

ANIMAL WELFARE

Title: Animal caretakers perspectives on performing euthanasia on commercial sow farms – **NPB #19-070**

Investigator: Lily N Edwards-Callaway

Institution: Colorado State University

Date Submitted: October 27, 2020

Scientific Abstract:

Caretaker Subpopulation:

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of euthanasia training, caretaker perceptions of euthanasia, and available resources for individuals who perform euthanasia as part of their job on swine operations in the United States. An online survey was distributed via an e-newsletter and in-person recruitment at swine industry events. The survey questions were related to training, attitudes towards performing euthanasia, work environment, and communication. Forty-five responses (17 workers, 21 managers, 7 owners) were recorded and summarized. The majority of workers ($n = 14$, 82%) agreed they had “received enough training to euthanize pigs correctly” and that training had made them “confident about performing euthanasia”, yet 35% (6) also indicated they would like more euthanasia training. Less than one-third of respondents indicated that strategies for dealing with “personal stress” (4, 24%) and “emotional wellness” 29% (5) were included in training programs but the majority (14, 82%) agreed that “trainings included human safety while performing euthanasia”. Most caretakers (37, 82%) agreed that they felt they could “communicate with my supervisors if they felt uncomfortable performing euthanasia. Opportunities for the future include enhancing euthanasia training opportunities and content to include more awareness of strategies to deal with stress related to euthanasia.

Veterinarian Subpopulation¹:

Euthanasia is a critical component in swine production and veterinarians play an important role in euthanasia protocol development and training. This study aimed to understand veterinarian involvement in and perspectives on euthanasia on pig farms. An online survey was disseminated both at a pig welfare conference and online via a veterinarian e-newsletter. Twenty-five veterinarians participated in the survey. The majority of respondents indicated that caretakers are the individuals making euthanasia decisions and performing the task ($n = 17$, 68% and 22, 88%, respectively). The majority (22, 88%) of respondents indicated that most of the facilities with which they work have a written euthanasia protocol, and 72% (18) indicated that they

These research results were submitted in fulfillment of checkoff-funded research projects. This report is published directly as submitted by the project's principal investigator. This report has not been peer-reviewed.

For more information contact:

National Pork Board • PO Box 9114 • Des Moines, IA 50306 USA • 800-456-7675 • Fax: 515-223-2646 • pork.org

as

¹ Sections with this footnote come directly from: Edwards-Callaway, L.N., C. Cramer, I. N. Roman-Muniz, L. Stallones, S. Thompson, S. Ennis, J. Marsh, H. Simpson, E. Kim, E. Calaba, and M. Pairis-Garcia. 2020. Preliminary exploration of swine veterinarian perspectives on euthanasia on-farm. *Animals*. 10(10) 1919. doi: 10.3390/ani10101919. Copyright is retained by authors and is permitted to be reused per *Animals* journal policy: <https://www.mdpi.com/authors/rights>.

sisted in protocol development. Only half of respondents (13, 52%) agreed that “all employees performing euthanasia have been trained adequately”, and 80% (20) identified an interest in delivering more training. Less than half the respondents indicated that strategies for coping with “personal stress” and “emotional wellness” (12, 48%) were included in euthanasia training. While the moral stress of performing euthanasia is recognized, there is opportunity for addressing mental well-being in euthanasia resources. Although preliminary, this study supports the need for further euthanasia training on-farm, involving veterinarians in the process.