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Merry Christmas & HAPPY NEW YEAR

What a whirlwind 2019 has been! We started the year fearful of what would happen if African Swine Fever (ASF) entered Canada. Fortunately, it hasn't and thanks to good collaboration between industry and government, we are now much more prepared. Trade wars and diplomatic tensions quashed what was looking like a banner year for Canadian pork producers. By November, China resumed buying Canadian pork and in most recent news they are reducing tariffs on American pork. Those high futures prices that we've seen continually pushed into the future may finally be captured in the cash market! Lastly, a late spring planting and a drawn out harvest made for a cropping season most growers would rather forget. And yet, we can be grateful that the corn crop this year is far cleaner than the previous one. A return to some stability and normalcy will be much appreciated as 2019 comes to a close.

Here at AGC, you can count on us to deliver genetics that are consistent and reliable, but also always improving. In this newsletter you'll see how our F1 sows are bucking the trend of increasing mortality yet continuing to produce

larger litters of good quality pigs. Through new research, we're working to ensure our sows remain easy to manage and have excellent mothering characteristics. Our Durocs continue to be the most robust and fastest growing in the industry. By implementing new technology and research, they'll also continue to be the envy of packers for both meat quality and lean yield.

All of us at AGC wish you a blessed Christmas season and much success in the New Year. Thank you for your business and support in 2019. We look forward to working alongside you as we enter the 2020s.

Sincerely,



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Sow Mortality: Laying Low

There's been a lot of talk and investigation into why sow mortality has risen to abnormal heights in the US over the past several years. A rate of 3-5% was always considered good. Then it crept up to 7%. Now with the industry average over 15%, a 10% mortality rate would be considered good. We weren't hearing about this issue in Canadian herds as much until recently.

Lameness and prolapses contribute to most sow deaths, but there are still many unknown reasons and the root causes haven't been determined. PigHealthToday.com recently did a special report on this issue with a panel of experts including Dr. John Deen. Some factors include inflammation, water quality, and nursing feed intake. Another common theme is evident in the following quotes from the panel:

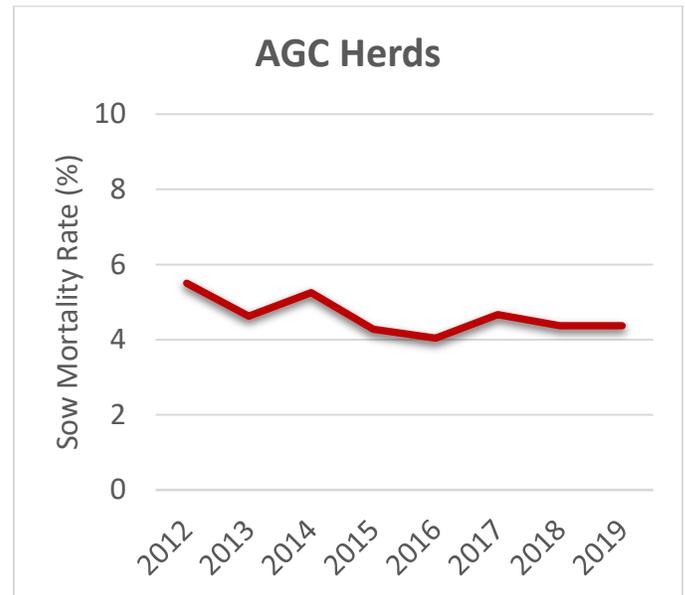
"We've lost our focus on selecting animals for good conformation, good structure. As you start breeding for one trait [such as] high litter size...you [don't] look at the individual sow as much."

"Make sure that the right animal comes into the farm."

"Gilt selection is a little bit of a lost art."

AGC takes a balanced approach to breeding. We select for economically important traits while maintaining sound animal structure. This begins at the nucleus level and carries through to F1 gilt selection.

The results are apparent in the consistently low rate of sow mortality on farms with AGC genetics:



New Research for Lower Stress Sows

We all know those sows, they're snappy, high strung, uncooperative when moving, and all around miserable to work with. They're outliers in what's generally an easy to manage herd. What if we could use genomics to find those high stress sows early on and avoid selecting them? What if by selecting lower stress sows we also improve piglet survivability and litter weight?



These are the questions we hope to answer in a new research project with University of Guelph researchers and the Canadian Centre for Swine Improvement.

Saliva samples will be collected from AGC Yorkshire sows after farrowing their 1st litter and tested for cortisol levels – the stress hormone. Correlations between cortisol levels, select genes, the entire genome, and nursing performance will then be calculated. If the genes of interest are linked to (un)favourable traits, they could be included in the AGC selection program.



Chris Almond, the new Genetic Program Coordinator for Vista Villa Farms, received his ultrasound accreditation from CCSI. This includes measurements for back fat, loin depth, and intramuscular fat.

New Technology for Better Meat Quality

AGC has been measuring intramuscular fat (IMF) on our Durocs for years as a predictor of marbling and meat quality. Thanks to some new technology, the number of animals that can be tested has increased substantially along with improved accuracy.

It's called a BioQStation®. Pigs around market weight enter the unit, are weighed and then lifted off their feet. This renders them immobile and ensures a consistent posture for all animals. An area on the pig's back is shaved

for better contact and an ultrasound scanner with special software is used to measure back fat, loin depth, and IMF within seconds.



As markets evolve, AGC is well prepared to supply the genetics that meet or exceed targets set by packers.

A poster for Canadian Pork Excellence (Du Porc Canadien) with a biosecurity message. The top left features the logo. The top right says "PORK DOES NOT BELONG IN BARN!". The main text reads: "Diseases such as African swine fever, are highly contagious and cause high mortality in pigs. African swine fever can be spread through contaminated pork products. Protect the pigs, protect the industry! Never bring any pork or pork products onto farm premises". A circular arrow icon is next to the second paragraph. The bottom of the poster shows a person holding a brown paper bag with a red biohazard symbol and a pig icon. The bottom right corner has the Canadian Pork Council logo.

CANADIAN PORK EXCELLENCE
DU PORC CANADIEN

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Protect the pigs, protect the industry!

Never bring any pork or pork products onto farm premises

ENJOY PORK AT HOME, NOT IN THE BARN!

Canadian Pork Council
Conseil canadien du porc