

Ask a FARM FAMILY



The Hartmanns – Dan and Ashley – raise pigs and grow corn and soybeans on their family farm. They reside in Sycamore with their children Layla and Oliver. Dan is a 4th generation farmer.

Q: How do livestock farmers keep up-to-date with animal practices and food safety measures?

A: Farmers are trained and certified to stay current with USDA and FDA regulations.

We stay up to date with animal practices and food safety measures by maintaining specific certifications that require education in both meat quality and animal welfare. These programs are provided by our veterinarian service as well as our meat processors (like Tyson, Farmland, Smithfield).

One of the certifications is Pork Quality Assurance or PQA. This means that we have been certified by our veterinarian that we are using proper procedures while caring for our animals. This includes the proper use and administration of medications and vaccines.

Withdrawal times from medications are very important in meat production. An animal cannot be treated too close to slaughter as to make sure that the medication has had ample time to be metabolized and therefore, not be present in the meat. This is something we watch very closely in order to produce a meat product that is safe.

The PQA certification process also trains producers on the evolving practices of humane treatment of animals. We take pride in providing good care for hogs raised on our farm.

The second major certification is Trucker Quality Assurance or TQA. This ensures the person driving the vehicle containing livestock has been properly trained to transport animals to the meat processing facility.

This includes how to properly and humanely move the animals from the farm to the meat facility – moving the livestock from their pens to the trailers and then off the trailers – as well as the time they are in a trailer during the transportation time.

It's important for truckers to be educated in these methods for both the sake of the animal's welfare and the meat quality. This training also covers what to do in emergency situations while transporting the animals, like how to get the animals out of the trailer if the truck was in an accident.

Both of these certifications are achieved by studying material, taking classes, and exams. By keeping our PQA and TQA certifications up to date we are staying current with standard USDA and FDA regulations.

Animal care and meat quality are top priorities as they go hand-in-hand on our family's hog farm. ■

Dan & Ashley Hartmann

Got a question for a farmer?

Submit your farm and food questions to connections@dekalbfarmbureau.org. We will share questions with our local farmers and publish their answers as space allows in upcoming issues of CONNECTIONS.

