

Responding to Consumer Concerns about Pork Safety - Group Discussions

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Participants were asked to discuss two highly publicized events, the BSE crisis in Europe and the Walkerton water issue. Groups identified: questions they would want answered, what they would ask for and what actions they would want taken, if they were either a member of the public or a regulator in either of those situations.

All of these questions and concerns are transferrable to consumer issues with the pork industry. If the industry wants to gain public confidence, the issues below would need to be addressed even before a crisis situation occurs. For example, consumers are often concerned about levels of hormones and antibiotics in meat and the presence of salmonella. How can the industry be pro-active about providing answers and actions to ease the concerns?

What actions do consumers want?

- ▶ Demand answers from authorities
- ▶ Track live animal movement
- ▶ Be honest, even if it means looking bad in the short term
- ▶ Involve consumers in resolution process
- ▶ Bring in impartial third parties to look at all the facts
- ▶ Set up a communications plan that provides open, consistent and clear messages
- ▶ Address rumors and hysteria
- ▶ Provide complete list of all products that could possibly be affected - let consumer make the choice about what to purchase
- ▶ Destroy source animals - zero tolerance for infectious animals (BSE)
- ▶ Testing throughout the producer - processor chain to further clarify situation and ease concerns

What would consumers ask for?

- Industry (not just Government) to take a pro-active approach
- Charge those who violate trust and don't follow the rules. We all lose from "bad apples".
- Provide traceability
- Aggressive, pro-active testing
- Transparency and honesty
- Have in place an aggressive recall plan
- Use knowledge from other countries to deal with issues
- Changes to the system that caused problems in the first place
- Compensation where there has been damage

Questions consumers want answered

- What is the cause of the problem and who is responsible?
- Who and what geographic area is affected?
- What are the costs to the public and who is liable?
- How does this affect the food chain?
- How is the animal agriculture community going to react?
- What are the REAL facts?
- How do we prevent this from happening again?
- What has happened in similar situations (cause and outcome)?
- Am I in danger?
- Can I trust the authorities?
- What products can I or can't I use?
- Can I use product I purchased last week?
- How is the CFIA handling this?