

# Common Audit for a **COMMON GOAL**

## New tool to cut through on-farm auditing maze



In recent years, a patchwork of increasingly complex customer demands and auditing programs have surfaced for pork producers in response to consumers who expect more from their food, but know less about what it takes to get it to their table.

“Industry stakeholders needed a consistent, reliable and verifiable way to assure on-farm animal well-being and preharvest food safety,” said National Pork Board President Dale Norton. “It was important to eliminate duplication and administrative burdens placed on producers.”

At the 2013 National Pork Industry Forum, a producer-directed resolution charged the National Pork Board with exploring a credible, affordable solution to assure on-farm animal well-being. This spawned the Industry Audit Task Force, which included producers, veterinarians, animal scientists, retail and foodservice personnel and packer representatives from Cargill, Farmland/Smithfield, Hatfield, Hormel, JBS, Seaboard, Triumph and Tyson.

The goal was to develop a consensus on consistent on-farm auditing standards using the Pork Quality Assurance® Plus and Transport Quality Assurance® programs as a foundation. The result is the Common Swine Industry Audit, which was announced at the 2014 World Pork Expo. It has been tested on farms and is now ready to be implemented by producers and packers across the country.

“The common audit incorporates scientific evidence, ethics and economics, which must be balanced for the pork industry to remain sustainable,” said Sherrie Webb, the Pork Checkoff’s animal welfare director. “As a third-party audit, it provides assurance of farmers’ and processors’ commitment to animal well-being and preharvest food safety.”

The standardized audit platform is designed to:

- Meet individual company and customer needs.
- Focus on outcome-based criteria that measure the welfare of pigs.
- Provide clarity to pork producers about audit standards and expectations.
- Minimize duplication and prevent over-sampling.
- Ensure greater integrity of the audit process through consistent application.
- Provide an objective, science-based platform to facilitate continuous improvement in animal care.

“The industry has come together on this audit platform with the goal of better serving the needs of farmers, packers, processors, retail and foodservice providers and consumers,” Webb said. “This is not a Pork Checkoff program, but rather an initiative led by producers and packers working together to enhance animal care and pork safety.”

With hands-on participation from the outset, many packers have signed on to use the new Common Swine Industry Audit when conducting third-party audits of their suppliers.

“As packers, we operate between our suppliers – the pork producers – and our customers – those who are selling pork to consumers,” said Chris Hodges, chairman of the Pork Checkoff’s Packer Processor Industry Council and senior vice president of fresh pork at Smithfield/Farmland.

“The public is focused on where its food comes from and how it is raised,” Hodges said. “Meeting our customers’ demands, while still appreciating the challenges producers face is tough. We are very pleased that these new audit tools will be available to the pork industry to demonstrate the progress we continue to make with on-farm animal care.”

# What to Expect on the Farm

The on-farm audit focuses on 27 key aspects of swine care and preharvest food safety through all production phases. It covers a pig's complete life cycle on the farm, including handling and load-out for transportation.

"The audit is designed to be independent of housing designs, operation size or geographic location," said Sherrie Webb, director of animal welfare for the Pork Checkoff.

If asked to complete an audit, it should be conducted by a certified, third-party auditor who is independent of the farm, with no personal, professional or economic relationship. The auditor will schedule an on-site visit with you during normal operating conditions, including when pigs are loaded or unloaded, if possible.

Plan to be asked for biosecurity protocols and animal inventories by production phase and housing type, as well as a site map of facilities. This will allow the auditor to calculate animal sampling needs, plan the audit's flow and follow your site's biosecurity protocols. The auditor will provide a list of records that he/she will want to review, which can be provided via physical or electronic formats.

Someone responsible for the care of the animals will need to be on-site during the audit. Several audit questions, particularly those related to training, may require a brief interview. The site's PQA Plus® advisor may be present during the audit as an observer, but this is not required. Expect the audit to take around two hours for wean-to-finish sites and about four hours for breeding sites.

While on-site, the auditor will observe animals in their production setting. Staff should be available to assist if animals need to be moved for observation. The auditor may need to enter the pens to complete the assessment.

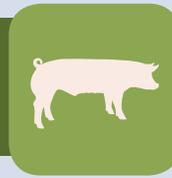
When finished, the auditor will conduct an exit meeting to recap the scope of the audit, explain the findings and allow for clarification and questions. However, the auditor cannot provide guidance during any point of the audit or exit meeting. You should receive a copy of the final report to share with your packer.

"Not only do third-party audits provide transparency, credibility and assurance of compliance, they also can provide useful feedback for continuous improvement," Webb said. ✓

Four primary areas will be reviewed during the audit:



Records



Animals



Facilities



Caretakers



## Components of the Common Audit

**Audit Instructions** – Outlines the audit's scope and objectives, the importance of biosecurity, animal selection for an accurate observation and guidelines for conducting an audit.

**Audit standards** – Details 27 key aspects of swine care and preharvest food safety through all phases of production that will be included in the audit.

**Audit tool** – Contains the specific audit questions and point values that will be used to evaluate compliance with the designated standard.

## For More Information ...

Resources to answer questions and help producers prepare for a Common Swine Industry Audit, including FAQs, fact sheets, record templates and training materials, are available from the Pork Checkoff at [pork.org/commonaudit](http://pork.org/commonaudit).

A detailed look at the Common Swine Industry Audit scoring system and protocols, as well as PAACO's (see story on right) 12 core criteria for certified audits, is available at [animalauditor.org](http://animalauditor.org) under "certified audits."

## PQA Plus® vs. the Common Audit

While Pork Quality Assurance® Plus (PQA Plus®) and the TQA® programs serve as a foundation for the Common Swine Industry Audit, the purposes and outcomes are different. Here's a look:



### PQA site assessment:

- Educational and benchmarking tool.
- Measurement and feedback from a trained PQA Plus advisor on the effectiveness of training and management to ensure pig well-being.

## COMMON SWINE INDUSTRY AUDIT

### Common Swine Industry Audit:

- Objective snapshot by an independent party, with no education component.
- Verification that the pork industry's approved animal well-being standards are being followed.

## Third-Party Certification

Key to consumers and the pork chain embracing the Common Swine Industry Audit is certification by an independent third-party. For animal agriculture, that means the Professional Animal Auditor Certification Organization (PAACO).



"PAACO's mission is to promote the humane treatment of animals through education and certification of animal auditors," said PAACO Chairman Terry Mader, Mader Consulting, Gretna, Neb. "That also involves reviewing and certifying animal audit instruments, assessments and programs."

A panel of animal welfare experts, appointed and overseen by PAACO, evaluated the Common Swine Industry Audit to ensure that it met all 12 of PAACO's criteria for a certifiable audit instrument. All PAACO-certified programs are reviewed annually and must remain current with welfare criteria and standards to maintain certification.

"The Common Swine Industry audit addresses on-farm animal welfare for swine from breeding, birth, rearing to marketing," Mader said. "This new audit, together with the PAACO-certified American Meat Institute meat plant welfare audit now expands the scope of swine welfare validation/auditing from production through to market." ✓

# Open Communication Critical for Audit Success

Another objective of the Common Swine Industry Audit is improving communication between pork producers, packers/processors and consumers. In keeping with that effort, here are a few questions and answers regarding the new audit tools.

**Q:** How will the audit be scored?

**A:** Five audit questions that relate to willful acts of abuse and timely euthanasia are considered critical. If any of these are found to be unacceptable, the site will automatically fail the audit. The remaining audit questions each have assigned point values. If the site meets the standard, it will receive the full points. A site cannot earn partial points for any audit question.

The audit tool will provide a score for each section (animal/benchmarking, caretaker, facility, records, food safety and loading and transport), with an overall score for the site. Section scores will allow for better interpretation of the overall audit score. The underlying data collected by the auditor will be provided with the scores to provide context to the scores.

**Q:** What will be considered a passing score?

**A:** No minimum passing score has been established. Rather, section and overall audit scores for an individual site will be presented and compared with aggregated audit scores from the rest of the industry. Interpretation of the scores must come from packers and customers in the marketplace.

**Q:** What if the audit finds something unacceptable?

**A:** You will be expected to complete a corrective action report to document that you have corrected the issue or that a plan is in place to address it. Corrective actions for designated critical areas must be completed within 10 calendar days of an audit, with other areas having a 30-day timeline. Buyers, such as packers, will be responsible for reviewing audit results and approving corrective action reports to determine if a supplier has resolved an issue and whether a re-audit is needed.

**Q:** Will audit results from one of my production sites apply to my other production sites?

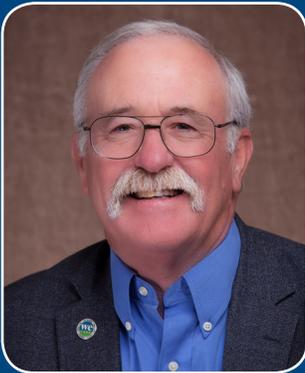
**A:** No. A site is defined by its standard premises identification number (PIN). The Common Audit will apply to only pigs and facilities within the geographic location identified by the PIN.

**Inside:** A **New** tool to cut through on-farm auditing maze.



🌐 [pork.org](http://pork.org) or 📞 the **Pork Checkoff Service Center @ (800) 456-7675**

National Pork Board • P.O. Box 9114 • Des Moines, IA 50306



*"It's the right tool at the right time to ensure U.S. producers provide high-quality pork from well-cared-for pigs."*

National Pork Board President  
Dale Norton, Michigan

## Verifying Our Daily Routines

By National Pork Board President Dale Norton

Day in and day out, pork producers are committed to the care and well-being of our animals. As an industry we have been ahead of the curve, beginning in the late 1990s with the Swine Welfare Assurance Program, which grew and evolved into the Pork Quality Assurance® Plus program in 2007 and then expanded into transportation with the Transport Quality Assurance® program.

However, our industry is dynamic and animal well-being and food safety are fluid and ever-changing issues. To that end, the Pork Checkoff's board of directors traveled to Europe in 2011 to visit with our counterparts who were already facing a range of programs that often required them to accommodate multiple on-farm audits each year. The goal was to prevent a similar patchwork of audits from developing here at home.

Now with producers and packers working together to commit to standards that enhance animal care and pork safety, the pork industry has introduced the Common Swine Industry Audit. The common, third-party audit will provide validation, transparency and credibility, while preventing costly and ineffective redundancies.

We know that our consumers are demanding a higher level of integrity from the pork industry's quality assurance processes and procedures. As a pork producer, I am excited about the common audit platform because it sets a clear vision that meets the needs of domestic and international customers. It's the right tool at the right time to ensure U.S. producers provide high-quality pork from well-cared-for pigs.



This special-topic newsletter is sent periodically to you by the Pork Checkoff.

Editor: Jan Jorgensen [JJorgensen@pork.org](mailto:JJorgensen@pork.org) • Contributing Editor: Marlys Miller • Art Director: Chris Oldt