to keep pork in the food supply chain, bottlenecks from the overall disruption in the chain continue to grow.

You should know the impact this is having on the life's work of Iowa pig farmers. Rather than raising pigs to put a nutritious, affordable protein on your table, we are weighing limited options, including euthanasia of healthy animals. We are also considering what changes we must make in future pork production. Along with you, we are thinking about a new normal.

Here is our promise – Iowa's pig farmers are resilient and will continue to provide safe, nutritious pork and practice our We Care ethical principles, even as we face these unprecedented challenges.