

Swine Cluster 4 (2023-2028)

Enhancing Pork Belly Quality Across the Value Chain

Activity 18 | Pork Quality

SUMMARY: *Building Better Bellies*

The Project

Cluster 4 – Activity 18: *“Enhancing pork belly quality across the value chain.”*

The Purpose

Historically, pork bellies have taken a back seat to more traditionally desired cuts like rib roast and tenderloin. Ranking these cuts is all about quality, so researchers have spent years developing better means of assessing pork quality. The next stage is classifying primal cuts, the area of the pig initially separated from the carcass during butchering (shoulder, loin, side/belly and leg) into sub-primals such as rib roast, tenderloin and pork belly.

Though bellies have always played a minor role due to their low price, they have since skyrocketed in both demand and value and now stand as one of the most expensive cuts, accounting for up to 20% of the total carcass value.

With consumer demand and market price climbing, science must rise to the occasion and make the most of pork belly potential.

The Process

If real estate is all about location, research is all about data. The more, the better, scientists will gather information on pork belly quality traits and gauge which ones can be passed from parent to offspring. Working with a major genetics company, the project plans to evaluate hundreds of pigs for everything from pedigree and genetics to performance and feed intake.

With the growing prominence of genetics in livestock, researchers will also assess the option of applying genetic selection in choosing traits of greatest interest to industry.

The Payoff

Pork belly has become a valuable player in the Canadian pork sector, and given the appetite for profits in this business, producers and packers need to capitalize on growing demand for quality pork belly.

To support that effort, this project will enable scientists to advise industry partners and genetic companies on which traits to target, and how to achieve a balance between traits that enhance productivity and those that improve pork belly quality.

Finally, given that pork bellies often demand top price in Canada and globally, a critical payoff could be a greater competitive advantage for Canadian producers and a chance to share in the pot of pork belly profits.

The People

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Collaborators:

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