

A COMPARISON OF THREE ANIMAL WELFARE ASSESSMENT PROGRAMS ON CANADIAN SWINE FARMS

PROJECT LEADERS

Tina Widowski, University of Guelph and Penny Lawlis, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

PROJECT OBJECTIVE

- To compare three on-farm animal welfare programs as they pertain to Canadian farms:
 - Canada's Animal Care Assessment™ (ACA)
 - USA's Pork Quality Assurance® (PQA) Plus
 - EU's Welfare Quality® Assessment
- To determine inter-observer reliabilities for different measures included in each of the assessments

The data obtained can be used to identify the best measures and to review the training for on-farm animal welfare assessment programs.



FINAL RESULTS

COMPARE THREE ON-FARM ANIMAL WELFARE PROGRAMS

The Welfare Quality® program works on a scoring scale and places farms into one of four categories (excellent, enhanced, good, not classified). PQA Plus® and ACA™ both use a pass or fail system.

Results showed that farms consistently earned “enhanced” level scores for the Welfare Quality® measures, but most of the 20 farms were unable to meet all the requirements for the PQA Plus® or the ACA™. Although producers kept records on many critical animal welfare procedures, they were not able to produce all records required by the ACA™ or the PQA Plus®.

Some Animal-based measures (ABM) can easily and reliably be included in an on-farm animal welfare assessment program. Management-based measures (MBM), previously thought to be a simpler way to measure on-farm welfare, need to be relevant to the producer before being included in an on-farm animal welfare assessment program. Resource-based measures (RBM) can be useful in an assessment also, and should be included when there is not an ABM that is reliable enough to give accurate results.

INTER-OBSERVER RELIABILITY

RBMs and MBMs generally have a higher agreement among observers than most ABMs. When using two different scales to compare two similar ABMs, such as body condition score, the simpler ABM displayed greater reliability. Surprisingly, some measures that should have had a clear yes or no answer showed variability. The wording of questions, the personal standards or the experience of observers may have affected responses.