

TITLE

PORK PRODUCER OUTREACH: COULD WE BE DOING BETTER? RESULTS OF A NORTH AMERICAN SURVEY

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CONTENT

Changes to practices that improve pig welfare are often slow to be implemented, which could, in part, be due to methods of communicating information. To maximize impact of educational materials, we used online surveys to ask producers where they obtained information and veterinarians and research/extension professionals their perceptions on educating producers. Chi-square tests compared frequencies among question options and veterinarians with research/extension professionals. Producers (n=313) selected veterinarians (87%) more than other sources of information ($P<0.05$). National Hog Farmer (65%), other farmers (63%), and industry reps (60%) were similarly selected more often than university research (50%) and extension educators (43%). All other sources were selected more than the Pork Information Gateway (24%). Veterinarians (n=129) were asked about all topics more often than research/extension (n=162) professionals ($P<0.05$). Both reported being asked about health/disease most often (76% selected very/quite often; $P<0.05$), followed by production management (67%), reproduction (54%) regulatory compliance (52%), and nutrition (42%). Behaviour and welfare (34%) topics were asked about at a rate similar to breeding and genetics (36%); both of which were asked about more than building design (29%). Environmental sustainability (19%) and meat quality (11%) were asked about least often. As veterinarians were the biggest source of information, it is important they have broad and current knowledge. Most veterinarians (79%) and research/extension professionals (66%) agreed/strongly agreed they keep up-to-date with the latest literature on swine management practices. However, further research is needed to understand what sources these experts use and topics they devote time to. Topics not emphasized during North American veterinary courses, such as animal behaviour and animal welfare, require self-education by veterinarians. As good welfare is more than good physical health, producer outreach may need a more holistic emphasis to ensure successful changes of production practices that impact pig welfare.