

**PRESENTATION BY SYD BAUMEL, CO-DIRECTOR OF ANIMALWATCH MANITOBA,
TO THE CLEAN ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING FOR THE
HOG INDUSTRY SUSTAINABILITY REVIEW**

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With hyperlinked references and further comments, notes and other material appended

Panel members, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for this opportunity to help make the upcoming CEC review of Manitoba's hog industry a turning point for humane, sustainable and socially responsible agriculture in Manitoba.

Some of the buzzwords and phrases I just used signal the premise of my presentation today: one cannot serve the public good by reviewing a major industry through a selectively narrow filter – in this case, environmental sustainability – that disregards other socially and ethically significant aspects of that industry. One cannot review the gambling industry by looking only at its impact on the hotel industry and disregarding its impact on compulsive gamblers and their families. One cannot review the province of Manitoba's greenhouse gas emissions by looking only at industrial emissions of CO₂ and disregarding agricultural emissions of methane and nitrous oxide. And, as a socially progressive province that believes in socially responsible development – at least I sure hope we do – we cannot review the hog industry without reviewing its impact on many things besides environmental sustainability: on small-scale family farmers, their families and communities; on health issues such as the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria and the pollution of drinking water; on the health, safety and workplace standards of hog industry workers; and, among still other things, on the focus of my submission today: our responsibility to treat the millions of animals used each year by the hog industry with basic human decency and respect.

As we sit here, government statistics indicate that most of the roughly 350,000 breeding sows who are the primary workforce – the working engine – of the Manitoba hog industry are standing, sitting or lying on barren slatted concrete floors behind the bars of metal cages barely bigger than their own bodies. This is where they live for most of the days of their adult lives, 24/7, without so much as a bathroom break. Below them flows a cesspool of their own waste. Its stinging fumes and the barn dust are so toxic to eyes, lungs and other organs that intensive hog barn workers are instructed by health authorities to wear protective masks even for brief barn visits and studies have shown that people who merely live in the *vicinity* of these barns are prone to respiratory, neurologic and other symptoms and disorders. Is it any wonder that these sows – who are stuck permanently in the middle of all this toxic squalor with no protection of any kind – either die on the job or are rushed to slaughter – “spent” - before they have lived more than a small fraction of their natural lifespan?

The cages where most Manitoba sows live are known as gestation and farrowing crates or stalls. They, at least the gestation crates where the sows spend by far most of their days, have been banned – or soon will be banned after they have gradually been phased out – in several industrialized countries, two American states and the entire European Union. Like veal crates and battery cages, they are emblematic of the estrangement of the modern factory farm from nature and from the human instinct to be kind to those weaker than ourselves, including the animals we opt to domesticate for our purposes. This compassionate instinct has probably never been stronger than it is today in our modern Western urban society. Yet, ironically, it is in the industrialized West where these inhumane factory farming

practices have originated and still thrive, out of sight, but, increasingly, not out of mind of awakening, conscientious consumers.

The plight of the sows is only one facet of the humanitarian crisis that is modern industrial hog production. Though much fewer in number, breeding boars also typically live their lives caged in solitary confinement. The piglets born to the sows are permanently taken away within days to be fattened to market weight so rapidly that they are only a few months old by the time they are trucked to the sausage factory. Like their parents, their lives have been lived on slatted concrete floors in huge crowded, polluted barns. They don't live in cages, but they can legally be penned so densely that the amount of space allotted per animal is barely larger than its own body.

It's not just AnimalWatch Manitoba or the Winnipeg Humane Society or the Beyond Factory Farming Coalition that regards the welfare of Manitoba pigs as a serious moral issue, one, therefore, that should naturally fall within the scope of the CEC review.

In September of 2005, over one thousand (1011) urban and rural Manitobans expressed their views on the subject of animal welfare in the hog industry in a survey by Probe Research commissioned by the Winnipeg Humane Society (http://animalwatch.ca/oly/Omnibus%20survey_Fall05.pdf). There were, effectively, four questions in this neutrally worded, scientific survey, all but one of which indicated that either a majority or a plurality of Manitobans support distinctly more humane hog production practices. The exception was a question that suggested that only 29% of Manitobans “would be willing to pay 10% more for pork raised in pens instead of stalls.” This “negative” finding actually suggests there is a significant, yet mostly untapped market in Manitoba for more humanely produced pork. The CEC panel should investigate the advisability of the provincial government facilitating a shift in how pigs are produced in Manitoba to service this market, which also is booming in the United States where most Manitoba pork currently is exported.

Returning to the Probe survey, let me read the first and perhaps most relevant question. (On a technical note, to prevent order bias, the order of the two opinion statements that were read to each survey subject was alternated for each subject.):

Currently in Manitoba adult female pigs called sows spend most of their lives in a metal stall that is 2ft. by 7ft. Which of these two positions is closer to your own personal view:

- a) Some people feel that penning pigs in stalls that are so small that they cannot even turn around is cruel. These people say that methods used in other parts of the world for raising sows where the animals move around together in larger shared pens is a better approach.*
- b) Other people feel that the sow stalls are safer for the animals as they cannot hurt each other. These people also say this system is efficient and helps keep the cost of pork down and consequently using stalls is a better approach.*

I actually think Probe Research's question, if anything, errs on the side of understating the argument for group housing. For instance, it makes no mention of the very important creature comforts of straw flooring instead of barren concrete. And it fails to note that “solitary confinement” is a uniquely modern solution for a modern problem – the chronic confinement of large groups of territorial animals in unnaturally crowded and physically boring and uncomfortable surroundings – that is more than manageable for farmers who house pigs in appropriately-sized groups with sufficient space and sensory stimulation per animal. Nevertheless, nearly twice as many respondents (52%) agreed with the first

opinion – that group housing is preferable to stalls. Just 29% favoured sow stalls.

A month later, in November of 2005, a national Decima Research poll (<http://www.humanefood.ca/docs/Poll2005.pdf>) posed a similar question to over 1000 Canadians:

Some feel confining farm animals to small cages that prevent them from turning around is unacceptable, while others feel confining farm animals to small cages is acceptable. Which point of view is closer to your own?

Over 80% of Canadians said the practice – which obviously applies to how most sows are housed in Manitoba – is “unacceptable.” In Manitoba and Saskatchewan (the data for these two provinces were combined), the percentage was not much lower: 69%.

If a majority of Manitobans find a standard, bedrock practice of the province's intensive hog industry to be objectionable, we have a significant social concern that the CEC panel mustn't overlook in its review of the hog industry.

As a journalist¹ and activist I have learned what few Manitobans know and what many find unbelievable: the livestock industry is entrusted to ensure the welfare of the animals it uses on the honour system. The public's eyes and ears – the government – never inspects even the largest factory farms to ensure that minimal legal standards of farm animal welfare are adhered to. Only if someone complains do the authorities consider investigating. But how often do good samaritans have an opportunity to see what goes on inside these secluded barns? Public oversight continues to be weak or nonexistent throughout the entire life cycle – and death – of pigs and other farm animals in Manitoba, from the farrowing barns to the transport trailers, auctions and holding facilities and to the final hours in the slaughterhouses. Undercover investigations by the *de facto* eyes and ears of society in this realm – animal protection activists – as well as the testimony of industry insiders has time and time again, including in Canada, confirmed that a system that reduces animals to nameless commodities and cuts corners to compete in a cutthroat global marketplace breeds, at best, systemic inhumanity to that commodity and at worst unspeakable brutality.²

AnimalWatch Manitoba urges the CEC in the strongest possible terms to review the farm animal welfare system by means of which we exercise our collective responsibility to protect millions of the weakest and most helpless residents of this province. And we urge the CEC to conduct its review and make its recommendations in consultation with independent experts on farm animal welfare from academia and civil society. We will be happy to recommend such experts to the CEC.

Thank you.

Feb. 2, 2007: What follows are some personal comments on other aspects of the scoping issue not included in my more focussed presentation on behalf of AnimalWatch Manitoba.

Environment. I urge the CEC to look not only at the vital issue of nutrient overloading of Lake Winnipeg and other fresh water bodies but at all environmental impacts. In particular, I'd like to draw the panel's attention to the potentially very significant contribution that an industry which currently produces nearly 9 million pigs a year (with a steady state population of about 3 million) may be making

to global warming. Not only do the industry's pigs all exhale the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide, their manure releases two exponentially more potent greenhouse gases into the atmosphere: methane and nitrous oxide. The transportation of most of these animals to and from different kinds of hog operations and to slaughter plants and the transportation of their feed, their meat and their manure emits a steady flow of carbon emissions into the atmosphere.

Manitoba's current government is a pacesetter in combatting climate change. It should therefore be informed of the extent of the hog industry's contribution to climate change so it may add that information to the balance sheet in evaluating the industry's net contribution or liability to Manitoba.

Health. The health hazards of the kind of industrial hog production we have in Manitoba – intensive, very large scale – are well-recognized worldwide. These scientifically documented concerns extend from such hazards as respiratory and neurological disorders among hog barn workers and people living near intensive hog operations, to ground and surface water contamination of the kind that has led to boil water advisories and beach closures in Manitoba, to repetitive stress syndrome, serious injuries, substance abuse, domestic violence and other adverse effects on workers in modern, high line-speed hog slaughter plants and to the development of antibiotic-resistant strains of bacteria that can infect humans as a result of the routine feeding of antibiotics to intensively housed pigs to prevent infectious disease outbreaks and to promote rapid growth. Medical authorities are concerned. Since the year 2000, at least four national medical bodies in Canada and the United States have issued strong public statements or resolutions. In 2000, the Canadian Public Health Association called upon the provinces to enact legislation to protect the public “from the negative impacts of intensive livestock operations.” In 2001, the American Medical Association passed a resolution calling for a ban or phase-out of the nontherapeutic use of antimicrobials also used in humans by the livestock industry. In 2002, the Canadian Medical Association passed a resolution calling for a national moratorium on industrial hog production, until the many health concerns are adequately investigated and addressed. In 2004, the American Public Health Association passed a similar resolution, but the APHA felt compelled to go beyond health issues. It also cited the serious social and environmental problems associated with intensive hog barns and other concentrated animal feeding operations, or factory farms. In 2006, the European Union extended its limited 1998 ban on the nontherapeutic use of antibiotics in livestock that also are used in human medicine to all antibiotics. The precedent, therefore, has clearly been set for the CEC to include the public health impact of the hog industry in its review.

Rural Sustainability. Manitoba's intensive hog industry represents what has been defended by its proponents as a major asset in developing and sustaining the economy of rural Manitoba (and to some extent our cities). The industry's detractors have for years produced volumes of evidence that it's having exactly the opposite effect. The CEC review should explore this issue and address the larger issue of how the social and economic future of rural Manitoba could best be served beyond the box of the intensive hog industry. I have heard encouraging arguments for the prospects of aggressively developing small-scale organic agriculture in Manitoba - “local production for local consumption” - as well as the potential for tapping into Manitoba's economic advantage as a producer and potential exporter of certain foods (e.g. small red beans – the most antioxidant-rich food, according to the USDA) and fibres (e.g., hemp), raw, or better yet, after local processing and manufacture (e.g., a made-in-Manitoba hemp food, clothing, textiles and paper industry).

Finally, as indicated in my opening statement, I believe the CEC would be doing Manitoba a great service by seizing this opportunity to review not just animal welfare, environmental impact, public health and rural sustainability but all socially, economically, politically and ethically relevant aspects of

this very consequential industry for the people, animals and environment of Manitoba.

NOTES

1. See for example, “Indecent Eggposure: How Eggs are Laid in Canada” (www.aquarianonline.com/Values/eggposure.htm).

2. How do Manitobans obtain an accurate picture of the state of farm animal welfare in the province? The provincial Animal Care Act (<http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/1996/c06996e.php>) is largely irrelevant because it allows any kind of treatment deemed acceptable by the industry to trump any of the Act's Duties of the Owner. An obvious example is sow gestation stalls which flagrantly violate the duty “not [to] confine the animal to an enclosure or area (i) with inadequate space ... or (iv) without providing an opportunity for exercise, so as to significantly impair the animal's health or well-being.”

So where does the industry get its standards of animal welfare? The Canadian Agri-Food Research Council's *Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals* for pigs (<http://www.carc-crac.ca/common/Code%20of%20Practice%20-%20Pigs%20English.pdf>), early weaned pigs (<http://www.carc-crac.ca/common/Code%20of%20Practice%20-%20Pig%20Addendum%20English.pdf>) and livestock transport (<http://www.carc-crac.ca/common/Code%20of%20Practice%20Transport%20-%20Code%204%20English.PDF>). In Manitoba, these Codes are law, although the possibility of enforcing the law occurs only in response to complaints to the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer of Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, of which there are very few.

This state of affairs is echoed throughout Canada and the United States. Farm animals (and other denizens of the so-called “animal use industries”) are a class of sentient creatures whose welfare is protected by society in a manner comparable to the protection afforded by the antebellum South to its plantation slaves, i.e., out of sight, out of mind, and left to the mercies of the “property owners.” But just as abolitionists brought the plight of slaves to America's attention, animal activists have taken up this cause for enslaved farm animals. Their best work is largely in the form of literature, video and other media based on reviews of the veterinary research and livestock industry literature, field work (including undercover investigations) and the testimony of whistleblowing insiders. To a much lesser extent, the media is also a source of original, unauthorized information about farm animal welfare.

In Canada, the Canadian Coalition for Farm Animals is a source of high quality information, such as their fact sheet on sow stalls (<http://humanefood.ca/docs/FactSheets/Sow2004.pdf>) and their 2006 monograph, *Gestation Stalls and the Welfare of Sows in Canada: A Summary of the Scientific Literature* (<http://humanefood.ca/docs/SowReport.pdf>). (For more examples, see <http://humanefood.ca/resources.html>.)

There have been a few exposés in recent years of farm animal welfare offenses in Canada. A story published in *Le Journal de Montréal* on Oct. 12, 2002 described the firing of 13 employees of a Quebec Olymel chicken processing plant, some for drug abuse, some for sadistic acts of cruelty to the animals (English translation appended below³). In 2003, an investigator with Animals' Angels documented on film the disturbing realities – legal and illegal – of farm animal transportation and slaughter in Canada and between Canada and the USA, including pigs (http://humanefood.ca/resources_10.html; www.humanefood.ca/news_20.html; www.humanefood.ca/media/26May05.html). In 2005, an anonymous university student released extremely disturbing video of an undercover investigation of a large intensive egg farm near Guelph (<http://humanefood.ca/eggindustry.html>). Closer to home, Twyla Francois, a co-founder of AnimalWatch Manitoba, now Head of Inspections for Animals' Angels in Canada, documented (in

writing, photographs and video) a high rate of animal welfare offenses when she conducted undercover inspections of two major Manitoba pig collection facilities in 2006. Her findings are detailed in a separate written submission by her to this CEC scoping process.

There have been many more investigations and exposés of the livestock industry in the U.S. than in Canada. Although one could argue that what goes on in the United States doesn't necessarily apply here, the basic model of intensive livestock production, transportation and processing is the same and differs in only a few minor respects (e.g., forced moulting of laying hens has supposedly been discontinued in Canada), as is the governmental attitude of entrusting animal protection to the industry. Because we Canadians have so little objective knowledge of what goes on in our system, we should regard findings from the U.S. as a warning that similar offenses could be going on here. Certainly, Canadian investigations so far have supported that suspicion.

One can gain an overview of American investigations by visiting the websites of the major investigators:

- The Humane Farming Association: www.hfa.org/about/index.html
- PETA: www.goveg.com/undercoverinvestigations.asp
- Compassion Over Killing: www.cok.net/investigations/

There have also been some notable reports and exposés in the media, including the *Washington Post's* landmark “They Die Piece by Piece” (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&node=&contentId=A60798-2001Apr9>).

Finally, in another line of evidence, independent audits of Canadian and American slaughter plants by Temple Grandin, Ph.D., a farm animal welfare scientist highly respected by industry and animal protectionists alike, have demonstrated that animal welfare is lax in federally inspected slaughter plants and improves significantly when independent audits become part of a plant's routine (<http://www.grandin.com/survey/survey.html>).

Grandin's work adds to the evidence that farmed animals are ill-served by the North American regulatory system – including Manitoba's – where animal protection is entrusted to a dysfunctional partnership between the industry that uses them and what appears to be a captured government bureaucracy that identifies more with the industry it regulates than the animals it is tasked with protecting.

3. Story published in *Le Journal de Montréal*, Saturday, October 12, 2002 (English translation courtesy of Kind Translators, www.kindtranslators.com):

Thirteen workers fired for drug use and animal abuse

Fracas at the Saint-Damase Olymel plant

Conditions seems fraught in Olymel's Flamingo plants. Homemade bombs explode in Saint-Simon while fowls are blown up in Saint-Damase.

By Martin Bourassa

Arbitrator Nicolas Cliche of the Labour Court just confirmed the firing of five Saint-Damase workers. All five were involved in preparing and exploding carbon dioxide snow bombs. At least four of these blew up in the plant's yard in June 2000.

But these National Holiday celebrations were cut short. The prank caused injuries to two people, one of

whom will be permanently affected, and necessitated the intervention of firefighters, SQ officers, emergency medical technicians and RCMP explosives technicians.

A clean sweep

This verdict comes just a few days after a great cleanup took place at the Saint-Damase fowl slaughtering plant, where Olymel fired twelve workers and one foreman. Three other employees have been suspended for a period of three to nine months.

Seven of the firings are drug-related. Some employees would come to work under the influence of illicit substances, while others would consume them at work.

“We use knives and mechanical equipment, so imagine the danger if our workers are not in full possession of their faculties,” explains Olymel Flamingo spokesperson. Paul Beauchamp.

Letting off steam and blowing up

The investigation on drug consumption took on a repulsive twist when it was discovered that five night workers were involved in animal abuse.

“They would blow up chickens with a well-placed pressure hose,” recounted an employee. “At other times, they would butcher them by tearing out their head or both legs.”

These actions would take place between the fowls’ arrival at the plant and the inspection.

“It’s the first time that Olymel is faced with such wantonly cruel acts towards animals”, notes Beauchamp. “They are unacceptable and should be punished.”

The United Food and Commercial Workers Union came to the defence of the employees. “This is a deplorable situation, but there are grievances in every case file,” confirms Local president André Sainte-Marie.

SIDEBAR:

Chickens butchered and pumped full of air or water until they burst

Butchered, torn apart, decapitated, pumped full of air or water until they burst – the special treatments reserved for fowls at the Saint-Damase Olymel plant are plain disgusting.

By Martin Bourassa

These “odious” acts committed by five employees fired for cruelty must not go unpunished declares Pierre Barnoti, executive director of Montreal’s SPCA.

“We have begun an investigation of these occurrences, which might lead to criminal charges.”

The SPCA head is outraged by the treatments inflicted to chickens. “The cruelty is so extreme, I’ve never heard anything like it. The slaughtering methods used in the processing industry are already cause for concern, but if maliciously and gratuitously torturing animals is now accepted, that’s revolting.”

The SPCA expects the company’s full support. “Olymel is currently working out the extent of our involvement, but we should be able to proceed rapidly,” declares Barnoti.