

A Ractopamine-Free Swine Project - Primer

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Introduction

Ractopamine-free swine production is now a market specification/requirement throughout much of the U.S. pork packing industry. Ractopamine remains an FDA approved product that can be legally fed in the U.S. at approved levels and approved time periods in the life of a market-destined hog. However, restrictions from trade partners have led to removal from most production systems

Removal of ractopamine from pork (meat) or pork products (internal organs, blood, fat, etc.) that may enter an export market is paramount. Swine producers, exhibitors, feed industry participants, and transportation participants all must work together to meet market demands.

What is Ractopamine Hydrochloride?

A beta-adrenergic agonist that when fed according to label directions can improve pig growth rate, carcass composition, and feed conversion efficiency. Product tradenames include: Paylean®, Optaflexx®, Engain®, Actogain®, and other generic derivatives.

What does Ractopamine-Free Mean?

The pig has never been fed or exposed to ractopamine sources from birth to harvest.

Ractopamine Removal (Focal Areas)

Your Pig:

Your pig is your responsibility and it will need to meet packer testing procedures. Understand the status of any pig(s) you purchase or raise on your own farm. Comply with not feeding or exposing your purchased and/or home reared pigs to ractopamine. Expect to sign an affidavit at a fair/exhibition stating that your pig is ractopamine free.

Your Feed Supply:

Do not purchase feed or use top-dress products that contain ractopamine. Read and follow label directions. Work with your feed supplier. Left over feed may contain ractopamine, discard if you are unsure. Top-dress products are more concentrated and can more easily cause cross contamination to the environment.

Ractopamine Removal (Focal Areas)

Your Feed Supply Continued:

Home grinder and mixers must be thoroughly cleaned to remove any ractopamine residue. Cleaning will include vacuum, soap and water, and drying of all compartments, grinders, mixers, augers and storage areas. Grind, mix, or auger a plain feed ingredient, such as corn, in a small quantity to flush the system after cleaning and properly dispose of flush material.

Your Feeders, Pans, Feed Tanks:

Feeders, pans, feed tanks, and storage containers must be cleaned to avoid residual contamination. Thoroughly clean with a detergent or soap and water, disinfect, and dry prior to adding new feed.

Your Pig's Environment:

Remove residual bedding and manure. Thoroughly clean, disinfect, and dry all flooring, penning, alleys, gating, fans and fan housings, and boots. Segregate pigs if a group is offered ractopamine. Urine, feces, and feeding processes and practices can easily lead to cross-contamination.

Trailers (Transport to Exhibition):

Wash, disinfect, and dry transport trailers and vehicles between loads, particularly between any groups offered ractopamine. Clean, disinfect, and dry between species, particularly cattle fed ractopamine.

At Exhibition:

Conspiring to sabotage, purposeful contamination, or other illegal activities are crimes punishable by existing laws. Do the right thing! Follow the rules!

Trailers (Transport to Packing Plants): Only use trailers that have been thoroughly cleaned, disinfected, and dried prior to loading. Use only fresh shavings (or sand in hot months) as bedding materials as they have no exposure to ractopamine.

Testing for Ractopamine

Testing technology advances have allowed detection of ractopamine at levels much less than those deemed safe by the FDA for human consumption. Packers have the right and the ability to test pigs they purchase. Internal organs, eyes, and muscle will maintain greater detectable levels for a longer time period.

Take Home Messages

- Ractopamine-free means from the time of birth to the time of market.
- Owners maintain responsibility for meeting market specifications and fair/exhibition rules.
- Follow WeCare® principles. **Department of Animal Sciences**

