

Effective Public Participation Methods for Siting Intensive Hog Operations in Alberta

Jody Mackenzie and Naomi Krogman

Dept. Rural Economy, University of Alberta, 515 General Services Building, Edmonton AB T6G 2H1
Email: jmackenz@ualberta.ca or naomi.krogman@ualberta.ca

The hog industry in Alberta is faced with the sociological challenge of understanding how to address and reduce community conflict over hog operations. The purpose of this project is to examine public participation in the current decision-making processes in rural Alberta.

Four agricultural communities were chosen that were similar in type and size of hog operations, but varied in the decision-making process and the outcome of the process. Participants were selected based on their level of involvement, position, and knowledge about the issues. Over a period of five months, 44 people were interviewed and were asked to identify problems and successes they experienced with public participation processes and solutions to improve the process.

These interviews will be analysed to identify common themes and patterns of how public involvement initiatives can reduce unnecessary community conflict, foster informed choices and make the decision-making process more effective for all interested parties. By identifying similarities and differences among stakeholders from communities with varying siting outcomes, we will better understand the specific arrangements found within each community associated with siting conflicts. Our findings will provide recommendations for public participation processes and permit reviews, for similar communities faced with land-use and siting decisions.

Implications: This study can provide hog producers, municipalities, and the provincial government with specific suggestions as to the most effective methods of public participation that are perceived by all interested parties as fair, informative and effective. The results of this information aim to avoid expensive delays, escalation of municipal and legal conflict, and to increase community democratic decision-making.

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