

CLT & TQA Working Together

Bill Mullen

Western Hog Exchange, 10319 Princess Elizabeth Ave, Edmonton, AB T5G 0Y5
Email: bill.mullen@westernhogexchange.com.

■ Introduction

Animal care and welfare are priorities of the pork industry. This is equally important when animals leave the farm for transport to market.

The transportation of pigs in Canada and the United States is similar. The Certified Livestock Transporter (CLT) program in Canada and the Trucker Quality Assurance (TQA) in the United States share a common goal:

- To educate individuals who handle pigs about the importance of proper handling in the loading, transportation and unloading of the pig with attention to animal care.

TQA was introduced by the National (USA) Pork Board in 2002. This program is offered to anyone delivering pigs to federally inspected packers in the USA. TQA addresses loading, transportation, unloading of pigs and how this affects animal welfare, biosecurity and pork quality.

TQA found that more than truckers were interested in participating. Producers, assembly yard loading crews, unloading crews and packers all benefit from their participation. The program helps certified handlers to understand the role they play in the pork production chain.

With the cooperation of the National Pork Board, provincial pork organizations and others in Canada have been delivering TQA to its trucking partners and producer members since 2002.

The CLT program received permission from the US National Pork Board to use their Trucker Quality Assurance training course as the basis for the CLT hog module. It was created under the guidance of Canadian transporters, researchers, federal and provincial government personnel, hog producers,

veterinarians and industry representatives and was launched in May, 2007. CLT instructors who have been certified as a TQA instructor may deliver both programs so that both exams can be written at the same session. Participants write the TQA test which is then forwarded to the National Pork Board; the CLT test certification test is written and forwarded to Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC).

In the United States, the TQA program is recognized as proof of competency by the USDA. In Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has indicated certification that will also be recognized.

■ **Comparing CLT and TQA**

Both CLT and the TQA programs deal with the following:

Drivers

The driver's attitude must be positive when handling and transporting animals. Tone of voice, body language, and handling practices affect the condition of livestock during loading and unloading. It is crucial for truckers and handlers to understand pig behavior and physiology in order to transport and handle them effectively.

Handling

Understanding the pig's natural instincts aids the loader when it comes to proper handling techniques. When a handler takes advantage of the animal's natural movement the animal is less stressed which improves both handler safety and animal care. The animal loads more quickly and arrives at the processor with less bruising and skin injuries, resulting in fewer losses.

Fitness of the Animal

Identifying compromised animals before they are loaded is a skill that the loader and driver must have. Recognizing signs of stress and reading the body language of the animal helps the loader/driver determine whether or not to load the animal. In Canada, with the aid of provincial animal care organizations such as AFAC and provincial pork organizations like Alberta Pork, the "Humane Handling of Swine" guidelines have been published. This manual aids in determining what is acceptable for transport. Transporters have the responsibility not to ship any animal that shows symptoms of illness, has a severe injury or is extremely fatigued.

Facilities & Equipment

Properly designed and maintained loading facilities are as important as any other part of the production system. Improperly designed chutes and ramps cause problems during loading and unloading. Design of the system should promote a pig's natural following behavior.

Loaders should use driving aids that help move animals in a safe, humane and timely manner. Sorting boards, plastic paddles and a witch's cape are tools that are effective and humane. The use of electric prods is extremely stressful to the animal and must be avoided. Use only when the safety of the loader may be compromised and only at a minimum.

Weather and Trucking

Trucking in Canada produces weather extremes; from plus 30° Celsius to minus 30° Celsius, transporters must be prepared. Drivers need to know how different weather conditions will affect the pigs in their care. Best management techniques including, checklist of extreme weather measures and loading densities are covered in TQA & CLT.

Winter weather can mean high wind chills and freezing temperatures. Pigs that cannot seek protection in bedding from the wind and low temperatures are susceptible to frostbite. Pigs have little natural protection from the cold and suffer frostbite quickly. Ventilation must be adjusted accordingly. Too much cold air can cause frostbite but insufficient airflow in the box may result in suffocation. Line the sides and floors of metal vehicle boxes with wooden liners and provide plenty of bedding. If the temperature is below 10°C use plenty of straw because it is a good insulator. Small amounts of shavings or sand on the bed of the vehicle improves footing.

Summer means loading to keep the pigs cool. Trucker's or handlers must make every effort to keep their pigs cool and calm in hot weather; follow recommended loading densities, maximize airflow to all compartments and wet down bedding materials with cool water. When possible, schedule deliveries early in the morning or in the evening, and avoid the heat of the day.

Stocking density is directly affected by the environment. Weather conditions and the size of the animals determine the number of pigs to be loaded. Space allowance should be such that pigs can lie down and stand up in their natural position.

■ **Laws & Regulations**

CLT and TQA address the laws and how they are applied in their respective countries.

Canada:

The federal laws and regulations governing livestock handling and transportation in Canada are:

- Health of Animals Regulations
 - Part XII Transportation
 - Part XV Animal Identification
 - CFIA Animal Welfare / Transportation of Animal
- Meat Inspection Regulations
 - Part III Examination, Inspection, Humane Treatment and Slaughter, Packaging and Labels
- Food and Drug Regulations
- Criminal Code of Canada, Cruelty to Animals Bill C-50

United States:

The federal laws and regulations governing livestock handling and transportation in the United States are:

- Humane Slaughter of Livestock Act
 - USDA & FSIS regulations in 9 CFR 313(7)
- TITLE 9 Code Federal Regulations-USDA & FSIS regulations in 9 CFR 313(7)CHAPTER 19/SUBCHAPTER A: ANIMAL WELFARE

■ **Emergency Response Plans**

CLT provides truckers with a toll free line (1-800-506-2273) to report on concerns and seek advice if needed. As part of this CLT Information Exchange service, truckers will be notified of any regulatory changes, updates, security issues and other professional development workshops.

Loaded commercial livestock trailers are at greater risk of being involved in a rollover situation than standard freight trailers. Studies indicate that the point of no return for a loaded double-decked livestock trailer is as little as 5° level. TQA gives a suggested plan of action in the case of a truck/trailer rollover. The adapted plan was originally developed by the Manitoba Pig Welfare group (www.manitobapork.com/animal). CLT covers emergency procedures as well as suggestions on incident response in its core manual.

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In 2006, almost six million Canadian feeder pigs were transported to the United States, most hauled by Canadian truckers. Total live hog exports in 2007 are on a pace to break the 2006 record of 8.76 million head exported. It makes sense that those who are involved with the transportation of pigs have access to programs on both sides of the border. Processors in both countries benefit because their customers, both domestic and foreign, will know that the animal was transported with the utmost animal welfare, biosecurity and pork quality in mind.

■ Websites for Information

www.westernhogexchange.com

www.tqa.porkboard.org

www.livestocktransport.ca

www.afac.ab.ca

www.inspection.gc.ca

www.manitobapork.com/animal