

Just the Facts!

FOOD SAFETY

Liz Wagstrom, DVM, MS, National Pork Board

Pork Producers, including youth producers, supply food to consumers. They are the first link in the Pork Chain.



All producers are responsible for supplying a safe and wholesome product. There are four main areas on a farm where producers can help to assure food safety in the product they sell:

1. Physical Hazards. Physical hazards, such as broken needles, can end up in the food that reaches the consumer's plate. If a consumer bites into a physical hazard while eating pork, it can injure them and also create a distrust of the safety of pork. It is the producer's responsibility to assure that physical hazards do not enter the food chain. Helpful tips to avoid physical hazards:

- Select the correct needle size for pig
- Never straighten and re-use a bent needle
- Never use metal or plastic clips to repair hernias

2. Drug Residues. It is vital that pork producers keep animals that may have unacceptable levels of drug residues out of the food supply. Always observe proper withdrawal times following the treatment of animals. To help observe accurate withdrawal times:

- Identify and track all treated animals
- Maintain medication and treatment records
- Properly account for all medications and medicated-feeds

Extra label use is when a veterinarian prescribes using medications in a way not specified on the label. Extra

label use may require an extended withdrawal period. A veterinarian should determine that withdrawal period.

3. Pathogen reduction. It is important for producers to do everything practically possible to minimize pathogens in pork that could cause foodborne illness in people. These pathogens include both parasites (worms) and bacteria. Rodents, birds, wildlife, and/or domestic animals can introduce many of these pathogens to swine facilities, so take precautions to keep them out of barns. The following practices can reduce pathogens:

- Control rodents
- Remove garbage
- Store feed in rodent-proof containers
- Implement a swine health biosecurity program
- Properly clean, disinfect and dry facilities between-groups of pigs

4. Antibiotic Resistance. Antibiotics are important for treating diseases. Bacteria that cause these diseases can become resistant and cannot be controlled by antibiotics used both in humans and animals. This can affect humans when antibiotics don't work to treat infections from contaminated food. Pork producers need to be responsible when using antibiotics for this reason. Help minimize antibiotic resistance by:

- Establishing a good relationship with your veterinarian
- Getting a veterinarians input before using antibiotics
- Following the guidelines for Judicious Use outline in GPP #4

By carefully using antibiotics, it will be possible for producers to minimize antibiotic resistance. This is beneficial for producers as well as for consumers.

Summary: Many of the steps that producers take to improve pork safety are also beneficial to swine health. Consumers expect the pork they buy to be safe. Providing a safe product is essential to maintaining consumer trust. Producers have the responsibility to follow these steps to minimize food safety hazards.

- follow ownership and registration deadlines
- know and follow show rules