



Producers Encouraged to Consider Needle-Free Technology

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CANADA - The director of procurement for western Canada with Maple Leaf is encouraging those who supply the company's pork plants with live hogs to consider switching to needle-free administration of medications, writes Bruce Cochrane.

Fuelled by concerns over needle fragments in meat there has been considerable media attention recently on the use of needles in swine production and the effectiveness of safeguards in place to ensure pork is free of needle fragments.

Jason Manness, Maple Leaf's director of procurement for western Canada, says policies related to needle use have been very effective in addressing concerns over needle fragments in pork.

Jason Manness-Maple Leaf Foods

In cooperation and partnership with our provincial pork councils' CQA programs, if a needle does break, we require the producer to immediately mark the hog and then humanely euthanize the animal on farm to ensure the needle fragment does not enter the food chain.

Though we do have safeguards and defense mechanisms in place in Brandon, given the scale of Brandon, the size and the capacity processing over 80 thousand hogs a week we just can't accept any foreign material entering the facility.

The producer will be compensated for any losses associated with humanely euthanizing the pig on farm by Maple Leaf.

Since implementing this policy, Maple Leaf in partnership with our councils a few years ago we've had producers notify both us and the provincial council if a needle fragment does remain and together we have dealt with the issue to ensure the fragment doesn't enter the food chain.

It has been successful.

We continue to work with industry and producers to review needling practices and techniques to ensure no needle fragments enter the food chain.

Manness notes needle-free injection technology is a growing alternative that a significant portion of producers that supply pigs to Maple Leaf's Brandon plant have adopted.

He says Maple Leaf encourages producers to investigate the options within needle-free and move toward the use of this technology.

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