

# Water Sustainability Issues for Pork Production

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## ■ Introduction

Alberta, like many provinces, is facing a number of pressures on its water resources. The limit of available water has been reached or is being approached in a number of river basins. Without changes in how water is used, the capacity to expand Alberta's economy, provide for its citizens and sustain healthy ecosystems could be limited.

In response to such pressures on water resource management, the Government of Alberta, in partnership with the public, developed *Water for Life: Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability*. The strategy defines a new collaborative approach to the wise management of Alberta's water quantity and quality now and in the future. It presents actions over a ten-year period to achieve three goals: safe, secure drinking water supply; healthy aquatic ecosystems; and reliable, quality water supplies for a sustainable economy.

## ■ How can the livestock sector further *Water for Life*?

### Partner

*Water for Life* is based on communities, industries and government all sharing responsibility for the wise use and sustainability of Alberta's watersheds. It provides opportunities for all Albertans (including livestock producers) to work in partnership to protect and manage watersheds – at the local, regional and provincial scale. Such involvement is critical to making effective place-based decisions concerning water management.

## **Conserve**

With increased demand for water resources, the Water Strategy challenges all Albertans to achieve a provincial target of a 30 per cent improvement in efficiency and productivity by 2015 from a 2005 baseline. In order to achieve conservation targets, each sector, including the livestock sector, must develop best management plans to improve water use efficiency.

## **Improve Management**

Best management practices are necessary to improve water quality from livestock operations. The intent of guidelines like those for manure management regarding water is to ensure that the interests of all water users are protected and that future development opportunities are not limited. Manure, in or on the ground, poses a potential risk to groundwater and to surface water through runoff. Not all manure storage operations present the same degree of risk due to differing geology, soil type, manure volumes, aquifer vulnerability, etc. New technologies are available to improve waste management and water quality (and to reduce energy use). Improved management of these wastes, and of such risk to water users, is necessary in the context of local and watershed management.

## **■ Reference**

*Water for Life: Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability*, Alberta Environment, Edmonton, AB, November 2003, [www.waterforlife.gov.ab.ca](http://www.waterforlife.gov.ab.ca)