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LESSONS ABOUT PROPOSITION 12 FROM RECENT PORK PRODUCER VISITS

Dr. Elizabeth Cox MS, DVM, Animal Care Program

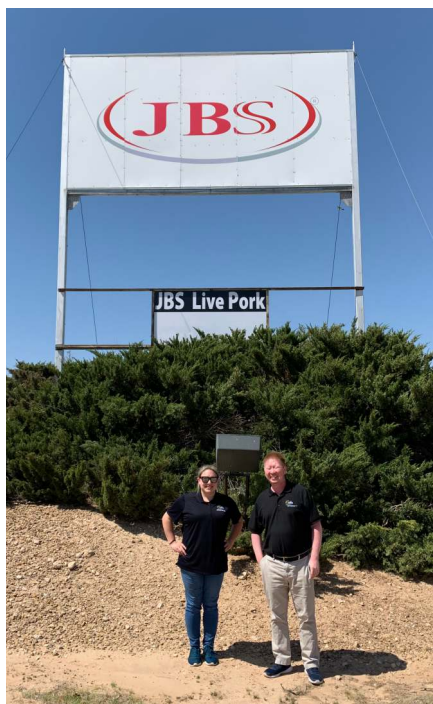
State of California
California Department of Food and Agriculture
1220 N Street, Sacramento, CA 95814





Over the past year I have visited ten sow farms across the U.S., including operations in California, Iowa, Texas, Missouri, Pennsylvania, and Minnesota. These sow farms invited me to visit as an opportunity to have discussions about Proposition 12 standards, and to see the enormous progress they've made in building or upgrading facilities to make Proposition 12-compliant pork. My visits to sow farms have given me great confidence in the pork industry's ability to provide compliant pork meat to California, as well as a real connection to the people in the industry working hard to care for their animals. I witnessed enormous employee pride, satisfaction, and enjoyment working with the sows in a group housing environment.

Some of the sow farms I visited were owned by the processor who would eventually harvest and sell pork meat into California, but the majority were family-owned operations with a commitment from a processor to purchase their Prop 12-compliant hogs. During my sow farm visits, I met with farm managers, veterinarians, employees, and representatives from the processors that ultimately would be purchasing the Prop 12-compliant offspring. The sow farms and associated processors I visited included Clemens Food Group, Hormel, JBS, and Premium Iowa Pork. I also visited a California processing facility owned by Smithfield, the largest pork producer in the country. During that visit, Smithfield employees confirmed that the company is hard at work constructing and upgrading sow farm facilities to serve consumer demand in California for Prop 12-compliant pork. On all of my visits, I followed each farm's biosecurity protocols (for instance, wearing clothing provided by the farm, showering before and after the visit, and sterilizing my glasses).



Animal Care Program team members visit JBS sow farms.

The sow farms and processor facilities that I visited all demonstrated their commitment to production of Prop 12-compliant pork. For example, two of the sow farms I visited were newly designed and constructed after the passage of Prop 12 in 2018. The farmers that made the investments to build these facilities did so because they knew they had an interested buyer—a processor who told the farmers that it would buy Prop 12-compliant hogs at a premium price. Other farms that I visited made fewer investments to upgrade their facilities in response to Proposition 12 because they were already producing various types of “premium” pork products—including “crate-free,” “no antibiotics ever,” “open-pen gestation,” “ractopamine-free” for the European Union market, and others. Like the farms that responded to Prop 12 by constructing new facilities from scratch, these farms with retrofitted facilities were told by a processor that it was interested in purchasing Prop 12-compliant hogs at a premium price. The farmers I met with decided that there was a profit to be made in upgrading their facilities in response to such offers.

ANIMAL CARE PROGRAM

HSC 25990-25994 (ALSO KNOWN AS PROPOSITION 12 INITIATIVE)

JULY 2022: PROPOSITION 12-COMPLIANT PORK



CDFA Animal Care Program team members on their tour of Smithfield processing plant in Vernon, CA. The Smithfield plant practices tracing and segregation of live hogs and pork meat.

Each of the sow farms I visited was dedicated exclusively to making Prop 12-compliant pork. None were “split operations,” raising both compliant and noncompliant sows at the same site. “Pig flow,” or the need to trace and segregate product throughout the supply chain, was the main justification offered by the farmers for not splitting up operations at a single farming site. To market pork as Prop 12-compliant, producers must be able to trace each cut of meat sold in California back to the sow farm. While there are a variety of ways to accomplish the goal of tracking and tracing compliant hogs, all of the producers I visited said it was easiest to have one planned line of compliant pig movement—meaning all the piglets from a specific sow farm go to a specific weaning farm, and then all those pigs go to the same

finishing farm. Ultimately, pork from those compliant pigs can then be sold in California (or in other States to customers willing to pay the higher price for premium pork products).

I also had the chance to visit several weaning and finishing farms as part of my tours. These facilities were devoted exclusively to raising piglets from Prop 12-compliant sows, which eventually become the pork meat sold in California. Pigs are housed in groups during this stage of their life cycle and are generally allowed to eat as much as they want.

Several of the farmers and processors who I visited told me that tracing pigs throughout the pig production cycle is relatively straightforward because farmers and processors have already been tracing product from sow farm to end-product for years in order to market and sell premium pork products (such as “crate-free” pork). Another reason that producers have, for years, traced each pig's movements is that farmers are generally paid and rewarded based on the performance of the hogs that began life as piglets in their breeding facilities.

Many of my visits also included a tour hosted by the processor at the slaughtering facility where Prop 12-compliant hogs were (or would be) processed. Unlike the sow farms I visited, these facilities were designed to process both premium pork products (including Prop 12-compliant pork) and conventional pork products within the same facility. That means that tracing and segregation protocols are especially important, ensuring that noncompliant hogs/products are not intermingled with Prop 12-compliant or premium hogs/products.

My tours of these facilities allowed me to see how segregation and traceability occurs in practice. All of the plants I visited were already practicing tracing and segregation for their existing premium pork product lines. The employees I spoke to at these plants told me that they would follow the same steps to segregate and trace Prop 12-compliant pork meat bound for California.

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Examples of steps taken by processors to segregate and track hogs and pork meat included:

- Scheduling and delivery of premium program hogs (such as Prop 12-compliant hogs or “crate-free” hogs or “no antibiotics ever” hogs) on certain days of the week. For example, “no antibiotics ever” hogs might be delivered on Mondays and Wednesdays and processed during the first shift of the day.
- Labeling the holding pens of hogs waiting to be slaughtered with pen cards indicating their source farm and if they were part of a premium product line.
- Applying tattoos to all hogs slaughtered as a means of permanent identification and leaving the tattoos on the remains of the carcass after slaughter. The multiple-digit tattoo corresponds to a coding system allowing the slaughter plant to easily determine when a carcass was slaughtered, what sow farm it was sourced from, and if the carcass is part of a premium program (such as “crate-free” or “Prop 12-compliant”).
- Performing the killing and dressing of the hogs for a premium program at the beginning of a shift, ensuring a clear break in the line of carcasses when switching to a different type of hog.
- Putting a tag or other kind of indicator on the foot of the first and last hog in a group that was part of a premium program, providing yet-another means of ensuring that no noncompliant hogs are mixed into a premium hog processing group.
- Checking the multiple-digit tattoos at several points throughout the dressing process.
- Performing fabrication (cutting up) of premium pork carcasses into specific cuts during the first shift in the morning on specific days of the week.
- Scheduling an employee break after processing of a line of premium hogs was complete, making it obvious that fabrication would be switching to a different group of hogs.
- Using facility-specific product codes and SKU's, along with easily-read labels, to keep track of all the pork meat after it was divided into various cuts.

Based on what I saw during my visits, and what farmers and other industry staff told me about their capacity to produce Prop 12-compliant pork, I have a great deal of confidence that farmers and processors will be able to segregate Prop 12-compliant hogs and trace the corresponding pork meat to ensure Californians are able to enjoy compliant pork products.

