

Search for Excellence in Livestock Production

Project: WVU Extension Establishes a Temporary Alternative Market for Hog Producers in the Covid-19 Pandemic

Background/Rationale:

The US is the world's third-largest producer of pork and hog operations are heavily concentrated in the Midwest and in eastern North Carolina with most commercial swine producers operating in an integrated production system. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic many of the slaughterhouses either temporarily closed or were operating at a decreased capacity by spring of 2020. The fast-growing genetics of modern pigs prevented them from being held at slaughter weight. Producers had new piglets ready to enter their system but no outlet for hogs that needed slaughtered. There was a large supply of hogs ready for slaughter concentrated in the Midwest and no way to process them. Many market ready hogs were being euthanized to make room for the next crop of piglets.

Goals:

- To provide a market outlet for slaughter-ready hogs from the mid-west
- To provide an affordable protein source (high quality pork) to local clientele
- To provide clear and concise information on at-home processing to clients purchasing and processing hogs

Methods:

WVU Extension Agents began examining the economics and logistics of providing a market for these producers. Order buyers and in some cases individual producers were contacted about the availability of hogs. Truckers were lined up. Qualtrics surveys were developed in some areas to assess clientele interest in purchasing slaughter-ready hogs. Within a week, twelve tractor trailer loads of hogs were scheduled for five different regions of WV. In total of 2411 hogs (weighing 678,140 pounds) were purchased by West Virginia families, providing them with an affordable, high quality protein source. Agents created a factsheet on safe home slaughter and provided information on meat cuts and home preservation. Hogs were purchased in 40 of WV's 55 counties.

- Coordinate the booking and delivery of hogs from Midwest farms to West Virginia. Work with local cattlemen's association and clientele to coordinate purchase of market hogs.
- Distribute educational materials on at-home slaughtering for those that choose to slaughter their purchased hogs using their own facilities and equipment rather than utilizing local custom and USDA inspected slaughter facilities.
- Survey participants to evaluate program and gauge impact.

Evaluation:

Participants were sent an online survey to evaluate the utilization of the animals they received, how they were processed, their associated costs, and additional educational or economic needs.

Outcomes/Impacts:

By Region:

- 336 hogs were brought into Mercer County (105,840 lbs. live weight) yielding approximately 74,088 pounds of meat for 99 families from Mercer, Summers, Raleigh, Wyoming, and McDowell Counties.

- In the Mid-Ohio Valley, 554 hogs were requested, representing 278 families. However, 358 hogs were purchased for a total of 115 families. So, 41% of demand was met through this program. It is estimated that the yield of was approximately 59,000 lbs. of pork protein.
- In the Greenbrier Valley, 440 hogs were provided to local citizens, representing over 160 families. It is estimated that the yield of these animals provided approximately 88,000 lbs. of pork protein.
- In the Potomac Highlands, 550 hogs were provided to a total of 231 families. It is estimated that the yield of was approximately 99,000 lbs. of pork protein.
- Central WV, 531 hogs were provided to a total of 331 families. It is estimated that the yield was approximately 95,000lbs of pork protein.

There were multiple days during the month where agents received over 100 phone requests per day to reserve a hog for their family.

142 people responded to the online survey. On the survey:

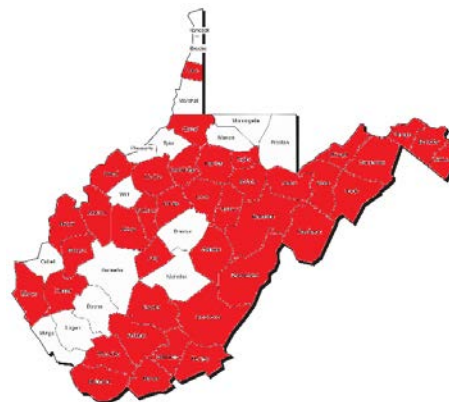
- **56% of participants processed at home** and 64.8% hogs sold were processed at home.
- **44% of participants found a processor** and 35.2% of hogs were processed professionally.
- **60.8% had their hogs further processed (cured, smoked, etc)**
- **Processing Costs ranged from \$0.65/lb and \$35 kill bill to \$0.70/lb. and \$60 kill bill.**

Processors utilized by participants of this program included: Wolfe’s, Troyers, Taylors, Sliders, Richards, K & L Processing, Cook Brothers, Call’s Meat Market, Campbell’s Butcher Shop, Hampshire Meats LLC, Hyde's Meat Packing, Patriot Meat Processing LLC, Pocahontas Proud Meats, Preston High School Animal Processing, R & D Meats, B & L Beef, Cameron High School – Meats Lab, Cook's Packing/Slaughtering & Processing, Countryside Meat Processing, D & K Custom Cutting, and Pendleton County High School Ag. Dept.

Based on survey responses, the following figures show the demand verses orders filled in this program effort.



Map 1: Counties with Live Hog Requests



Map 2: County with Live Hogs Purchased

Fortunately, other requests were met in some of the highlighted counties and those consumers did not respond to the survey. Furthermore, other entities replicated the program through local stockyards and private treaties. In Caldwell, WV, for example, the local stockyard brought in an additional 1,000 hogs for consumers. As was the case throughout the state. Despite WVU Extension’s role diminishing, the program was successful for several weeks with those that took on the sourcing and delivery of these market hogs.

Through this service project, we learned of the need for additional education in the area of curing and smoking meats as well as the economic need to develop educational program targeting the development of additional slaughter facilities.

Although this a short-term service program, it was highly impactful for the producers of these animals and our local clients that received them. Most families were extremely grateful of the opportunity to have such an

affordable source of quality protein and we often receive calls if the opportunity arises again to please call them.
New WVU Extension contacts were made throughout the state.

Role of Agent:

Agents worked with local clientele to reserve hogs being delivered, coordinated with the truck driver and the farm for set up and delivery, recruited volunteers, assisted with unloading of truckloads hogs to ensure the safe and humane handling of animals and the loading and delivery of hogs for multiple clients and groups. Additionally, they distributed educational information on meat handling and processing to clients that indicated they would be processing their own animals. Extension agents also assisted with the survey design, factsheet development, distribution of the survey tool, data collection, data analysis, and program summary.

Supporting Documentation Available:

Client Survey: https://wvu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cGvcxauCUcbxE9

ISU Beef and Pork Buying Guide: <https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/Beef-and-Pork-Whole-Animal-Buying-Guide>

WVU Extension Factsheet ANR-ANSC-20-001: [Chilling a hog carcass down in warmer outdoor temperatures](#)

WVU Extension Factsheet, “We CAN! Meats and Poultry,” <https://extension.wvu.edu/files/d/681713c6-375f-4dd3-b78e-bd3207f5090c/we-can-meat-and-poultry.pdf>

Collaborators:

WVU Extension Agents: Greg Hamons-Pocahontas Co., Brian Wickline-Monroe Co., Josh Peplowski-Greenbrier Co., Evan Wilson-Cabell/Wayne Co., Ben Goff-Putnam/Mason Co., Daisy Bailey-Calhoun/Gilmer Co., Brandy Brabham-Roane Co., John David Johnson-Jackson Co., Mollie Toppe-Wetzel Co. Jodi Richmond-Mercer Co., David Richmond-Raleigh/Summers Co., Alex Smith-Hardy Co., Brad Smith-Grant Co., Stacey Huffman-Mineral Co., Brooke Alt-Pendleton Co., Zona Hutson-Doddridge Co., Monroe County Cattlemen’s Association, R&C Livestock LLC, South Branch Valley Livestock Exchange, and the Greenbrier Valley Marketing Association.