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## Potential Changes for 2020 Swine Exhibits at County Fairs and Exhibitions

### Several commercial pork processors will stop purchasing pigs fed ractopamine

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#### Recent announcements from commercial pork processors

Several commercial pork processing plants have announced they will no longer purchase pigs that have been fed ractopamine. The restrictions placed on pork products destined for export markets drove this decision. With export pork sales reflecting over 25% of the markets, commercial processors need to reduce the risk of distributing a product that does not meet export market guidelines. Eliminating the use of ractopamine products in swine diets for the pigs that are sent to their plants will reduce that risk.

#### What is ractopamine?

- Ractopamine is commonly used in production swine diets to promote lean muscle growth. It mimics the effects of adrenalin.
- It is marketed under brand names such as Paylean, Explode, XXL, Lean Maximer and others.
- This feed additive has been approved for use in swine diets in the United States for several years, with domestic markets setting tolerance levels for ractopamine.
- Ractopamine is a beta-agonist agent.
- A number of export markets have a zero tolerance level for ractopamine in their pork products.
- Ractopamine can be detected by sampling animal tissues, urine or blood.
- Youth exhibitors must be aware of the ingredients in the feed that they purchase for their projects. Reading the feed ingredient label and having conversations with their breeder and feed supplier will help identify any feed additives that may not be allowed.
- According to the label, ractopamine can be fed throughout the lifecycle of the pig; however, it is typically fed a few weeks prior to slaughter.
- Ractopamine may be mixed in feed or top-dressed as a feed additive.

#### Potential impacts on fairs and exhibitions

These recent announcements will have an impact on county fairs and exhibitions that utilize resale markets as a service to their livestock auction buyers. Commercial processors may not accept animals that originate from sources with unknown ractopamine status. Fairs and exhibitions will need to consider various requirements and marketing options to continue their market swine show. Some buyers and commercial processors may elect to eliminate the purchase of exhibition pigs entirely even if a fair or exhibition adopts policies that remove the option of using ractopamine as a feed additive. If a fair or exhibition utilizes a commercial market as a

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destination for their pigs, it is important that they have a conversation regarding requirements and availability with the market that they work with.

### Considerations for fairs, exhibitions and youth exhibitors

- Fairs and exhibitions that utilize a resale option for their auction animal should contact the buyer that they traditionally work with to see if any restrictions have been announced.
- If their traditional market has been affected, fairs and exhibitions need to evaluate their option of developing local markets for their pigs or working to source different buyers that could provide access to commercial markets.
- Fairs and exhibitions may want to look at prioritizing the identification of local markets that may accept animals fed ractopamine.
- If it is determined that access to the commercial processors is still needed, fairs and exhibitions should consider changing the requirements for swine exhibited by eliminating the use of ractopamine fed in the feed or as a top-dressed feed additive.
- Fairs and exhibitions that utilize a commercial processor should also be prepared to require Youth for the Quality Care of Animals (YQCA) certification for all swine exhibitors.
- Fairs and exhibitions should also consider increasing the traceability of the animal back to the youth exhibitor. This will be important if a ractopamine violation would be found at a processing unit.
- Fairs and exhibitions may also contemplate implementing a process that requires all exhibitors and/or their parents or guardians to verify that their pigs have never been fed ractopamine. An example of this would be requiring a signed affidavit from each exhibitor/family.
- Youth exhibitors must be aware of the ingredients in the feed that they purchase for their projects.
- Youth exhibitors should make it a practice to read the feed ingredient label on the feed and additives that they plan on feeding to their animals.
- They may also want to have a conversation with their breeder and feed supplier, which will help identify any feed additives that may not be allowed at their fair or exhibition.

### For more information

Looking for more information on this topic or want to discuss some potential options for your fair or exhibition? Questions may be directed to:



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