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MINNESOTA PORK CONGRESS

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CONGRESS

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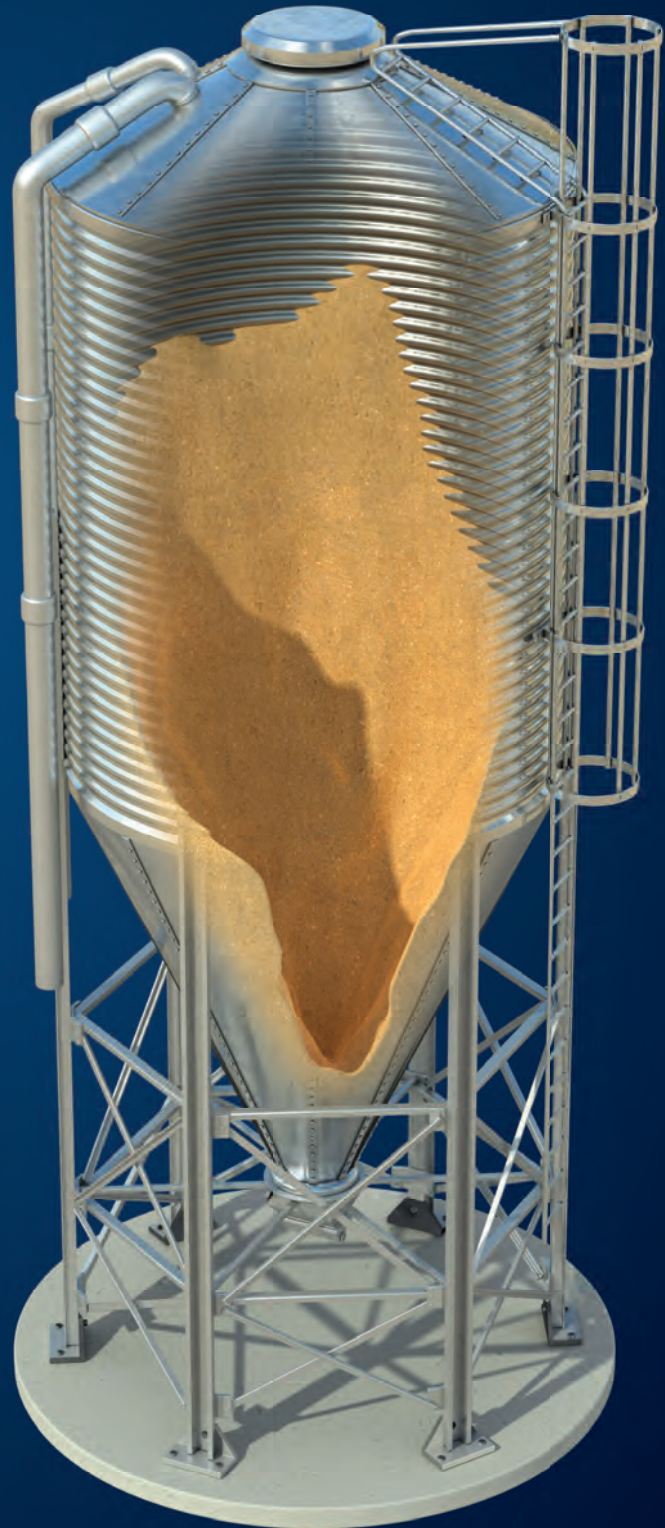
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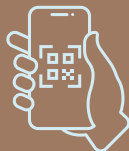
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ANIMAL HEALTH

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The Minnesota Pork Producers Association (MPPA) publishes the Minnesota Pork Congress Magazine. For more information on future tradeshow and exhibiting opportunities, contact the MPPA office at (507) 345-8814 or email [mnppork@mnppork.com](mailto:mnppork@mnppork.com)

Graphic design services by Lime Valley, Mankato, Minnesota. For more information on Lime Valley services, telephone (507) 345-8500 or visit [www.limevalley.com](http://www.limevalley.com)

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## ON THE COVER

Left to right: Jeff Senne, Swine Manager of the Year; Dale Stevermer, Environmental Steward; Rep. Paul Anderson, Legislator of Distinction; Terry Wolters, Sylvia Wolters, Family of the Year; Dr. Tom Wetzell, Distinguished Service; Lindsey Loken, Pork Promoter



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## Here for Minnesota Pig Farmers

The Minnesota Pork staff works year-round to support pig farmers through education, promotion, research, and advocacy.



**JILL RESLER**  
*Chief Executive Officer*



**PAM VOELKEL**  
*Director of Events  
and Promotions*



**LAUREN SERVICK**  
*Director of Public Policy  
Strategy and Sustainability*



**BAILEY RUEN**  
*Director of  
Communications*



**KATE MADDOCK**  
*Director of  
Farmer Outreach*



**JORDAN  
ZIMMERMAN**  
*Director of Finance and  
Human Resources*

## The Minnesota Pork Office in Mankato

Stop by or reach out!



151 St Andrews Ct STE 810, Mankato, MN 56001

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The 12-member Minnesota Pork Producers Association (MPPA) and Minnesota Pork Board (MPB) together make the Minnesota Pork Board of Directors. The Board represents a diverse cross-section of pig farmers across Minnesota. This unified board works to align the organization's operations with its 2024-2027 strategic plan, advancing the five foundational pillars that guide Minnesota Pork's mission. Each elected member serves three-year terms, limited to three consecutive terms.

The strategic pillars include:

- 1. Build Trust**
- 2. Invest in People and Communities**
- 3. Impact Through Influence**
- 4. Protect Our Freedom to Operate**
- 5. Animal Well-Being**

Through strategic governance, the board ensures the organization delivers measurable results aligned with its long-term vision for producers and consumers alike.

### Minnesota Pork Board of Directors:

<i>President</i> <b>TODD SELVIK</b> Waseca	<i>Vice President</i> <b>MIKE PATTERSON</b> Kenyon	<i>Secretary</i> <b>JAY FULTZ</b> Tracy	<b>PAT VONTERSCH</b> Luverne
<b>VINCE BAACK</b> North Mankato	<b>MIKE BOERBOOM</b> Marshall	<b>MADDIE HOKANSON</b> Cannon Falls	<b>MIKE WALKER</b> Sleepy Eye
<b>BRAD KLUVER</b> Lakeville	<b>BRIAN SCHWARTZ</b> Sleepy Eye	<b>DARYL TIMMERMAN</b> North Mankato	<b>MYRNA WELTER</b> Stewartville



Front row (L to R): Mike Boerboom, Pat VonTersch, Maddie Hokanson, Myrna Welter, Daryl Timmerman, Vince Baack  
Back row (L to R): Mike Patterson, Jay Fultz, Mike Walker, Brad Kluver, Todd Selvik  
Not pictured: Brian Schwartz

### Ex Officio NPB Board Member



**GORDON  
SPRONK**  
Pipestone  
President

### Ex Officio NPPC Board Members



**JOHN  
ANDERSON**  
Belgrade



**TODD  
MAROTZ**  
Sleepy Eye



**LORI  
STEVERMER**  
Easton  
Immediate Past  
President



The Minnesota Pork Board (MPB) and Minnesota Pork Producers Association (MPPA) recognizes several individuals this year for their service on the board of directors. We are grateful to Brian Schwartz, Daryl Timmerman and Myrna Welter for their time and dedication. Ranging from diverse backgrounds in the Minnesota Pork industry, each of them led the board sharing their knowledge and expertise while overseeing the investment of mandatory checkoff dollars and voluntary non-checkoff dollars.

Each of the outlined retiring board members served on the board for a varying amount of time, from three years to ten years; each ran for a spot on the board for a different reason; and each acknowledged something different that they learned or found the most rewarding about their experience.

\*At the 2026 annual meeting held on Feb. 9, prior to the Minnesota Pork Congress, three board members will be elected to the Minnesota Pork Board of Directors.



## **BRIAN SCHWARTZ**

### **How long did you serve on the Board?**

I served on the Board for a total of nine years, completing three, three-year terms.

### **Please state any committees you are/were a part of and any positions you held.**

I served on the Promotion and Image Committee and had the opportunity to chair the committee for a period of time.

### **What did you enjoy most about serving on the Board?**

There were many aspects of serving on the Minnesota Pork Board that I truly enjoyed. At the top of the list were the opportunities to network and collaborate with fellow board members and staff, build meaningful relationships, and learn from mentors that turned into lifelong friends. The experience offered both personal and professional growth, allowing me to add value to the industry while also learning from a great team and industry peers.

### **What was the most rewarding part about serving MPPA/MPB?**

The most rewarding part of serving was having the opportunity to help shape the overall direction and mission of the Minnesota Pork organization, and how they support Minnesota producers. The Minnesota pork industry has many successful, independent farms and it was a privilege to work alongside others who are passionate about advancing and supporting the industry. During my tenure on the board, we tackled big issues for Minnesota and provided perspective and strong leadership at the National level. Our collective experiences, perspectives and strengths allowed us to anticipate real issues that impact producers and take action to best support our industry. I'm proud to be part of an organization that listens to producers and goes to work every day to serve them.

### **What motivated you to serve on the Board of Directors?**

My motivation to serve stemmed from a deep appreciation for the pork industry and a desire to give back to an industry that has meant so much to our family. When my Dad and Uncle started the company, they recognized the need and appreciated the opportunity to connect with and learn from others in the industry. They also deeply valued contributing to our communities, including the "pork" community. As I looked to grow in my role as a second-generation leader in our company, I too valued the opportunity to expand my network, build strong relationships, and use my skills and experience to support the organization and the industry as a whole. For me, serving on the Board of Directors has been an investment that will extend far beyond my term, deepening my understanding of the domestic and global industry, building necessary skills and developing lifelong relationships.

### **What is your favorite pork product/dish?**

Bacon





## DARYL TIMMERMAN

### How long did you serve on the Board?

I served for nine years - three, three-year terms.

### Please state any committees you are/were a part of in the past and

#### any positions you held.

I was on the public policy committee and the human capital committee. I also served as chairman of the search committee when Dave Priesler announced his retirement as CEO. I then served as president of the newly unified Board of Directors from February 2023 to February 2025.

### What did you enjoy most about serving on the Board?

What I enjoyed most was working side by side with fellow board members and our incredible staff for the benefit of pig farmers across the state.

### What was the most rewarding part about serving MPPA/MPB?

The most rewarding part of serving on the board is seeing the two organizations now being governed under a single Board of Directors with the staff being incredibly well positioned as Jill has full navigated the CEO seat. She has continued to build on the team she has directly led for several years and has a full slate of team members who are some of the best people you could find to serve the needs of Minnesota's pig farmers.

### What motivated you to serve on the Board of Directors?

Nearly 10 years ago, I was earlier in my career. Having grown up raising pigs, I was looking for a way to advocate for families like ours as well as to serve the clients that I work with daily in another way. It was a way to give back to the industry while also learning a lot from the board members who have a wealth of knowledge from life, farming, and industry experience.

### What is your favorite pork product/dish?

My favorite pork product is a good meaty rack of ribs off the smoker.



## MYRNA WELTER

### How long did you serve on the Board?

I served for 10 years.

### Please state any committees you are/were a part of and any positions you held.

I served as Minnesota Pork Board secretary for five years. I also served on the Promotion committee and the Research committee, when they were in place.

### What did you enjoy most about serving on the Board?

I enjoyed the people the most while serving on the board. My fellow board members, pork staff, both state & national, the people I met along the way from all over the United States. Friendships to last a lifetime! I also enjoyed being part of all the pork promotional opportunities.

### What was the most rewarding part about serving MPPA/MPB?

Being a smaller producer and still having a seat in the board room.

### What motivated you to serve on the Board of Directors?

Having a deep passion for pigs and pork, I had a desire to learn and get more involved with the pork industry at the state level.

### What is your favorite pork product/dish?

Besides BACON, I am a fan of the famous "Pork Sausage". It can be used in so many ways. Personally, I like using it in pork meatloaf and spaghetti. A grilled pork burger is also hard to beat!

### Bonus Question: Most heartwarming experience?

Being named 2025 Pork Promoter of the Year.

As we step into 2026, we're reminded that pork farming continues to be shaped by both challenges and opportunity. Disease prevention, evolving production practices, and regulatory pressures remain part of the landscape. Yet through it all, Minnesota pig farmers continue to demonstrate resilience, innovation, and a strong commitment to doing what's right for their animals and the greater Minnesota pork industry.

At the Minnesota Pork Board (MPB) and Minnesota Pork Producers Association (MPPA), our focus continues to be responsible stewards of your Checkoff and non-Checkoff investments while delivering meaningful value back to pig farmers across the state. I encourage you to take time to review the MPB and MPPA Year in Review sections later in this magazine to see how those investments are at work.

We are proud to gather once again in Mankato for the 2026 Minnesota Pork Congress, an event that reflects the strength of Minnesota pork production and the people behind it. Through the Minnesota Pork Board, funded by the mandatory Pork Checkoff, we continue to support research, promotion, and education efforts that build consumer trust in pork and highlight the values shared by farm families.

At the same time, the Minnesota Pork Producers Association, supported through voluntary Strategic Investment Program (SIP) contributions, remains focused on advocacy and leadership development. From representing pig farmers at the Capitol and in Washington, D.C., to investing in future leaders and strengthening pork's reputation, MPPA works to ensure your voice is heard and respected.

As President of the joint MPB and MPPA Board of Directors, I encourage Minnesota pig farmers to stay engaged and connected. Minnesota Pork Congress offers a valuable opportunity to learn from one another, hear from industry experts, and celebrate the progress we continue to make together. Your involvement and support are essential to our success, and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve this strong and dedicated community.

Here's to a productive Minnesota Pork Congress and a successful year ahead. I look forward to seeing you in Mankato.

Sincerely,



*Todd Selvick*

**Todd Selvick**

*President  
Minnesota Pork Board &  
Minnesota Pork Producers Association*



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**Monday, February 9, 2026**

**11:00 - 12:00 PM MPB Annual Meeting**

**12:00 PM Lunch**

**Ellerbe Room,  
Mayo Clinic Event Center**

**AGENDA**

- I. Call to Order** – Todd Selvik, President
- II. Introductions**
- III. 2025 Annual Meeting Minutes** – Jay Fultz, Secretary
- IV. 2025 MPB Financial Audit** – Jordan Zimmerman
- V. 2026 Advisements, Discussion and Action**
- VI. 2027 Pork Act Delegate and Alternate Elections**

**RECESS**



**Monday, February 9, 2026**  
**12:30 PM MPPA Annual Meeting**  
**Joint Session with MPB – 2:00 PM**  
**Ellerbe Room,**  
**Mayo Clinic Event Center**



## **AGENDA**

- I. Call to Order**
- II. 2025 Annual Meeting Minutes** – Jay Fultz, Secretary
- III. 2025 MPPA Financial Audit** – Jordan Zimmerman
- IV. 2026 Resolutions**
- V. 2026 MPPA State Legislative Priorities and Outlook** – AJ Duerr

## **RECESS**

## **JOINT SESSION WITH THE MINNESOTA PORK BOARD @ 2:00 PM**

- I. Executive Board Election**
- II. Industry Leader Panel**  
Moderator – Jill Resler, CEO, MN Pork  
Panelists:
- III. President's Remarks** – Todd Selvik
- IV. Adjourn**

## **PUBLIC NOTICE**

### ***Public Notice by Minnesota Pork Board and the National Pork Board***

The election of pork producer delegate candidates for the 2027 National Pork Producers (Pork Act) Delegate Body will take place at **11:00 AM, Monday, February 9, 2026** in conjunction with a Board of Directors meeting of the Minnesota Pork Board. All Minnesota pork producers are invited to attend. This Annual Meeting will be held at the Mayo Clinic Health System Event Center, 1 Civic Center Plaza, Mankato, MN 56001. All Minnesota pork producers are invited to attend. **To RSVP, please contact the Minnesota Pork office at (507) 345-8814 or email [mnppork@mnppork.com](mailto:mnppork@mnppork.com).**

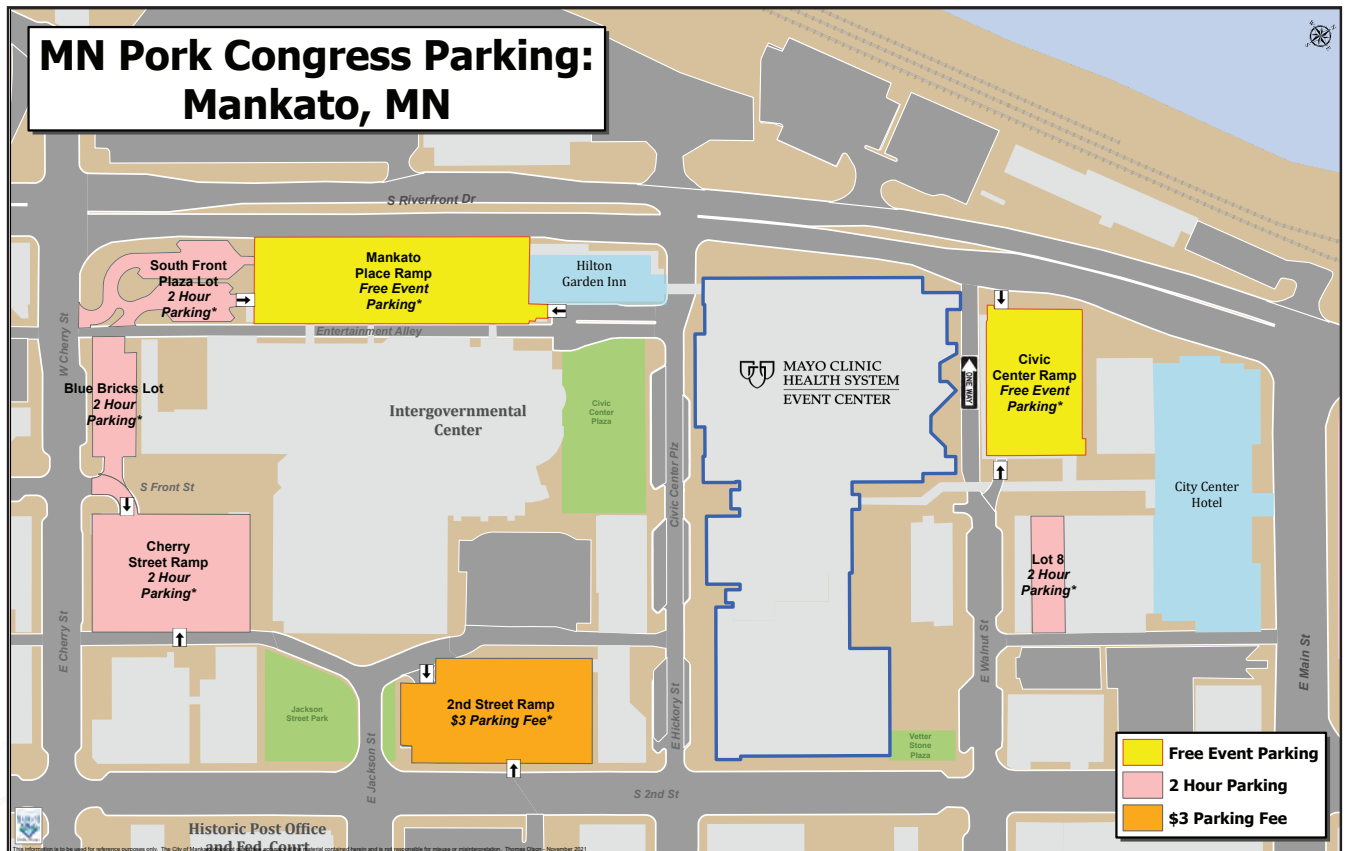
Any producer, age 18 or older, who is a resident of the state and has paid all assessments due may be considered as a delegate candidate and/or participate in the election. All eligible producers are encouraged to bring with them a sales receipt proving that hogs were sold in their name and the checkoff deducted. For more information, contact the Minnesota Pork Board Office, 151 St. Andrews Court, Suite 810, Mankato, Minnesota. (507) 345-8814 or (800) 537-7675.





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Growthland	65	—	Signify	22	—
Hennen Pig Chute	65	60	Topigs Norsvin	72	46
ISG	47	33	United Animal Health	5	74
Johnson Engineering Group	31	141			

## MN Pork Congress Parking: Mankato, MN



## OUR MISSION

We provide best-in-class programming, build relationships, and have influence in five key areas that deliver a demonstratable return-on-investment (Checkoff and Non-Checkoff) to our stakeholders ensuring opportunities for the next generation of Minnesota pig farmers.



## BACKGROUND

To ensure delivery on the organizational mission, Minnesota Pork employed a third-party to facilitate a strategy plan refresh starting in May 2023. A stakeholder survey, stakeholder interviews and planning sessions collectively helped the team arrive at the most important areas of focus. Feedback was solicited from a variety of interests, including national organizations, contract growers as well as independent producers, veterinarians, environmental experts and public officials. The following five pillars were identified as essential success of the organization and industry.



### BUILD TRUST

MN Pork will build trust with customers, consumers, and decision makers. We will advocate for our industry, our people, and our product. MN Pork is a voice for pork producers, working to ensure our image accurately reflects our industry, while elevating pork as an essential protein of choice.

#### Example:

- *Star Tribune Targeting – Proactive and Reactive*
- *Cook 'n Bacon / Chad Greenway / Nourish Move Love / Real Food RDs Partnerships*



### IMPACT THROUGH INFLUENCE

MN Pork will leverage our reputation and exert our influence on decision makers to impact local, state, and federal policy decisions, regulatory standards, rule-making, and national priorities on research and policy issues. We will build relationships, collaborate with partners and states, develop coalitions, and leverage our value propositions.

#### Example:

- *Denver Ballot Initiative – Municipal Initiated Measure Risk*



### INVEST IN PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

MN Pork will build on existing efforts and create new programming that develops stakeholders of the MN pork industry. Programming will focus on the talent life cycle of our stakeholders, prioritizing training, leadership development, and the investment in and development of rural communities. Investing in our people today ensures opportunities for future generations tomorrow.

#### Example:

- *MN Pork Cohort Group Initiative*
- *Second Harvest Heartland Partnership*



### PROTECT OUR FREEDOM TO OPERATE

MN Pork will proactively engage to protect our freedom to operate and enable producers to profitably and successfully produce sustainable, safe, and healthy protein. We will focus on understanding the impact of policy and regulatory changes, prioritizing industry profitability for all operational structures, driving efforts to promote social, environmental, and economic sustainability, and ensuring opportunities for future generations.

#### Example:

- *Environmental Policy and Permitting*
- *Sustainability*



### ANIMAL WELL-BEING

MN Pork will **lead the nation in herd health** improvement to support a nutritious, safe food supply, protect public health, and advance animal well-being. We will engage with farmers, veterinarians, academia, other pork producer associations, and the Minnesota Board of Animal Health in disease prevention and mitigation. We are **committed to the eradication of endemic domestic diseases**. We believe healthy pigs support animal well-being, sustainability, profitability, and vibrant rural communities.

#### Example:

- *US SHIP Enrollment Targets*
- *Animal Health Task Force*

## MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9

7 A.M. - 7 P.M.

### Exhibitor Move-In

Mayo Clinic Event Center  
Arena & Grand Hall

11 A.M. - 12 P.M.

### Minnesota Pork Board Annual Meeting

Mayo Clinic Event Center  
Ellerbe Room

12 P.M. - 12:30 P.M.

### Lunch

Mayo Clinic Event Center  
Ellerbe Room

12:30 P.M. - 2 P.M.

### Minnesota Pork Producers Association Annual Meeting

Mayo Clinic Event Center  
Ellerbe Room

2 P.M. - 3:30 P.M.

### Joint MPB/MPPA Annual Meeting

Mayo Clinic Event Center  
Ellerbe Room

5 P.M. - 8:30 P.M.

### Awards Reception

Mayo Clinic Event Center  
Ballroom

Sponsored by:

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## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10

9 A.M. - 5 P.M.

### Pork Congress Registration

Mayo Clinic Event Center  
Main Entrance

9 A.M. - 5 P.M.

### Pork Congress Trade Show

Mayo Clinic Event Center  
Arena & Grand Hall

9 A.M. - 5 P.M.

### Beverages on Pork Congress Trade Show Floor

Mayo Clinic Event Center  
Arena & Grand Hall

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9 A.M. - 10 A.M.

### Seminar: Taste What Pork Can Do Consumer Campaign Update

Speakers: Jose De Jesus, AVP Consumer  
Marketing, NPB, Neal Hull, Director,  
Domestic Market Development, NPB

Mayo Clinic Event Center  
Banquet Hall West

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Minnesota Soybean Research and  
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10:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M.

### Seminar: Gene Editing Insights: The Consumer Perspective

Speaker: Andy Tauer, VP, International  
Market Development, NPB

Mayo Clinic Event Center  
Banquet Hall West

Sponsored by:

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Promotion Council, Minnesota Farm  
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11:30 PM - 1:00 P.M.

### Box Lunch

Mayo Clinic Event Center  
Arena & Grand Hall

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**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11**

**1 P.M. - 2 P.M.**

**Seminar: Inside the Beltway: Issues Impacting the Pork Industry**

*Speakers: Holly Cook Anderson, Economist, NPPC, Dr. Ashley Johnson, Director of Food Policy, NPPC, Steph Couser, AVP, State and National Relations, NPPC*

Mayo Clinic Event Center  
Banquet Hall West

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**1 P.M. - 4:30 P.M.**

**Commercial Animal Waste Technician (CAWT) Recertification Workshop**

*Class is open to the public. There will be a \$10 fee for recertification of CAWT.*

Mayo Clinic Event Center  
Room 247

**3:30 P.M. - 4:30 P.M.**

**Seminar: No Bad Days: How to Live the Rest of Your Life Without Having Another Bad Day**

*Speaker: Hunter Pinke*

Mayo Clinic Event Center  
Banquet Hall West

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**4:30 P.M. - 6:30 P.M.**

**Trade Show Social Hour**

Mayo Clinic Event Center  
Banquet Hall Lobby

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**9 A.M. - 2 P.M.**

**Pork Congress Registration**

Mayo Clinic Event Center  
Main Entrance

**9 A.M. - 2 P.M.**

**Pork Congress Trade Show**

Mayo Clinic Event Center  
Arena & Grand Hall

**9 A.M. - 10:30 A.M.**

**Breakfast Sandwiches**

Mayo Clinic Event Center  
Arena & Grand Hall

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**9 A.M. - 10 A.M.**

**Seminar: International Trade Update**

*Speaker: Maria Zieba, VP, Government Affairs, NPPC*

Mayo Clinic Event Center  
Banquet Hall West

*Sponsored by:*

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**10:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M.**

**Seminar: Improving Swine Health: A Strategic Path Forward**

*Speakers: Dr. Tom Wetzell, Minnesota Pork Board/For His Kingdom LLC, Dr. Dusty Oedekoven, Chief Veterinary Officer, NPB*

Mayo Clinic Event Center  
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**2 P.M.**

**Minnesota Pork Congress Closes**

Mayo Clinic Event Center

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2026

**Taste What Pork Can Do™ Consumer Campaign Update****9:00 AM***Speakers:**Jose de Jesus, AVP Consumer Marketing**Neal Hull, Director, Domestic Market Development,  
National Pork Board*

Jose and Neal will share an update on the Taste What Pork Can Do™ consumer campaign, including highlights from NPB's retail and foodservice efforts. The session will cover early campaign results, key learnings, and how these combined initiatives are strengthening consumer interest in pork to drive long-term demand as we build on the momentum going into 2026.

**Gene Editing Insights: The Consumer Perspective****10:30 AM***Speaker:**Andy Tauer, VP of International Market Development,  
National Pork Board*

Get a look at new research exploring how consumers—both in the U.S. and around the world—perceive gene editing in food and agriculture. This session breaks down emerging trends, key concerns, and opportunities for the pork industry, giving you the insight you need to confidently navigate this evolving conversation.

**Inside the Beltway: Issues Impacting the Pork Industry****1:00 PM***Speakers:**Holly Cook Anderson, Economist,  
National Pork Producers Council**Dr. Ashley Johnson, Director of Food Policy,  
National Pork Producers Council**Steph Couser, AVP of State and National Relations,  
National Pork Producers Council*

Join leaders from the National Pork Producers Council to hear updates on federal issues impacting the pork industry. From MAHA and "One Big Beautiful Bill" to market trends and the overall state of the industry, this panel will break down what's happening, why it matters, and how it impacts the industry.

**No Bad Days: How to Live the Rest of Your Life Without Having Another Bad Day****3:30 PM***Speaker:**Hunter Pinke, Athlete, Leader, Crop Farmer*

After becoming a paraplegic in a skiing accident during the winter of 2019, Hunter was told by health professionals that he would have good days and bad days going forward. Hunter told them they were wrong: "I don't have bad days." Learn how to stack good days upon good days and live a life of gratefulness and joy.

Join us for this Hunter's inspirational story and message prior to the 2026 Minnesota Pork Congress social hour.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2026

**International Trade Update****9:00 AM***Speaker:**Maria Zieba, VP of Government Affairs*

Explore the latest developments shaping U.S. pork's position in the global marketplace. This session will cover the current state of international trade, recent comments and priorities advanced by the National Pork Producers Council, and key wins delivered for the industry. With an ever-changing global landscape, this seminar will help you understand where things stand today—and what it means for pork producers moving forward.

**Improving Swine Health: A Strategic Path Forward****10:30 AM***Speakers:**Dr. Tom Wetzell, Minnesota Pork Board / For His Kingdom, LLC**Dr. Dusty Oedekoven, Chief Veterinary Officer,  
National Pork Board*

Learn how national and Minnesota swine health efforts are setting the stage for long-term industry success. This seminar highlights the motivation behind these strategies, the desired outcomes, and how implementation will support a stronger, more resilient industry.





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## MPPA Partner Form

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The Minnesota Pork Producers Association (MPPA) Partner Program allows contract growers, farm employees, and others who have an interest in the swine industry to take part in the MPPA decision-making process. Partners have the right to vote at meetings and receive MPPA communications.

Your membership supports MPPA and National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) legislative activities and public policy development on issues important to the Minnesota pork industry.

A full description of each membership level and associated benefits can be found on the back of this form. Please select one of the following levels:

- ☐ Level 1 **\$750 Annual Membership Fee** Benefit Summary: Voting Rights, Access to Litigation Fund, MPPA Communications, and NPPC SIP Membership
- ☐ Level 2 **\$400 Annual Membership Fee** Benefit Summary: Voting Rights, MPPA Communications, and NPPC SIP Membership
- ☐ Level 3 **\$250 Annual Membership Fee** Benefit Summary: Voting Rights and MPPA Communications

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Please select one:

- ☐ Contract Grower [To receive full NPPC SIP membership benefits (Level 1 and 2), your selected membership level fee must exceed your gross contract x 0.0015]

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Minnesota Pork offers six scholarships to undergraduate and graduate students between two categories: Growing Ag and Voice of Pork.

### Growing Ag Scholarship

The Growing Ag Scholarship recognizes students committed to shaping the future of agriculture through innovation, leadership, and practical solutions. Whether pursuing animal science, ag business, veterinary medicine, farm management, public policy, or ag law, recipients are forward-thinking individuals dedicated to tackling the industry's toughest challenges. This scholarship supports those who are passionate about advancing agriculture's growth and sustainability through creative problem-solving and impactful ideas.

### Voice of Pork Scholarship

The Voice of Pork Scholarship celebrates creative, forward-thinking students who are passionate about telling the story of pork and agriculture. Designed for students pursuing interests in communications, marketing, public relations, or education, this scholarship recognizes innovative minds. Recipients are future leaders, equipped to promote pork, connect with consumers, and elevate the industry's brand through modern platforms like social media, video, and digital content.

**2026 Minnesota Pork Scholarships open on March 15, 2026 and close May 15, 2026.**

#### 2025 RECIPIENTS:

##### Growing Ag



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*Jackson, MN*



**CARSON RUEN**

*Lanesboro, MN*



**KENDRA BLASCHKO**

*Le Center, MN*

##### Voice of Pork



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## Congratulations to the 2026 Minnesota Pork Board Award Recipients!

On Monday, February 9, from 5:00 – 8:30 p.m., Minnesota Pork will recognize the 2026 award recipients. The invitation-only event will take place the Mayo Clinic Event Center. Attendees are welcome to enjoy refreshments and heavy appetizers while honoring these pork industry leaders. Please reference the following pages to learn about each recipient and their contributions to the pork community.

### 2026 Minnesota Pork Industry Award Recipients:

#### ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARD:

**DALE STEVERMER**

*Sponsored by Alltech Pork Team*



#### SWINE MANAGER OF THE YEAR:

**JEFF SENNE**

*Sponsored by Purina Animal Nutrition*



#### PORK PROMOTER OF THE YEAR:

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# DALE STEVERMER

## 2026 ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARD OF THE YEAR



At Trails End Farm, environmental stewardship is a way of thinking, one shaped by generations, sharpened by experience, and guided by a willingness to make thoughtful investments to help pigs, people, and the planet. For Dale Stevermer, Minnesota Pork's Environmental Steward of the Year,

the recognition reflects a journey still in motion rather than a destination reached.

### ***Built from Bare Ground***

Trails End Farm began with Stevermer's grandparents, who started the site from bare ground. Breeding pigs were central to those early years, with his grandfather raising purebred Chester Whites throughout his entire career.

"Pigs were always here on the farm," Stevermer said. "My dad continued that."

They transitioned to commercial production, and in 1975 the farm built its first barn. Within a decade, all pigs were moved indoors, earlier than some operations, but a move Stevermer says was necessary and ultimately beneficial. He and his father both grew up on the farm, absorbing not just the daily work but the mindset that progress requires adaptation.

After graduating from Iowa State University, where he studied animal science, Stevermer spent several years in agricultural lending. The experience proved invaluable, as he always knew pigs were going to be an integral part of the farm.

When Stevermer returned, he took over the pigs as his father prepared to step back. Together, they formed a corporation to manage farm operations and guide financial decisions. Advice from veterinarians and feed representatives helped inform changes along the way.

Dale and his wife, Lori, have three children. Brett is a mechanical engineer, and his wife, Tressa, is a pharmacist. Brett and Tressa have a one-year-old son, Killian. Adam serves as a 4-H program coordinator in Mower County. Beth recently began her legal career in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Lori is the Customer Success Manager for Alltech's U.S. Pork Business and will be finishing her role as immediate past president of the National Pork Producers Council in March.

### ***A Commitment Passed Down***

For Stevermer, this award means so much, especially from the generational aspect as the farm was built by his grandparents with vision and insight into how they can do more with what they have.

"It is fulfilling to receive recognition from fellow producers to receive this award, especially in regard to the time I have committed and resources I directed toward sustainability and environmental stewardship," Stevermer said.

Stevermer focused on not being afraid to make investments to make not only the farmers' lives easier but the pigs' life better as well.

"Dale has always been one to do the right thing, that is simply who he is," said Brandon Schafer, a fellow Minnesota pig farmer. "His passive wisdom and steady leadership made him a mentor to me in my early years, personally and professionally, and you never have to question whether he has the industry's best interest at heart. On the environmental side, he does what is right for the pigs and planet, not for the credit, but because he believes in being a good steward."

### ***Stewardship in Practice***

"I had a hand in planning and budgeting for the gestation barn," Stevermer said. "When we moved the sows, manure handling became a twice a year opportunity to fertilize the soil instead of dealing with it every other day or week."

If soil conditions allow, manure is injected to reduce disturbance. In the early 1990s, manure management limited progress on the crop side.

"How do you do the least amount of soil disturbance but still get manure on the ground?" Stevermer recalled.

It took decades for technology to catch up, but low-disturbance openers eventually provided the solution.

Manure is typically applied twice a year, depending on weather conditions. This year, a third of Stevermer's acres will be planted to oats, shifting rotations from a 50/50 corn-soybean split to a more diverse rotation that may also include sweet corn.

Two-thirds of his acres will have a cover crop. Corn going to soybeans will typically feature cereal rye, while oats going to corn will receive a more complex, multi-species

Environmental Stewards of  
the Year Award Sponsor:



mix designed to alleviate compaction, diversify root structures, and improve nutrient cycling.

"Cover crops are designed to alleviate compaction, diversify root structures, and improve nutrient cycling," Stevermer said. "I'm trying to accomplish multiple strategies at once."

### ***Letting the Soil Do the Work***

Stevermer's transition to reduced tillage began in 2014 with a single cover crop. By 2017, cover crops were on nearly every acre, and that spring he made the decision to eliminate tillage altogether. With minor repair exceptions, the farm has been no-till ever since.

"I don't have residue buildup," Stevermer said. "After rain events, I can walk into the field and not pick up mud on my shoes. It's more like walking on a lawn."

Some soil types responded within three years and others took six. Crop type and soil conditions played a role, but the results are clear. Stevermer now relies less on commercial fertilizer, confident that soil biology is making nutrients more bioavailable. From this point forward, 100 percent of his corn acres will receive manure.

The difference is especially noticeable during extreme weather. In the spring of 2025, while hauling manure, Stevermer witnessed one of the hardest rain and wind events he could remember. Yet soil movement was minimal.

Water quality improvements have come through the installation of rock inlets, replacing surface intakes. Over the past six years, Stevermer has steadily converted inlets,

improving infiltration and reducing erosion. With no-till practices, the inlets last longer and function more effectively.

"We won't be the first ones out in the field by calendar," he said, "but we can be the first ones out after a rain event."

### ***Innovation in Every Corner***

Solar energy represents another piece of the stewardship puzzle. Installed in the summer of 2022, the six panel system produces roughly as much electricity as the site consumes annually.

"I see it as a hedge against energy inflation," Stevermer said.

Excess production is compensated for, and the addition of an electric pickup, his favorite vehicle to date, has shifted the energy balance slightly. Under the panels, a pollinator habitat was established in 2023, complementing an existing monarch habitat installed in 2018.

Inside the barns, stewardship continues through technology. After transitioning from farrow-to-finish to finishing in 2016, significant changes were required. Central controllers and airflow were adjusted, feeders were updated to wet/dry instead of just dry, and one barn moved from partial to fully slatted floors.

Temperature monitoring systems, water meters, bin-level sensors, and BarnTalk technology now provide real-time insights. Stevermer records water usage daily, watching for trends that may signal health challenges before they arise.





**(DALE STEVERMER CONTINUED)**

"I'm starting to trust that I can pick up a health problem before it happens," Stevermer said.

These tools also support the On-Farm Sustainability Report, which Stevermer has completed annually since 2020. Seeing his reports year over year has reinforced that the decisions made on the farm today have lasting impacts on both productivity and sustainability.

"Dale's commitment to continuous improvement is evident in every decision made at Trails End Farm," said Todd Selvik, president of the Minnesota Pork Board of Directors. "His dedication to caring for pigs, people, and the planet truly sets him apart in our industry."

### ***Stewardship Beyond the Farm***

Education and advocacy are equally important components of stewardship. Stevermer is open about his practices and welcomes conversation, whether with neighbors, fellow farmers, or consumers at the Minnesota State Fair.

"Going to the state fair allows farmers to engage with consumers, some that may have preconceived notions with what we are doing," Stevermer said. "Consumers are surprised that we are able to use manure as a fertilizer and produce the crop for the next group of pigs instead of discarding it as waste."

Stevermer shared that one of his favorite topics to discuss especially with consumers is the nutrient cycle, the "why" behind many farmers' decisions.

"It takes nutrients to grow corn, we grow corn to feed our pigs, we use manure to grow the next crop, and raise an awesome protein to eat," Stevermer said.

At the national level, Stevermer served on the National Pork Board (NPB) from 2021 to 2024 and participated in the USDA Advancing Markets for Producers grant working group. His role helped ensure producer perspectives shaped the program.

"What are things unique to pig farms that USDA has not thought about yet?" he asked. "Those were the conversations I was part of"

That work led to an invitation to represent American pig farmers at the 2023 G7 Agriculture Ministers Meeting in Japan, where he presented on the climate-smart grant and the On-Farm Sustainability Report.

After the presentation, NPB was asked to assist in the creation of a video that could be used by USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service and U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF) as visual tools for building pork markets in other countries. The Stevermers were featured in the video filmed at Trails End Farm.

"I'm deeply grateful for Dale's steadfast leadership in advancing our industry's sustainability efforts through the We Care® platform," said National Pork Board Chief Sustainability Officer, Jamie Burr. "His guidance was key in shaping the On-Farm Sustainability Report and the USDA Advancing Markets for Producers grant. Dale's impact on our sustainability journey is lasting, and we are stronger because of his leadership."



## Looking Forward

Stevermer views stewardship as an investment in the future, whether or not the next generation ultimately chooses to farm. The agronomic improvements made today, he believes, will leave the land better prepared for whatever comes next.

"The things I've done agronomically have improved this soil," Stevermer said. "If the next generation wants to build on it, they'll be able to reap the benefits."

Stevermer's advice to others is simple: "Do or do not. There is no try."

He encourages others to commit fully to the process, make informed decisions, seek out trusted advisors, and approach challenges as opportunities to learn and improve rather than setbacks to avoid. Progress, in his view, comes from action, reflection, and a willingness to adapt.

At Trails End Farm, stewardship remains exactly what it has always been: a commitment to doing what is right, one decision at a time. It is an approach Dale Stevermer exemplifies as Minnesota Pork's Environmental Steward of the Year.

"This is not the end, the journey is not done," Stevermer said. "Without the vision and insight to do more with what we have, this farm wouldn't exist."



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# JEFF SENNE

## 2026 MINNESOTA PORK SWINE MANAGER OF THE YEAR



A commitment to consistency, attention to detail, and genuine care for both people and animals defines Jeff Senne's career in swine production. As the recipient of the Swine Manager of the Year award, Senne is recognized for more than three decades of leadership in pork production and his lasting impact on the farm and people he works with every day.

As farm manager of Camalot Breeders (Camalot), part of the Fairmont Veterinary Clinic and Preferred Capital Management (PCM) family farms, Senne has built a career grounded in hands-on leadership, strong systems, and a deep respect for animal health. His approach reflects a belief that success in swine production comes from doing the basics well every day, without shortcuts.

### ***A Career Built from the Ground Up***

Senne has spent his entire career in the pork industry. During high school, he worked part time for independent pork producers in Martin County, gaining firsthand experience with daily farm responsibilities. After graduating, he moved directly into full-time swine production, beginning a career that would span more than 30 years.

In 1994, Senne joined Fairmont Veterinary Clinic/PCM as a pig technician at Wel-Cam Breeders in Granada, Minnesota. Over time, his dedication and work ethic led him to advance into the role of breeding manager.



In 2002, Senne relocated to Camalot, where he took on the breeding manager position. Over the next 14 years, he helped guide Camalot to consistent top performance

within the PCM system, particularly in breeding efficiencies and pigs weaned per sow per year (PSY).

His leadership and results earned him a promotion to farm manager in 2016. Under his guidance, Camalot has continued to rank among the top-performing farms in the PCM system, even as the facility itself reached nearly 30 years of age.

In 2021, Senne led Camalot through a successful depopulation and repopulation, a major transition that required precision, patience, and trust in established protocols. Since 2022, Camalot has ranked as a top ten percent farm in the AcuFast SMS database, a testament to Senne's steady leadership and attention to detail.

### ***Consistency, Process, and Performance***

Those who work with Senne describe him as a manager who leads by example and believes strongly in following systems.

"Jeff's relentless attention to detail and commitment to process has kept Camalot a top producing farm for over 20 years," said Brian Roggow, DVM, of Fairmont Veterinary Clinic/Preferred Capital Management.

From daily routines to long-term planning, Senne emphasizes that everyone on the team understands what is expected and why it matters. He believes consistency is the foundation of herd health and productivity.

"Everybody needs to be on the same page," Senne said. "If people know the routine and understand the expectations, the animals benefit"

That mindset carries through every aspect of the operation, from breeding and farrowing to weaning schedules and biosecurity protocols. Camalot is a 2,200-sow farm operating on a structured batch system, where Senne ensures the team adheres closely to established timelines and procedures.

### ***A Focus on Biosecurity and Animal Health***

Animal health is central to Senne's management philosophy. He has long prioritized strong biosecurity practices, understanding that prevention is the most effective tool in maintaining herd performance.

Senne works closely with veterinarians and production partners to ensure protocols are followed consistently. His approach includes strict entry procedures, shower-in and shower-out requirements, and a focus on maintaining health across every stage of production.



**Swine Manager of the Year  
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"He was an early adopter of Post-Cervical Artificial Insemination (PCAI) technology and was instrumental in teaching those techniques to other PCM farms," Roggow said.

Senne's willingness to embrace innovation while staying grounded in proven practices has helped Camalot remain competitive and resilient, even as production challenges evolve.

### ***Leading and Supporting His Team***

Senne's leadership style is hands-on and personal. He believes that good managers must be present, supportive, and willing to step in when needed.



"You've got to treat it like you own it," Senne said. "That's how I expect myself to show up every day."

He works closely with his team to ensure safety, proper training, and accountability. Senne places a strong emphasis on making sure employees understand not just how tasks are done, but why they matter. In addition to the people, the health of the pigs is the main focus.

"If the pigs are healthy, everything else follows," Senne said. "You can't skip steps and expect good results."

By reinforcing expectations and encouraging communication, Senne has built a team culture rooted in pride and responsibility.

### ***Meeting Challenges Head-On***

Senne has faced his share of challenges, from feed availability to market pressures and facility limitations. He approaches problems by focusing on what he can control: management, care, and consistency.

Producing high-quality pigs efficiently and responsibly remains his top priority. Senne believes that strong systems and disciplined execution are the best tools for navigating uncertainty.

### ***Devoted Inside and Outside of the Barn***

Beyond the farm, Senne's dedication is just as evident at home. He is a devoted father who spends most of his free time with his son, Ashtyn, who is on the autism spectrum. Whether attending medical appointments, helping Ashtyn cast a fishing line, or spending time camping together as a family.

Those qualities, Roggow noted, are what makes Senne not only a strong manager, but a respected leader.

### ***A Lasting Impact***

When asked about the future, Senne says his focus remains simple: keep learning, keep improving, and continue doing things the right way.

"Ask questions and don't ever think you know everything," Senne said. "There's always something new to learn."

He is encouraged by advancements in genetics, technology and training that continue to improve pig health and productivity, and he takes pride in helping younger employees find fulfillment in the industry.

Being awarded Swine Manager of the Year is meaningful, Senne said, not just as personal recognition, but as a reflection of the people and systems around him.

"I enjoy this work and I'm grateful," Senne said. "It's about finding younger employees who want to be here and helping them succeed."

Jeff Senne's leadership, dedication to animal health, and commitment to doing things right have made a lasting impact at Camalot Breeders and across the PCM system, contributing to the continued success of Minnesota pork production. As Swine Manager of the Year, his example reflects the values that move the Minnesota pork industry forward.





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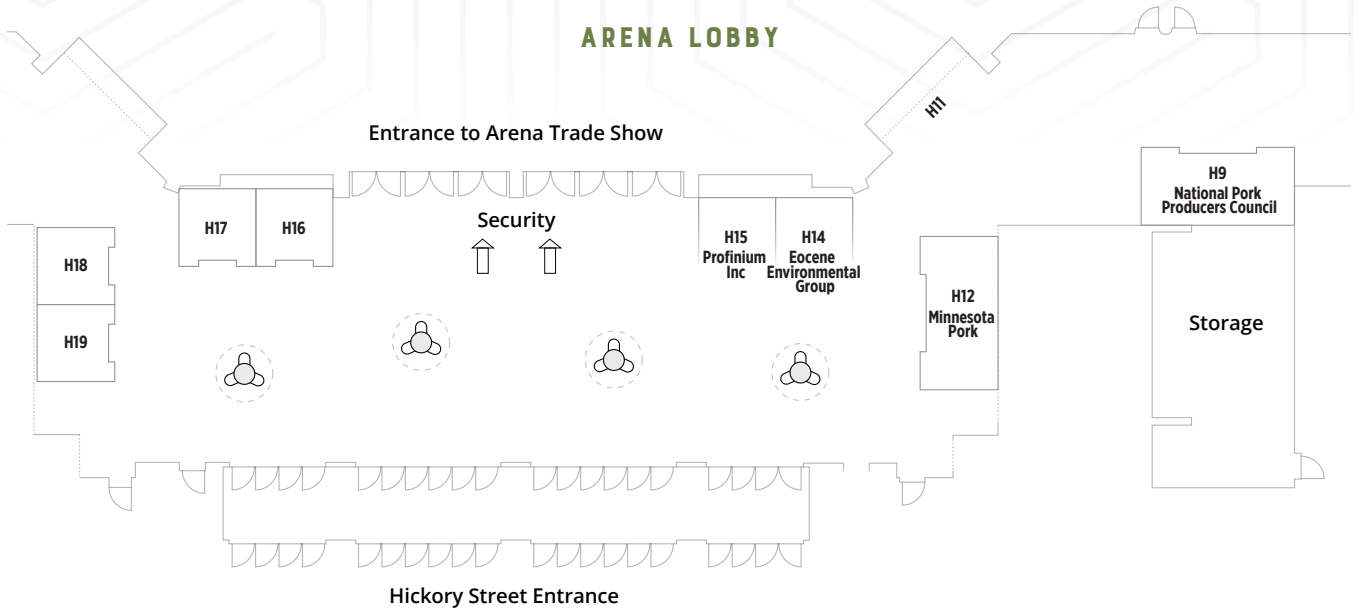
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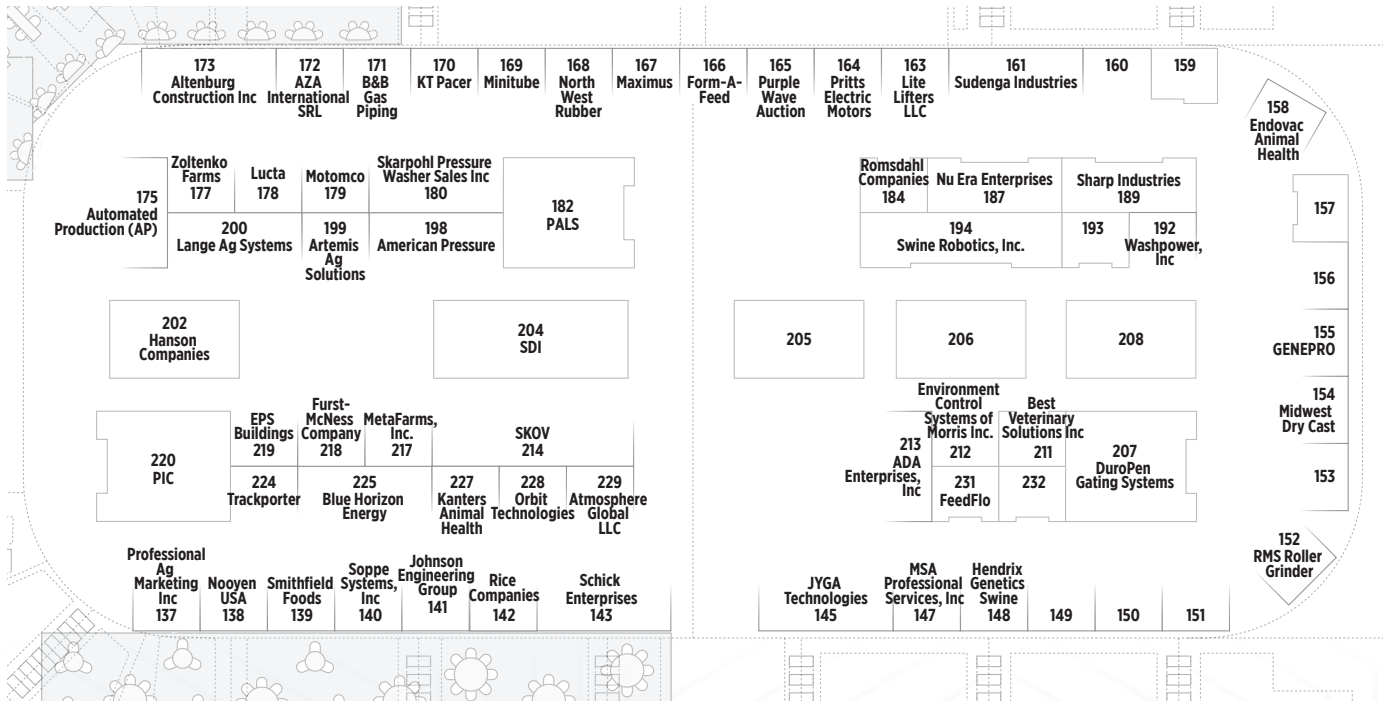
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AZA International SRL	172	Gro Master	101
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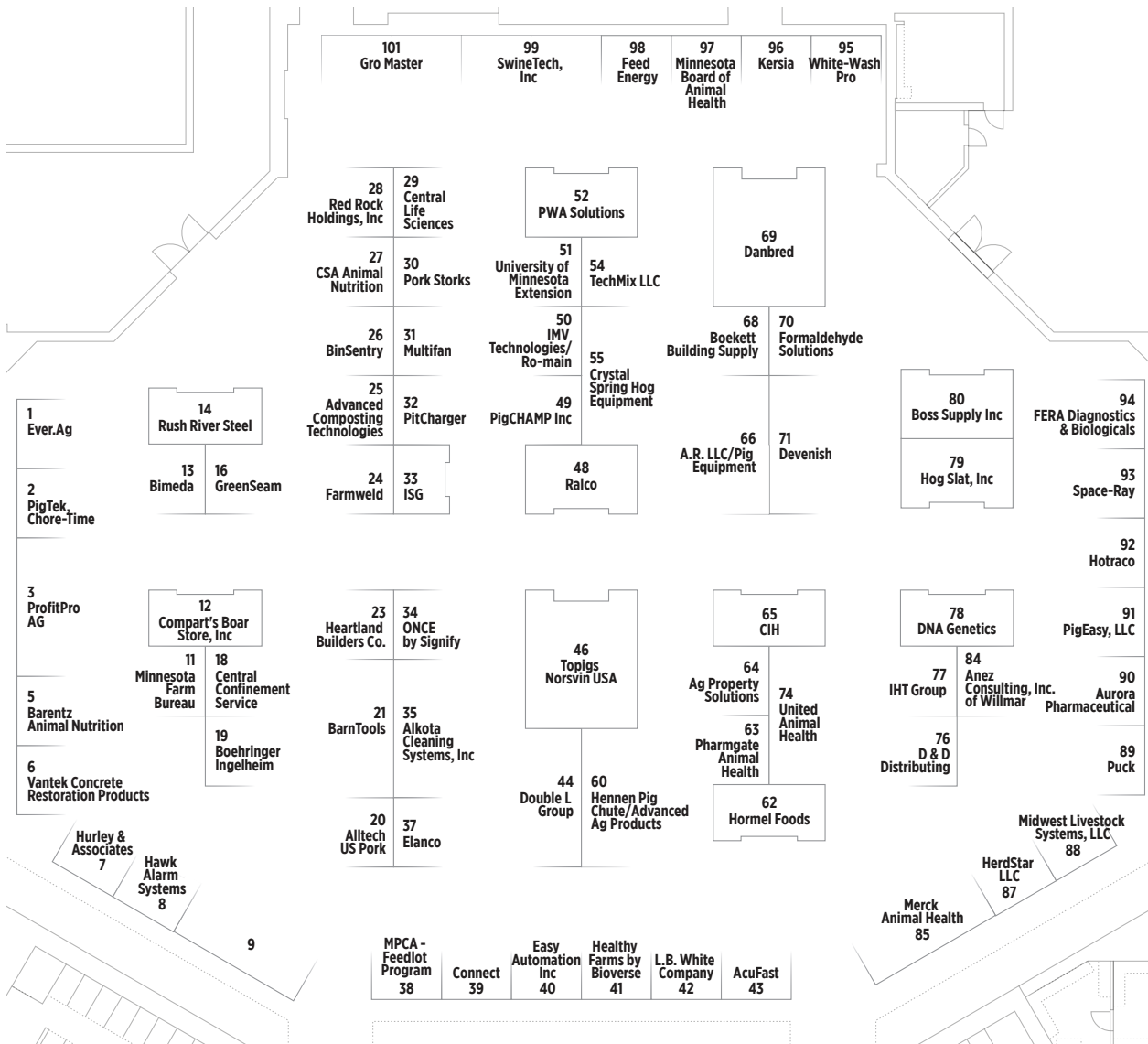


## ARENA TRADE SHOW





## GRAND HALL



<b>Exhibitor</b>	<b>Booth Number</b>	<b>Exhibitor</b>	<b>Booth Number</b>
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A vibrant photograph of a pork dish, likely pork chops or tenderloin, served over white rice and garnished with broccoli, red bell peppers, and green onions. The dish is presented on a red plate with a scalloped green rim. A blue circular logo with the word "pork" in white is overlaid on the dish. Below the logo, the text "TASTE WHAT PORK CAN DO." is written in white, bold, uppercase letters.

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# LINDSEY LOKEN

## 2026 PORK PROMOTER OF THE YEAR



For Lindsey Loken, pork promotion is rooted in everyday connection. It happens across the butcher counter, through hands-on education, on social media, and through conversations with customers who are curious, cautious, or looking for guidance.

Through her work as founder and owner of Blondies Butcher Shop, Loken has become a trusted and relatable voice for pork, one that meets consumers where they are and invites them to learn without judgment. Loken is the 2026 Minnesota Pork Promoter of the Year, recognized for her ability to connect consumers to pork in a way that is approachable, educational and grounded in trust.

### ***A Background Rooted in Passion and Curiosity***

Loken's passion for animals began at a young age. Growing up on her parents' hobby farm near Wanamingo, she spent time caring for animals, and rode along with her mother, a veterinary technician, developing an early appreciation for animal health and hands-on care. After high school, she studied animal science and veterinary technology, eventually working as a veterinary technician. She spent time working on a ranch in Montana, further shaping her understanding of agriculture and helping clarify the path she wanted to pursue.

In addition to her work as a veterinary technician, Loken also served as an emergency medical technician (EMT), a role that further reinforced her commitment to service and her ability to remain steady in high-pressure situations. While the work was rewarding, the demands of emergency response and emergency veterinary care eventually led her to reflect on what she wanted her long-term career to look like.

"I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do, but I knew I still wanted to work with animals and food in a meaningful way," she has shared.

Around that time, her parents mentioned that a local butcher shop back home in Minnesota was for sale. Loken decided to move home and take the leap. She spent time learning butchery skills, asking questions and immersing herself in the craft. In 2014, she officially took over Wanamingo Meats as the fourth owner, a business that would later evolve into Blondies Butcher Shop, a

woman-owned, consumer-facing butcher shop in Wanamingo known for its bright pink exterior and welcoming approach.

Today, Loken owns and operates Blondies with a focus on education, transparency and connection. She has created an environment designed to bridge the gap between farmers and consumers, where questions are encouraged and learning happens at the counter. Through in-shop conversations, classes and digital content, Loken works to make butchery approachable, understandable and fun, whether she's helping customers choose a cut, sharing practical cooking tips, or highlighting the farm-to-table journey behind the meat.



### ***Building Blondies: Education at the Core***

Blondies Butcher Shop officially rebranded in 2020, a year that would change the trajectory of the business in unexpected ways. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Loken found herself at the center of a renewed consumer interest in local food, meat sourcing and freezer stocking. What began as a small, value-driven business quickly became a trusted resource for customers seeking reassurance and knowledge during an uncertain time.

Loken leaned into education, explaining cuts, cooking methods, sourcing practices and how modern meat production works. Rather than overwhelming customers with technical language, she focused on clarity and comfort.

"A lot of people just don't know," she has said. "And if you remove the intimidation, they're actually excited to learn."

Blondies became known not only for high-quality meat, but for its welcoming atmosphere. Customers were encouraged to ask questions, try new cuts, and better understand where their food comes from, including pork.

**Pork Promoter of the Year Award Sponsor:**

**Elanco**

### ***Promoting Pork Through Everyday Conversations***

As a pork promoter, Loken's strength lies in her ability to translate complex topics into everyday language. Roughly 90 percent of her customers come from urban or suburban backgrounds, many with little direct connection to farming. For Loken, that represents an opportunity.

Through in-store conversations, classes, demonstrations and social media, she helps customers understand pork production, animal care, and the role farmers play in producing safe, wholesome food. She emphasizes that pork doesn't have to be complicated or intimidating, and that enjoying it doesn't require expert-level knowledge.

Her approach is intentionally judgment-free.

"This is a no-judgment zone," Loken often says. "People just don't know, and that's okay."

By creating a space where curiosity is welcomed, she bridges the gap between farmers and consumers in a way that feels authentic and lasting.

### ***Expanding Pork's Reach Beyond the Counter***

Loken's influence extends well beyond the walls of Blondies Butcher Shop. Through social media and television appearances, as well as educational content and collaborations with farmers and food professionals, she continues to reach consumers who may never step foot into a butcher shop but are still forming opinions about pork.

Her platforms are intentionally approachable, blending humor, practicality and clear information to demystify meat. Rather than focusing solely on product, Loken emphasizes understanding of how pork fits into everyday meals, how animals are raised, and why production practices matter. That approach has helped make pork feel accessible to a generation of consumers seeking transparency and confidence in their food choices.

Loken also recognizes that promotion is most effective when it reflects real life. She speaks openly about convenience, budgeting and cooking realities, acknowledging that today's consumers balance busy schedules with a desire to eat well. By meeting those needs honestly, she helps keep pork relevant and relatable. Through thoughtful engagement and a

consistent presence, Loken continues to strengthen trust in pork and reinforce its place at the center of the table.

### ***A Modern Voice for a Changing Audience***

Loken is helping redefine what pork promotion looks like for a new generation of consumers. As a woman in the meat industry, she brings both visibility and credibility to a space that has historically been male-dominated, while remaining deeply committed to education and connection.

In addition to her work at Blondies, Loken has also shared her expertise as a guest lecturer with the University of Minnesota, offering students a real-world perspective on meat science, retail education and consumer engagement. Together, these efforts reflect a broader shift within agriculture, where more women are leading, educating and shaping how food is discussed and where expertise, personality and leadership work hand in hand.



**(LINDSEY LOKEN CONTINUED)**

### ***Overcoming Challenges with Purpose***

Like many small business owners, Loken has navigated significant challenges, from COVID disruptions to the financial realities of being self-employed. She is transparent about the difficulty of building a business where “the heart goes into the work, not the margins.”

Yet she remains motivated by the impact.

“There’s a gut feeling that keeps you going,” she has said. “You wake up, your stomach hurts, but you still show up because it matters.”

For Loken, success is measured not only in sales, but in moments of understanding: a customer trying pork they’d previously avoided, a family learning how to cook a new cut, or a conversation that shifts perception.

### ***A Well-Deserved Recognition***

Lindsey Loken’s impact as a pork promoter is rooted in trust. She doesn’t rely on slogans or shortcuts. Instead, she builds understanding one conversation at a time through education, transparency and respect.

In an era where consumers are asking more questions than ever, Loken provides thoughtful answers. Through Blondies Butcher Shop, she has created a modern platform for pork promotion that resonates with today’s audience while honoring the work of those who raise pigs.

Her ability to connect people to pork with authenticity and approachability makes her a deserving recipient of the Minnesota Pork Promoter of the Year award.





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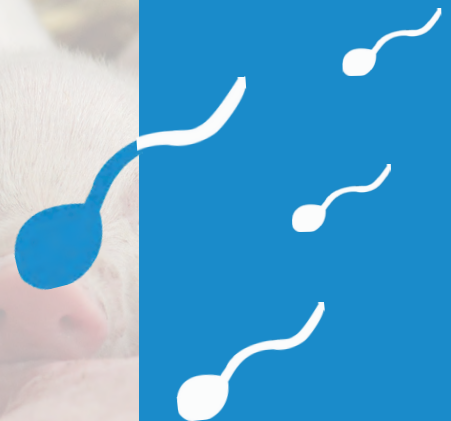
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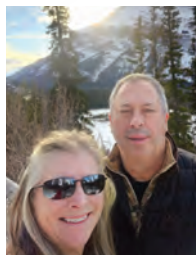
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# WOLTERS FAMILY

## 2026 MINNESOTA PORK FAMILY OF THE YEAR



A passion for animal science set Terry and Sylvia Wolters on a path that would shape both their careers and their family's purpose.

Though not the traditional farm family rooted in one place, their story reflects an increasingly important kind of legacy. It is one built on an unwavering commitment to people, community, and pork. Their dedication has led to deserving recognition as the 2026 Minnesota Pork Family of the Year.

### A Shared Start

Terry and Sylvia's story began at Washington State University (WSU), where both were animal science majors and members of the livestock judging team. Judging contests, quiz bowl, meats judging and coursework laid a technical foundation, but more importantly, they sparked a shared passion for agriculture.

Sylvia grew up in western Washington on a sheep and hay ranch, while Terry was raised in eastern Washington, where his early exposure to pigs came through an FFA project. That experience left a lasting impression, shaping Terry's belief that agriculture must remain accessible to students who may not grow up on a farm. Decades later, both Sylvia and Terry remain using the skills they learned growing up in programs like FFA and 4-H. That belief would resurface through his involvement with career and technical education programs that connect students to livestock and food systems.

After graduating from WSU in 1985, Terry and Sylvia married and moved to Kentucky within weeks, both accepting positions with Pig Improvement Company (PIC).

"We moved to Kentucky with what we owned in the back of a pickup and school loans," Terry said.

It was the first of several moves that would shape their professional and personal journey, driven by passion for the industry and a willingness to pursue opportunities.

### Building Careers Together

PIC soon transferred the couple to Iowa and then to White Lake, South Dakota, where Terry managed production sites. While Sylvia initially worked in barns, the realities of small-farm staffing and alternating weekend schedules prompted her to step away from barn work and explore opportunities in town.

That decision led Sylvia into the retail and food-service world, a move that would prove instrumental later in life. After working as a meat cutter and gaining retail experience, Sylvia and Terry eventually purchased a grocery store in White Lake, followed by a café shortly thereafter. For more than a decade, Sylvia ran both businesses, handling everything from meat cutting and ordering to cooking, marketing and customer relationships.

"Food brings people together, and that has carried through everything we've done since," Sylvia said.

Those years proved how food connects people, how quality and consistency matter, and how relationships are built around shared meals, lessons that would later become central to the Wolters' approach to pork promotion and community engagement.





## Family of the Year Award Sponsor:



and community engagement, she has played a key role in developing hands-on and interactive experiences including exhibits like virtual sow farm tour at several fairs, children's museums and more including the Sioux Empire Fair's Discovery Barn. For Sylvia, the work is a natural extension of what she has always done.

"When I was 11 years old, I did a sheep-shearing demonstration at the mall for an ag awareness weekend," she said. "We did the shearing demonstrations right there at the mall, and now I've done those same demonstrations at the Discovery Barn."

More than 50 years later, that passion remains unchanged. What began as a childhood introduction to agricultural education has become a lifelong commitment, creating meaningful, approachable experiences that help people better understand farming, food and animal care.



## Promotion Through Food and Community

While production and leadership laid the foundation of the Wolters' careers, over the years of building Pipestone as their home, their greatest fulfillment has come through promotion and community engagement.

What began as simple county pork producer grilling gradually evolved into something much larger. With Sylvia's background in food service and retail and Terry's passion for advocacy, the couple started preparing pork for meetings, events, and fundraisers across their community, and demand grew quickly. Their efforts have supported a range of organizations, from FFA chapters to military, first responder, and fire rescue organizations.

"It just got bigger and bigger, and it's like a hobby that's kind of out of control now," Sylvia said.



## Moving to Pipestone

After 12 years in White Lake, Terry's role with PIC evolved into a sales position, bringing him frequently to Pipestone, Minnesota. The relationships he built there, particularly with Hutterite colonies and Pipestone's growing customer base, led to a new opportunity. Pipestone recruited Terry to join the organization, where he currently serves as the Western Region Manager for Big Stone Marketing.

Beyond a career shift, the move opened doors for Terry and Sylvia to invest directly in pork production. Unlike previous roles, Pipestone's structure allowed employees to have ownership, enabling the Wolters family to purchase shares in sow farms and eventually own a wean-to-finish barn. Today, under Stony Creek Farms, the family has ownership interests across multiple sow farms and maintains a leased wean-to-finish facility, along with some crop ground.

Just as importantly, Pipestone felt like home.

The values, work ethic, and farmer-first focus of the organization aligned closely with Terry and Sylvia's own.

"Pipestone felt like a place that shared our values and work ethic," Terry said. "It was closer to the farmers we worked for, and it felt like home."

Over time, their definition of "family" expanded beyond their two children to include the broader Pipestone team, colleagues who became friends and partners in a shared mission to support family farmers.

With the move, Sylvia found her place at Pipestone, too. As the Public Relations Director, she has helped shape how the organization connects with the public, farmers and families through education and outreach. Drawing on decades of experience in food service, promotion



**(WOLTERS FAMILY CONTINUED)**

They invested in professional equipment, licensed food-service trailers in both South Dakota and Minnesota and developed what is now known as Stony Creek Promotions. Today, they prepare an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 pounds of pork annually, with

the majority used to support community fundraisers. Rather than writing checks, the Wolters use pork as a tool to multiply impact, turning a few hundred dollars' worth of product into thousands in revenue for local causes.

"There are a lot of relationships and a lot of good things that happen around food," Sylvia said. "Being part of people's celebrations or events is fun, and being able to contribute pork makes it even better because that's what we're passionate about."

### **Leadership, Service, and Family**

Beyond cooking delicious pork, both Terry and Sylvia have dedicated countless hours to leadership and service.

Terry has served at every level of pork leadership, from county involvement to state and national boards, including the Minnesota Pork Producers Association and the National Pork Producers Council, serving as president in 2022. His roles have included work on animal health, food safety, traceability, product demand, and promotion committees.

Sylvia's leadership has often centered on education and community. She has served on chamber boards, pork-related committees in multiple states, and education-focused boards such as the CTE Academy and Minnesota West. Her work consistently returns to one theme: helping people, especially young people, find opportunity and connection.

Colleague Lori Stevermer, who has served alongside Terry on the national level, can attest to the role they play.

"Terry and Sylvia may not be your traditional family farmers, but their impact has been significant. They have dedicated themselves to promoting pork and advocating on half of pig farmers not just in Minnesota, but across the

United States," Stevermer said. "Their children have been part of many of these events, and as the family grows, the next generation is becoming part of the pork advocacy team as Terry and Sylvia continue their work."

Terry and Sylvia's children, Bailey and Blake, grew up immersed in these values.

Bailey, the older of the two, balanced livestock projects with a range of interests. Today, she and her husband Austin are raising their son in South Dakota, continuing the family's connection to community, agriculture, and youth activities.

Blake developed an early passion for pigs through show projects and later earned a degree in agricultural engineering from South Dakota State University. He, his wife Paige and their daughter Hattie live in Austin, Minnesota. Blake works for Hormel in research and development, designing and improving processing systems while continuing to give back as a high school wrestling coach.

Both Blake and Paige served as Minnesota Pork Ambassadors from 2016-2017 as college students, meeting with farmers and consumers, attending events such as Minnesota Pork Congress and World Pork Expo, and overall representing the industry. Through their involvement, Jill Resler, CEO for Minnesota Pork, has witnessed the family's commitment first-hand.

"The Wolters family is a testament to there is no single pathway that leads to a lifelong commitment to the pork industry," Resler said. "Across roles, generations, and stages of life, they have been intentional about remaining connected to the industry they care about deeply."



### **Looking Ahead**

From building careers in pork production to serving pork to bring communities together, the Wolters have touched nearly every aspect of strengthening pork in Minnesota. Their recognition as the 2026 Minnesota Family of the Year reflects a decades-long commitment to leadership, service, and commitment, continuing in its next generation.



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# DR. TOM WETZELL

## 2026 DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD



For decades, Dr. Tom Wetzell has helped shape the success, resilience and future of Minnesota's pork industry. Through clinical practice, corporate leadership and independent consulting, his career reflects a deep commitment to service, collaboration and the long-term well-being of pig farmers and veterinarians alike.

As the recipient of the 2026 Minnesota Pork Distinguished Service award, Dr. Wetzell is recognized not for a single achievement, but for a career of leadership rooted in integrity, humility and an unwavering dedication to the success of not only Minnesota's pork industry, but agriculture as a whole.

### ***A Foundation Built in Veterinary Medicine***

Dr. Wetzell's journey into veterinary medicine was shaped at a young age. Born in Ames, Iowa, he was exposed early to the profession through his father, a veterinarian, which sparked an interest that eventually led him to Iowa State University for his undergraduate studies. While there, Dr. Wetzell gravitated toward swine medicine, drawn by both the science and the people behind pork production.

He later attended the University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine, where Dr. Al Leman served as a professor and became a major influence on his career. After graduating, Dr. Wetzell began his career with South Central Veterinary Associates, where he served Minnesota pig farmers for three decades, from 1977 to 2007. During that time, he became a trusted practitioner across southern Minnesota, working closely with farm families during a period of significant transition in the pork sector.

The 1980s and 1990s brought rapid change, and Dr. Wetzell was among those willing to adapt early. As production systems evolved, he leaned into innovation rather than resisting it, helping producers navigate emerging health challenges and new management approaches.

"Tom was never afraid to be an early adopter or a risk taker," Dr. Gordon Spronk, staff veterinarian and chair emeritus at Pipestone, said. "He understood that progress required thoughtful change."

### ***Expanding Impact Through Corporate Leadership***

In 2008, Dr. Wetzell continued working with pig farmers in his role as Senior Professional Service Veterinarian with Boehringer Ingelheim. He worked across multiple regions to address complex animal health challenges while collaborating with veterinary teams, producers and industry partners to translate science and research into practical, on-farm solutions. The move into corporate leadership also brought personal and professional growth. Dr. Wetzell embraced new challenges as opportunities to gain perspective.

"It's always exciting in swine to find solutions," Dr. Wetzell said. "Because I already knew people through private practice, they were open to hearing from me in this role."

Those qualities are evident to people who worked alongside him throughout his career.

"Although I could speak at lengths about Tom's expertise and knowledge as a veterinarian, what I believe sets him apart is how he goes about his work: with integrity, care and genuine concern for the people he works with." Mark Schwartz, director of innovation at Schwartz Farms Inc., said. "Tom lives a life of gratitude, being so keenly aware that everything is a gift, and he freely gives of his time and talents in service to others. His leadership is quiet, steady and rooted in generosity."

Both his roles in private practice and in a corporate role strengthened Dr. Wetzell's leadership and helped shape his later work as a consultant and industry leader in Minnesota.

### ***Returning to Serve as a Consultant***

In January 2020, Dr. Wetzell transitioned into independent consulting, a role that allowed him to combine decades of experience in private practice and corporate leadership with a renewed focus on service.

One of his early contributions as a consultant was leading Minnesota's efforts within the U.S. Swine Health Improvement Plan (U.S. SHIP), where he helped increase farmer enrollment and position Minnesota as a national leader in producer engagement.

More recently, Dr. Wetzell has played a central role in advancing Minnesota's work on *Mycoplasma hyopneumoniae* elimination. As chair of the Minnesota Animal Health Task Force, he has helped bring producers, veterinarians and industry partners together around the



## Distinguished Service Award Sponsor:



shared goal to improve herd health. This is an effort that has drawn strong support from academic and industry leaders alike, including Dr. Montse Torremorell, DVM, PhD, professor and department chair of Veterinary Population Medicine at the University of Minnesota.

"What has always stood out about Tom is his unwavering commitment to Minnesota pig producers and veterinarians," said Dr. Montse Torremorell, DVM, PhD, professor and department chair of Veterinary Population Medicine at the University of Minnesota. "He cares deeply about the long-term health and sustainability of the pork community, and he brings people together with a genuine desire to serve the greater good."

Dr. Wetzell believes strongly in understanding others before seeking to be understood, an approach that has earned him trust and respect across generations.

"At the end of the day, it's about people," he said. "If you support them, listen well and work together, the industry is stronger for it."

Even in a semi-retired role, Dr. Wetzell continues to show up with energy and purpose, guided by a belief that service does not end with a job title. His consulting work reflects a lifetime commitment to strengthening Minnesota pork, today and for the future.

### **Championing Collaboration and Mentorship**

Dr. Wetzell has invested significant time supporting younger veterinarians and swine professionals, encouraging them to stay engaged in the pork industry and helping them navigate the realities of demanding careers. He has also been involved in initiatives designed to support early-career veterinarians, recognizing the importance of developing future leaders who are both skilled and grounded.

"Tom has always believed that strong people are the foundation of a strong industry," Spronk added. "He gives freely of his time and knowledge."

Long before podcasts were mainstream, Dr. Wetzell was creating space for thoughtful dialogue. With colleagues Dr. Spronk and the late Dr. Bob Morrison, he founded and co-hosted *At the Meeting*, a podcast focused on veterinary medicine, leadership and the evolving challenges facing pork producers. Early episodes were recorded on cassette tapes, proof that Dr. Wetzell and his colleagues were sharing insights and building connection

well before podcasting became "cool." Through long-form conversations with peers and industry leaders, Dr. Wetzell fostered learning and collaboration rooted in listening and shared experience.

### **Service Guided by Faith, Family, and Gratitude**

Those who know Dr. Wetzell well often speak of his humility and gratitude. Grounded in faith and family, he brings a steady perspective that frames work as service and leadership as responsibility.



**(DR. TOM WETZELL CONTINUED)**

"Dr. Wetzell is a lifelong learner who consistently goes above and beyond what is expected of him to ensure the success of pork producers in Minnesota, and beyond," Torremorell said.

That mindset extends beyond his professional life. Dr. Wetzell is actively involved in leadership at Crossroads Church in Albert Lea and a regional Christian radio station, serving on its board and supporting faith-based programming centered on encouragement and service.

***An Industry That Continues to Inspire***

When reflecting on the evolution of pork production, Dr. Wetzell points to innovation, adaptability and the people within the industry as defining strengths. He believes Minnesota's pork community is uniquely positioned to lead, not only through technology, but through collaboration and shared values.

He also emphasizes the importance of preparing the next generation to take ownership of the industry's future.

"There is so much potential in the next generation," Dr. Wetzell said. "We need to continue challenging ourselves and supporting young leaders as they step forward."

***A Legacy of Distinguished Service***

Dr. Wetzell's career spans private practice, corporate leadership and consulting, but the common thread is service. He has consistently chosen roles that allow him to give back, support others and strengthen the long-term success of Minnesota's pork community.

Those who nominated him for the Distinguished Service award describe a leader who seeks solutions, not credit, someone who is always willing to listen, collaborate and help move the industry forward.

"In short," Schwartz said, "Tom Wetzell lives out the spirit of this award."

As the 2026 Minnesota Pork Distinguished Service Award recipient, Dr. Wetzell's legacy extends beyond the programs he has helped lead or the initiatives he has advanced. It is reflected in the people he has supported and the example he continues to set for service-driven leadership within Minnesota's pork industry and beyond.





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# REPRESENTATIVE PAUL ANDERSON

## 2026 MINNESOTA PORK LEGISLATOR OF DISTINCTION



For Representative Paul Anderson, agriculture is not simply a policy focus. It is the foundation of his life, his values and his approach to public service. As the recipient of the Minnesota Pork Legislator of Distinction award, Anderson is recognized for nearly two decades of leadership at the

Minnesota Capitol and his unwavering commitment to ensuring agriculture has a strong, informed voice in state government.

Throughout his legislative career, Anderson has been known as a steady, practical leader who listens first, works across differences and approaches policy with the same mindset he brings to the farm: think long-term, solve problems, and do what is right.

### ***Grounded in Rural Minnesota***

Anderson grew up in Starbuck, Minnesota and is a fourth-generation farmer on his family's farm. After graduating from Starbuck High School, he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in physical education and education from the University of Minnesota, Morris. Agriculture has been a constant presence throughout his life, shaping not only his career but his perspective on stewardship, responsibility and community.

After college, Anderson spent time working as a radio announcer and sports broadcaster, a role that kept

him closely connected to rural communities across west-central Minnesota. For more than 20 years, he served as a sports announcer and referee, experiences that reinforced the importance of communication, fairness and teamwork. These are skills that would later serve him well in public office.



In the mid-1970s, Anderson returned home to the family farm, where the operation includes corn, soybeans, small grains and beef cattle. Over the years, he has seen firsthand how advances in technology and management have allowed farmers to become more efficient while remaining committed to conservation and animal care.

"Today's technology in agriculture allows farmers to be more efficient for a financial reason, but also for environmental reasons," Anderson said. "Producers are always looking for ways to do things better."

Alongside his wife, whom he often describes as his "right hand", Anderson values the teamwork required to run a successful business. Their family remains closely connected to agriculture, with children and grandchildren continuing to stay involved and return home for planting and harvest when possible.

"Farming teaches you to think long term," Anderson said. "You make decisions knowing they affect not just today, but the next generation."

### ***A Path to Public Service***

Anderson's path to public office began at the local level, driven by a desire to serve his community and make a positive impact. He spent 20 years as a township clerk, served on the local school board and later as a county commissioner, experiences that gave him a deep understanding of how government decisions affect people at every level.



## Legislator of Distinction Award Sponsor:



In 2008, Anderson was elected to the Minnesota House of Representatives. Now in his 18th year in the House through three rounds of redistricting, he said his motivation for serving remains unchanged.

"I've always been interested in helping people," Anderson said. "Government impacts everyone's lives, and I've always believed it should work in a practical, common-sense way."

Over the years, Anderson has witnessed agriculture policy become increasingly complex and, at times, more partisan. He notes that as fewer legislators come from farming backgrounds, it becomes even more important to educate colleagues about how policies translate to real-world impacts on farms.

"A lot of people don't fully understand agriculture," he said. "That's why it's important to keep those conversations going and make sure decisions are made with good information."

That commitment to education and accessibility is part of what has made Anderson an effective advocate for pig farmers, said AJ Duerr, lobbyist for the Minnesota Pork Producers Association.

"Throughout his 18 years in the Minnesota House, Rep. Anderson has consistently championed legislation on behalf of pig farmers," Duerr said. "As a farmer himself, he understands these issues better than just about anyone, and that credibility allows him to be effective whether he is chairing a committee or serving in the minority party. Whenever MPPA contacts him with a question or concern, his response is always immediate and extremely helpful."

### **A Steady Voice for Agriculture**

Throughout his legislative career, Anderson has been a consistent advocate for farmers and ranchers in



Minnesota. He currently serves as co-chair of the House Agriculture, Finance, and Policy Committee, a role that allows him to bring firsthand farming experience into policy discussions and ensure agriculture remains part of broader state conversations.

He has worked on a wide range of agriculture-related legislation, including efforts to prevent bans on treated seed, address nuisance lawsuits affecting livestock producers and ensure statewide zoning and environmental protections are implemented fairly.

"We can protect natural resources and still allow farmers to do their jobs," Anderson said. "Those things don't have to be in conflict."

Anderson also points to his work improving auditing requirements for small grain elevators and addressing permitting timelines as examples of practical changes that reduce unnecessary burdens while maintaining accountability.

"Permitting in Minnesota can be more difficult than in other states," he said. "If timelines drag out too long, it discourages expansion and innovation. We need to make sure the process is fair and reasonable."

From a policy perspective, Lauren Servick, director of public policy strategy and sustainability for the Minnesota Pork Producers Association, says Anderson's approach to





**(REPRESENTATIVE PAUL ANDERSON CONTINUED)**

issues like environmental permitting reflects his ability to work through complex and often partisan topics.

"Representative Anderson remains a steady champion for the issues that directly impact farmers and rural Minnesota," Servick said. "He has supported and advocated for reasonable changes that meet the needs of farmers in areas like environmental permitting, where things can get more partisan. Rep. Anderson is known for being level-headed and thoughtful, and that leadership and approach help agriculture issues move forward at the legislature."

### **Committee Leadership and Legislative Impact**

In addition to his leadership on agriculture issues, Anderson has served on numerous committees, including education, property tax, state and local government, and health policy.

He has played a role in updating the agricultural homestead tax classification to better reflect modern farming operations and supported increased funding for soil and water conservation programs, recognizing the importance of voluntary, incentive-based conservation efforts.

Anderson has also been a strong supporter of animal health and biosecurity initiatives. He has worked to maintain funding for the Minnesota Board of Animal Health and supported policies that strengthen disease prevention and response.

One issue Anderson continues to highlight is the shortage of rural veterinarians. He has supported loan forgiveness programs aimed at encouraging veterinarians to practice

in rural areas, understanding the critical role veterinary care plays in livestock production.

"Animal health is essential," Anderson said. "If we don't have the infrastructure in place, it affects farmers, animal care and the food supply as a whole."

### **Partnerships That Matter**

Anderson credits strong relationships with farmers, commodity groups and fellow legislators as a key reason for his effectiveness. He has worked closely with Minnesota Pork leaders and advocates, including former Minnesota Pork CEO Dave Preisler, lobbyist AJ Duerr and pig farmer John Anderson, to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges facing pig farmers and livestock producers.

"These partnerships matter," Anderson said. "The more communication we have, the better policy we create."

Pig farmer John Anderson, who farms near Belgrade, Minn., has seen that approach firsthand and says it reflects the quiet confidence Rep. Anderson is known for.

"Paul's quiet, confident demeanor has made him an effective leader in the Minnesota Legislature," John Anderson said. "He understands the needs of his constituents by staying involved in the agriculture and community he represents."

### **Why He Continues to Serve**

Despite long legislative sessions and increasing demands, Anderson says he continues to serve because the work remains meaningful.

"I enjoy working with smart, talented people and helping solve real problems," he said. "People call because they need help, and being able to help them is incredibly rewarding."

He also emphasizes the importance of ensuring production agriculture continues to have a place at the table as policy discussions evolve.

"There is room for all of us," Anderson said. "We need to make sure production agriculture has a voice and that decisions are made with a full understanding of the consequences."

### **Advice for the Next Generation**

When asked what advice he would offer to those involved in policymaking and advocacy, Anderson points to the importance of listening and collaboration.

"There are always two sides to an issue," he said. "You need to hear both, discuss it and come to a common-sense solution. Do the right thing, the best thing."



He also encourages agriculture to continue telling its story clearly and consistently.

"There are reasons why we do things the way we do," Anderson said. "They make sense. We need to keep explaining that and helping people understand where their food comes from."

Rep. Paul Anderson's leadership, experience and commitment to agriculture have made a lasting impact at the Capitol and across Minnesota's farming communities. As a Legislator of Distinction, his work continues to strengthen the partnerships and policies that support farmers today and into the future.



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Minnesota Pork's investments, events, and collaborations continue to be guided by the strategic imperatives outlined in its 2024–2027 Strategic Plan under the pillars of Build Trust, Animal Well-Being, Invest in People, Impact Through Influence, and Protect Our Freedom to Operate. The following activities and partnerships reflect action-oriented efforts over the past 12 months to add value to producer investments and move the organization forward.



### Build Trust

*Minnesota Pork's approach to building trust centers on making pork an easy, enjoyable, and repeatable choice for everyday meals. By inspiring consumers to confidently purchase pork and enjoy the cooking process, taste, versatility, and convenience of pork, the goal is to encourage repeat purchases and long-term loyalty to pork as a go-to protein.*

In May 2025, Minnesota Pork launched the **Taste What Pork Can Do™** campaign, a refreshed consumer-focused effort that brings pork's flavor, versatility, and convenience to the forefront. The campaign showcases how pork fits seamlessly into everyday routines, from quick weeknight meals to on-the-go lifestyles. The campaign was integrated into many campaigns after it's launched, bringing a fresh new energy for years to come.

### Minnesota State Fair



The Oink and Promotion Booths continue to be valuable spaces for connecting fairgoers with Minnesota pig farmers and sharing cooking and nutrition tips. The Oink Booth offers an educational experience, featuring interior and exterior murals that highlight the finishing barn environment and highlight the practices and people

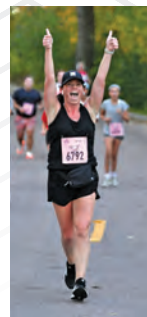
involved in pig farming. The Promotion Booth focuses on pork the product, promoting the **Taste What Pork Can Do™** campaign by highlighting pork's flavor, versatility and role in everyday meals. Both experiences are made possible by dedicated farmer volunteers who share their stories and answer questions, creating authentic, trust-building interactions, while crowd favorites, including the sow and litter and the largest boar, continue to draw strong interest each year.

### Mankato Marathon

Again in 2025, the Minnesota Pork Board (MPB) sponsored the Pork Power 5K during the Mankato Marathon weekend,



held October 17-18. On Friday, Oct. 17, MPB took part in the Scheels Wellness Expo, hosting a booth to share nutritional information about pork, the Taste What Pork Can Do messaging and distributing meat thermometers, and recipes. During the Pork Power 5K, MPB provided prize packs for the first male and female finishers and handed out pork snack sticks at the finish line for all participants.



### Grandma's Marathon

MPB continued as a major sponsor of Grandma's Marathon in 2025. The event, held in Duluth on June 19-21, included the Essentia Health and Fitness Expo and featured three races that drew over 18,000 runners, along with their families and fans from around the globe. MPB offered pork loin samples, nutritional information, meat thermometers, and cooking tips at the expo while featuring the Taste What Pork Can Do campaign. Farmer volunteers and runners staffed the booth, sharing insights, answering questions, and participating in the 5K, half marathon, and full marathon. Additionally, 8,000 pork snack sticks were distributed in the recovery area for half-marathon and marathon runners.

### Nourish, Move, Love

Over 635,000 people now follow fitness trainer Lindsey Bomgren of Nourish Move Love (NML) on Instagram, reflecting continued growth and strong audience



engagement. Minnesota Pork maintained its partnership with NML to produce free 35-minute workout videos that authentically highlight pork's role as a high-quality protein to support active lifestyles and post-workout recovery, with Dr. Taylor Spronk, an audience favorite, featured across both workout and kitchen-style cooking content.



Kitchen-style cooking videos continued to see strong success, reinforcing pork's flavor, versatility, and convenience alongside the workout content. The partnership also included two two-week workout challenges, paired with a meal plan developed in collaboration with the Real Food Dietitians. Together, these activations connected fitness routines with practical meal inspiration, helping consumers see how pork fits seamlessly into both movement and everyday cooking.

### The Real Food Dietitians

Minnesota Pork continues its long-standing partnership with *The Real Food Dietitians*, a team of registered dietitian-nutritionists followed by more than **551,000 people on**







**Instagram**, who are known for creating approachable, real-food recipes and practical meal plans for busy families. Together, they developed pork recipes and two two-week meal plans with

grocery lists that highlighted pork's flavor, versatility, and convenience, making it easier for consumers to confidently choose pork for everyday meals.

### **Minnesota Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (MAND)**

In 2025 MPB sponsored a pre-conference workshop prior to the Annual Minnesota Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Conference (MAND). The workshop featured Chef Yia Vang and his cuisine from his award winning restaurant, Vanai. Chef Yia shared how his culture, Hmong, views food and how it connects them with their homeland. The attendees heard how he has worked with dietitians to control and overcome his diabetic journey. Continuing its sponsorship of the annual conference, the MPB hosted a booth and served as the lunch sponsor at the MAND conference for current and emerging dietitians. Held in Eagan, Minnesota, the conference provided an excellent opportunity to connect with professionals dedicated to understanding and advising on nutrition.



### **Twin Cities Live Participation**



Over the past year, the MPB collaborated with Twin Cities Live in several engaging ways. During the daytime show, hosted by Elizabeth Ries and Ben Leber, MPB featured a variety of segments. These included a monthly pork recipe tied to the season, a "12 Days of Grilling" campaign in July in partnership with

the Minnesota Beef Council, and a week-long series of pork-focused segments to kick off grilling season and celebrate National Pork Month in October. In each six-minute segment, a representative, whether a chef, pig farmer, veterinarian, or dietitian, highlighted creative ways to prepare pork while discussing its nutritional benefits and farmers' sustainability practices.

### **Start Tribune Display Ads**

The Minnesota Star Tribune remains a high-impact platform for reaching engaged consumers across the Twin Cities metro, supporting MPB's goal of shaping positive perceptions of pork. Through targeted digital display advertising across Star Tribune's website and streaming platforms, MPB



highlighted pork's sustainability, versatility and flavor. The partnership also included MPB serving as a pillar sponsor of Strib Varsity, the Star Tribune's new hub for Minnesota high school sports, aligning pork with community pride and active lifestyles, along with a variety of print placements including the 2025 Minnesota's Best magazine and the Minnesota State Fair Guide.

### **WCCO Radio**

Jason DeRusha continues as the drive-time host on WCCO Radio, well-known for his previous role in the Twin Cities as a WCCO-TV personality and food critic. DeRusha has been a long-time supporter of pig farming and pork for nearly two decades. His authentic voice can be heard over one dozen times each month sharing Minnesota pig farmers' sustainability story and simple, delicious, versatile ways to cook pork during his live segments and online on the Audacy radio network. In addition to his radio presence, he hosts a podcast titled DeRusha Eats where he has also had segments based on pork's flavorful potential and nutritional benefits.

### **NPB/Hy-Vee Partnership**

MPB, in collaboration with other state organizations, the National Pork Board, and Hy-Vee, sponsored a comprehensive pork promotion campaign both in stores and online. The partnership featured five targeted monthly promotions throughout 2025, showcasing a variety of pork products. In addition to these paid promotions, Hy-Vee consistently spotlighted pork by including recipes and featuring pork products in nearly every issue of its *Seasons* magazine.

### **Coborn's Grocery & Cash Wise Foods Registered Dietitian Team**

In 2025, MPB partnered with the registered dietitian teams at Coborn's Grocery and Cash Wise Foods for two impactful promotions. March promotions focused on National Nutrition Month with shoppable online recipes, nutrition information and meal ideas on display in the stores. September is National Family Meal Month and MPB continued to supply recipes, **Taste What Pork Can Do™** graphics and meal plans.

### **Cub Foods Partnership**

MPB has worked a few different ways with Cub Foods in 2025. In July MPB shared **Taste What Pork Can Do™** recipes and Cub Foods partnered those with McCormick seasonings and Wholestone Farms pork for an online and in their app promotion. In continuing the partnership with Cub Foods and Wholestone Farms, MPB worked with U of M, Gophers Football an a "Pick for Pork" promotion. during home games, if the Gophers intercepted the football, all fans were able to go to Cub Foods for the next 48 hours and receive \$2 off the purchase of Wholestone Farms pork.





## MS 150 Rest Stop Sponsor Promotion



New in 2025, MPB sponsored the Multiple Sclerosis 150 (MS 150) Bike Ride Rest Stop in Charlton, MN. This gave farmers and staff the opportunity to talk about pork and nutrition with over 1,500 riders. The MS 150 raises money the National MS Society can tackle the challenges of MS. MPB handed

out thermometers, nutrition information, recipes and hosted a photo booth. Martin C. Magic, mascot for Martin County, Bacon Capital USA, made an appearance and was featured in many of the photo booth pictures. While being fun and engaging, this is another opportunity for pig farmers to support their communities.

## Partnerships with Athletes



Following the momentum of the 2024 Cook 'n Bacon partnership, MPB continued expanding athlete influencer partnerships within women's sports, where audience engagement continues to grow. As

**Taste What Pork Can Do™** remains a digital-first campaign, influencer marketing plays a key role in reaching consumers in authentic, relatable ways. This year, MPB partnered with elite female athletes from the Minnesota Frost (Professional Women's Hockey League) and the Minnesota Lynx (Women's National Basketball Association), creating social media content that featured pork in everyday, at-home cooking moments. The partnerships also extended beyond digital, with athletes Taylor Heise and Kendall Coyne Schofield joining MPB at an in-person event at the Ronald McDonald House.



## Gopher Sports Partnership



New this year, MPB launched a partnership with Gopher Athletics as part of the **Taste What Pork Can Do™** campaign, which focuses on making pork relevant,

approachable and part of everyday life. By activating at the state's Big Ten university, MPB met consumers in a place where they were already engaged and excited, creating natural opportunities to showcase pork's flavor, versatility and convenience. The partnership included in-stadium participation during Celebrate Food and Agriculture Day, where fans received pork snack sticks, along with influencer content featuring Gopher football



lineman Tony Nelson, who shared videos of cooking pork on his personal social media channels. The partnership also included the launch of *Pick for Pork*, a retail-focused activation developed with Cub Foods, Wholestone Farms and other partners that allowed a discounted price with pork purchases at the grocery store.



## Invest in People and Communities

*Minnesota Pork's commitment to investing in people and communities is centered on supporting the individuals and families who make up Minnesota's pork industry. By building on existing efforts and creating new programming focused on training, leadership development, and community engagement, MN Pork aims to support stakeholders at every stage of their journey. Investing in people today helps strengthen rural communities and ensures opportunities for future generations.*

## Young Leaders in Agriculture Conference



Celebrating its 10th year, the Young Leaders in Agriculture Conference (YLAC) welcomed 87 college students from across the country to Mankato in June for three days of learning and connection. The conference featured engaging speakers who shared insights on career preparedness, identifying personal goals and natural strengths, and building effective networking skills. The experience also included a hands-on service project and time dedicated to relationship-building, reinforcing MPB's commitment to investing in the next generation of leaders.

## Agriculture Scholarships Awarded

MPB awarded six scholarships ranging from \$1,000 to \$4,000 through its *Voice of Pork* and *Growing Ag* scholarship programs. The *Voice of Pork* scholarship supports students pursuing careers in communications, education, and marketing related fields, while the *Growing Ag* scholarship focuses on students preparing for careers in ag business, animal science, and advocacy.

## Summer Intern Program

The Minnesota Pork Board employed one intern during the summer, Kenzie Moline, who continued with the organization as a student employee into the fall. Kenzie supported MPB's marketing and communications efforts



in a variety of ways, including bringing the **Taste What Pork Can Do™** campaign to life through creative social media content and fun, engaging cooking videos that showcased pork's flavor and versatility, among many other responsibilities. She also played a key role in on-site engagement and operations at the Minnesota State Fair Oink and Promotion Booths, assisting with daily operations, coordinating supervisors and volunteers, and helping ensure a positive experience for fairgoers.

### Giving Back



In the spirit of holiday giving, Minnesota Pork Board of Directors donated a meal at the Ronald McDonald House Charities - Upper Midwest, providing a pork tenderloin dinner and sharing a special evening alongside partnered professional hockey players Taylor Heise and Kendall Coyne Schofield, mentioned earlier under 'Partnerships with Athletes.' From serving

a nourishing meal to signing autographs and visiting with families, the night was a meaningful reminder of how food brings people together and the role pork plays in fueling strength and connection. Earlier that same day, board members and staff participated in the national #GiveAHam challenge tradition, donating hams to RMHC after being challenged.



### Protect Our Freedom to Operate

*Minnesota Pork works to protect the ability of farmers to responsibly and successfully raise pigs today and in the future. By staying engaged on regulatory issues, supporting sustainability efforts, and prioritizing the long-term viability of farms of all sizes, Minnesota Pork helps create an environment where producers can continue providing safe, healthy protein while planning confidently for the next generation.*

### Minnesota Leadership in SHIP

Minnesota continues to be significantly involved in the U.S. Swine Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) – a partially Checkoff-funded program developed and facilitated by a House of Delegates comprised of industry professionals, farmers, and government officials. It is built on a foundation of biosecurity, traceability, sampling, and testing using tools like AgView and Secure Pork Supply Plans. The objective of SHIP is to develop and implement an African Swine Fever (ASF)-Classical Swine Fever (CSF) Monitored Certification Program. This certification demonstrates evidence of disease freedom to resume

international trade during the response and recovery period of a foreign animal disease outbreak.

Minnesota is represented by Mike Walker on the U.S. SHIP steering committee. Minnesota's enrollment in U.S. SHIP stands at 81% of the state's breeding herd and 61% of the state's growing pig herd.

### Advancing U.S. Pork Sustainability Grant

The Advancing U.S. Pork Sustainability and Market Value grant is an opportunity for farmers in 12 states to receive technical support and incentives for adopting agriculture practices that advance markets for pork. The financial backing of \$20 million in federal funding for the Advancing U.S. Pork Sustainability and Market Value grant, matched with \$10 million from our grant partner Nestle and \$5 million in Pork Checkoff funds, provides a total of \$35 million to support farmers in implementing practices that benefit the environment and that drive value and market access for pork.

Practices eligible for financial support include cover crops, livestock integration with cover cropping, conservation tillage, manure management for multiple applications, edge-of-field and perennial buffers, and energy efficient practices in barn including LED lighting and heat mat.



### Animal Well-Being

*Minnesota Pork's approach to animal well-being focuses on keeping pigs healthy and supporting a safe, nutritious*

*food supply. By working closely with farmers, veterinarians, researchers, and industry partners, MN Pork advances disease prevention, herd health, and best practices in pig care. Healthy pigs are essential to animal well-being, farm sustainability, and the strength of rural communities.*

### Swine Health Task Force

MPB and the Minnesota Pork Producers Association launched the Swine Health Task Force to strengthen swine health across Minnesota by working directly with farmers, veterinarians and University of Minnesota experts. As its first priority, the task force is leading the Minnesota *Mhp Eradication Initiative*, a voluntary, science-based effort built on on-farm research and collaboration with producers to reduce and ultimately eliminate *Mycoplasma hyopneumoniae* (Mhp). The initiative aims to improve herd health and productivity and reinforce Minnesota's leadership in proactive swine health.



# ACTIVATE

MINNESOTA PORK LEADERSHIP COHORT

In July 2025, Minnesota Pork launched Activate: Minnesota Pork Leadership Cohort, an immersive, 18-month experience designed to equip twelve emerging leaders in the pork industry with the tools, confidence, and connections to boldly advocate for Minnesota pig farmers.

Through hands-on training in advocacy, communications, relationship management, leadership, and industry knowledge, participants will grow into a network of excited, equipped, and activated voices for agriculture.

Minnesota Pork is proud to invest in the next generation of leaders, those who will shape policy, inspire trust, and ensure the long-term success of pork production in Minnesota.

Activate is offered by the Minnesota Pork Board and Minnesota Pork Producers Association at no cost to participants.

## Participants Gain:

- Confidence in public speaking, media interviews, and advocacy settings
- Tools for building relationships with legislators, media, and consumers
- A deep understanding of the pork industry and its key challenges
- Leadership skills that transfer to personal, professional, and on-farm settings
- Access to a supportive network of like-minded ag professionals

## Leadership Focus Areas:

1. Advocacy
2. Communications
3. Relationship Management
4. Leadership
5. Industry Knowledge

## Eligibility

- Ages 25–40 (recommended)
- Actively involved in the pork industry — on-farm (pig owners, contract growers, employees, and managers) or in a related field (nutrition, veterinary, education, marketing, etc.)
- Passionate about agriculture and eager to advocate for pig farmers
- Living or working in Minnesota
- Willing and able to travel for scheduled cohort experiences
- Committed to participating fully in all program components over the 18-month period

## Class 1 Session Schedule

Six sessions over 18 months, concluding with a graduation ceremony:

- Session 1** – Minnesota Pork Office (Mankato, MN) – July 8–9, 2025
- Session 2** – National Pork Board Office (Des Moines, IA) – December 1–3, 2025
- Session 3** – Minnesota Pork Producers Association – Day on the Hill (St. Paul, MN) – March 10–11, 2026
- Session 4** – Hormel Foods (Austin, MN) – March 31–April 1, 2026
- Session 5** – California Trip (Sacramento, CA) – July 19–23, 2026
- Session 6** – Washington D.C. Trip – December 7–10, 2026
- Graduation** – Minnesota Pork Congress (Mankato, MN) – February 8, 2027

**Class 2 applications open in April 2027** – fill out our interest form on our website, [mnpork.com/activate](https://mnpork.com/activate), or scan the QR code.







**Brad Kluger** - Brad grew up on a family farm just outside of Northfield, MN and still actively farms there alongside his parents, brother, and family. Growing up they had indoor and outdoor lots, farrowed

continuous flow with around 120 sows and sold feeder pigs each week. Now their farm operates as more wean to finish production and they own shares in some sow farms. He has a bachelor's and master's degree in education and spent 4 years teaching 1st grade and kindergarten before getting back into agriculture full-time. For the past 8 years he has worked in swine nutrition and feed sales through a coop in Southern Minnesota.



**Dusty Compart** - Dusty is both a current Nicollet County pork producer and a team member at Compeer Financial. Dusty grew up on his Family's farm near Nicollet MN and his passion for the Swine Industry led

him to obtain a degree in Agriculture from SDSU. Currently, Dusty is a Swine Lending Specialist at Compeer Financial. In this role, he helps support MN Pork Producers by providing financing tools and his perspective to their operation.



**Erin Krug** - Erin is a 5th generation farmer from central Minnesota. After getting her degree in Animal Science from North Dakota State University and furthering her work experience she returned

home to her family's diversified farming business. Her family owns a farrow-to-finish hog operation, beef cattle feedlot and raises corn, sugar beets and edible kidney beans. As a farmer she has been involved in the pork industry for many years and is passionate that this industry remains strong, creates opportunities and stands with farmers for many generations to come.



**Guilherme Preis** - Guilherme Preis, DVM, PhD, is a veterinarian-epidemiologist specializing in swine health and productivity. Raised in a pork-producing family in Brazil, he earned his DVM

and worked nearly five years for a major integrator before relocating to the U.S. in 2018 to pursue a PhD in Veterinary Medicine at the University of Minnesota. As Product Performance Manager at Topigs Norsvin, he supports statistical analysis, product benchmarking, and research initiatives to help pork producers improve key performance indicators.



**Jayme Enamorado** - Jayme is the Training and Development Supervisor at Christensen Farms, specializing in technical upskilling and leadership development for internal teams. Since 2022, she has

led the design and implementation of training programs that equip employees with the skills needed to grow into technical and supervisory roles. Her work focuses on building structured pathways for advancement, aligning workforce capabilities with operational goals, and strengthening the internal talent pipeline across all levels of pork production.



**Jordan Wiesen** - Jordan grew up on a farm in Lincoln County, Minnesota. He and his wife Ashley are now the third generation on that family farm. Along with their two kids, they raise cattle, row crops, and alfalfa. Upon

graduating from South Dakota State, he began working at Boerboom Ag Resources as a caretaker and hauling feeder pigs. Over the years, he has taken on several roles for the business such as a grow/finish service manager. In Jordan's current role, he directly manages the marketing, pig flow, and trucking logistics for Boerboom Ag. When he's not at work Jordan enjoys working with his cattle, going to sporting events, and chasing his kids around the farm.



**Lance Goettl** - Lance is a third-generation crop farmer and first-generation hog producer who entered the livestock side of agriculture in 2007 with an entrepreneurial spirit and a commitment to long-

term sustainability. Starting with a modest operation, Lance has steadily expanded his business and today manages a thriving hog operation with 5,500 sows. His growth reflects not only his dedication and work ethic, but also his ability to innovate and adapt within a constantly evolving industry. In 2012, Lance established a feed mill to create a more efficient, vertically integrated system that strengthened biosecurity and ensured a consistent feed source. His success is rooted in strong family involvement, with his wife and father playing key roles on the farm, and in the early support of landlords, mentors, and industry partners. Today, Lance is a dedicated advocate for agriculture and works to support the next generation of producers through mentorship and leadership.



**Logan Tesch** - Logan grew up on a diversified farming operation with hogs, cattle, corn & soybeans in Henderson, MN. In college he was active in the SDSU Swine Club & Swine Unit. He was the MN Pork

Ambassador from '19-'20. After graduation he started working for New Fashion Pork as a Feedmill Trainee, and within a year he was promoted to manager of their feed mill in Round Lake, MN. In the mill, Logan oversees the manufacture & delivery of over 3,000 tons of feed a week.



**Olivia Wolle** - Olivia grew up on a small farm near St. James, MN. While in college she interned for a local Minnesota pork integrator where her passion for the industry began. During Olivia's career she has held

multiple positions including Wean to Finish Herd Technician, Animal Welfare Specialist, and most recently joining her husband and his family on their farm where they raise corn, soybeans, and hogs. Olivia stays involved in her community by volunteering for 4-H and various board positions.



**Scott Walter** - Scott grew up on a crop and cattle farm in Sleepy Eye, Mn. After graduating from Sleepy Eye High School, Scott went straight into farming raising dairy cattle and working on a dairy by Leavenworth, MN.

In 2017 start his career at Wakefield Pork as a herdsman and since advanced into the role as a Sow Farm Manager. From 2018-2024 Scott served on the Nicollet County Pork Producers Board. Serving 2 years as Vice-president and 2 years as President. Scott has also served on the Redwood Area Cattlemen's Board. Scott currently resides in New Ulm, with his wife Emily and two daughters Wynn, and Ruby.



**Sydney Rosenstengel** - Sydney is a Production Technology Specialist at Schwartz Farms, a family-owned, MN based pork producer. She holds a B.S. and M.S. in Agricultural Engineering from Iowa State

University where she focused her studies on commercial swine facilities and ventilation systems. Passionate about the future of agriculture, Sydney brings a practical and innovative approach to utilizing and advancing production technologies. She is also an active member of the Brown County Pork Producers Board, contributing to local industry support and advocacy.



**Travis Brown** - Travis is the Director of Operations for Brookfield Pork and Legacy Ag, a progressive, integrated pork production company. A first-generation pork producer, he holds dual degrees in Livestock

& Poultry Management and Agribusiness Management from North Carolina State University. Travis brings over a decade of leadership experience across multiple production systems, including roles with Murphy-Brown, HD3 Farms, Professional Swine Management, and Prestage Farms. Known for his focus on operational excellence and strategic growth, he now oversees more than 9,000 sows and expanding partnerships across company-owned and managed service partnerships. As a first-generation professional in agriculture, he brings fresh perspective, tireless energy, and a deep respect for the land and animals under his care. Travis is driven by a passion for innovation, performance, and building a strong future for the swine industry.

## Leadership Minnesota and Minnesota Chamber Tours



MPPA is proud to support farm tours hosted by Minnesota pig farmers in conjunction with the Minnesota

Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Minnesota cohort. Hugoson Pork hosted another leadership cohort as part of the group's experiences, meetings, and tours within the food and agriculture sector of Minnesota. The tour participants represent business leaders from across Minnesota who get firsthand experience visiting the farms and learning about how pigs are raised and how their businesses operate in greater Minnesota. Always receiving high reviews, the farm tours are often a highlight of the year for each of the classes. The group also meets with Hormel Foods following their visit to the farm, capping off a full farm-to-fork experience with the Hormel Sales cabin chef preparing a pork meal for the group. Exposing other thought leaders from around Minnesota remains a key objective of Minnesota Pork as the organization continues to build connections and relevance with other key partners and influencers, including the Minnesota Chamber.

## I-90 Legislative Reception



In partnership with Greater Mankato Growth, Minnesota Pork grills pork chops for the I-90 legislative reception held each spring as the Minnesota Legislative session wraps up. A big thank you to Bill Crawford for his long-time support in volunteering his grilling skills to prepare delicious pork chops for the event. As a featured

host of the reception, Minnesota pig farmers and staff are able to connect with Representatives and Senators across all parties and levels of leadership. This reception always comes at a key time as the session begins to wrap up and conference committees form to review bills passed in the House and Senate, remedy differences, before officially passing off their respective floors and making their way to the Governor's desk.

## Rep. Finstad Listening Session

Early summer is a busy time for MPPA, kicking off a season of legislative listening sessions and roundtables, most often focusing on



different agricultural policy topics like trade, animal health, and agricultural labor. Rep. Finstad joined a group of Minnesota pig farmers in the Minnesota Pork office to talk about market and animal disease challenges. Rep. Finstad heard from farmers in addition to ag lenders, input suppliers, and veterinarians. As a result of the meeting, Rep. Finstad sent a letter to the United States Department of Agriculture's Risk Management Agency (RMA) asking them to review current risk management tools and report back to Congress on additional regulatory and legislative actions that could be taken to promote resilience and strengthen livestock agriculture's ability to address economic hardships. Rep. Finstad believes these tools could be expanded to meet the needs of modern farm structures, ensuring future generations of family farmers can weather tough economic downturns.

## Agriculture Roundtable with Sen. Amy Klobuchar



Senator Amy Klobuchar serves as the Ranking Member on the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee and spends much of her summer traveling around Minnesota when not in Washington, DC. One such event was held in Howard Lake, Minnesota, where she hosted a listening

session for agricultural leaders to share top issues for the next Farm Bill and beyond. NPPC board member, Todd Marotz, attended the listening session and reminded Sen. Klobuchar about the uncertainty around Prop 12 and the challenges faced by farmers in trying to make long-term investment decisions without clarity on how to best avoid a patchwork of state legislation. Furthermore, Marotz spoke on the critical need to protect the TN Visa program as the United States Mexico Canada Trade Agreement begins its review process in 2025 through 2026.

## Minnesota Farmfest

Minnesota Farmfest remains a significant political stumping ground for state and federal legislators alike. Minnesota Pork leaders hosted



many elected officials and regulators for discussions about policy topics and to broadly build understanding about key issues impacting Minnesota's family farmers. 2025 Farmfest saw a large number of state elected officials make the trip out to Morgan to engage farmers and agricultural organizations. In addition to the political connections, Minnesota pork also has a number of resources and information available to farmers in the tent, along with pork loin samples.



Featured guests to the Minnesota Pork tent included Sens. Amy Klobuchar, Reps. Craig, Fischbach, Stauber, and Finstad. MPPA leaders also welcomed numerous Minnesota state Senators and Representatives, including Speaker Lisa Demuth and state agency officials from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota Attorney General, and Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

### **Minnesota Ag Leadership Conference**



Minnesota Pork Producers Association supported the Minnesota Corn Growers Association in their Minnesota Agriculture Leadership Conference hosted at the end of August. Farmer leaders Todd Selvik and Lori Stevermer participated in the state leader round table where key policy priorities were discussed

and aimed at focusing on areas where agricultural advocacy organizations could collaborate.

In addition to the leader roundtable, many congressional leaders spoke at the overall conference. Those include Senator Amy Klobuchar, Rep. Angie Craig, Rep. Pete Stauber, and Rep. Brad Finstad. House Agriculture Chairman, Rep. G.T. Thompson was also present at the event and connected directly with Minnesota farmer leaders on a river boat cruise over dinner.



Because of MPPA's close work and support for NPPC's Pork PAC, farmer leaders also attended fundraisers for these members which provided a unique opportunity to connect with members in a more intimate setting and discuss pork specific issues. In addition to congressional delegates, federal agency leaders also addressed the conference including Environmental Protection Agency Region V Administrator, Anne Vogel, and United States Department of Agriculture Risk Management Agency Administrator, Pat Swanson.

### **Region V EPA Administrator Connects with Minnesota Farmers**



Anne Vogel was appointed Administrator for the Region V office of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency by the Trump administration in April of 2025. Administrator Vogel

made a number of visits to Minnesota early in her tenure, including connecting with Minnesota pig farmers and staff at the Minnesota Agriculture Leadership Conference, the Minnesota State Fair, and as part of farm tour in Southeast, Minnesota.

Dave Mensink attended the farm tour hosted by the Smith family on their dairy farm in rural Adams. Rep. Brad Finstad invited Administrator Vogel to visit Southeast Minnesota and learn more about what family farmers are doing to address water quality challenges in the region, while also discussing the increased focus on feedlot inspections. Following these meetings, it was announced by Region V EPA they would be changing their standard operating procedures to include notification of feedlot inspections prior to inspectors coming on farm, ensuring proper biosecurity steps are taken to further protect animal health, while still accomplishing the EPA's responsibilities in feedlot permit compliance.

### **Minnesota AgriGrowth Visits a Pig Farm**

The Minnesota Pork Producers Association continues to be a member of the Minnesota AgriGrowth Council, a coalition of food and agricultural businesses and



organizations that work to advance food and agriculture in Minnesota. At the end of September, AgriGrowth hosted their first Minnesota Agricultural and Food Economy tour which included nine stops between the south Twin Cities Metro, Rochester, and Owatonna areas. The event focused on showcasing the vibrant agricultural economy in Minnesota while drawing legislators and agency leaders' attention to the challenges and opportunities facing farmers and the broader food and agriculture supply chain.

Minnesota Pork partnered with AgriGrowth to highlight pig farming and its role in protecting the environment, while significantly contributing to Minnesota's rural, vibrant economies through farming and pork processing.

Brian Herbst and his family raise pigs near Kasson, Minnesota and welcomed more than 25 state lawmakers and state agency leaders to their farm where they talked about their commitment to caring for their pigs, the environment, while ensuring opportunities as they integrate the next generations of Herbsts into the family business. Brian highlighted the opportunity that was created with contract finishing, and how valuable manure is to their crop farming enterprise. A huge thank you is owed to Brian and Cindy Herbst, and their sons Eli and Adam who represented the Minnesota Pork industry well with a highly influential group of policy leaders in the state.





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## Minnesota Pig Farmers Advocate in Washington, D.C.

In partnership with the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC), Minnesota farmer leaders and industry advocates meet with Minnesota's congressional delegation to raise issues important to pig farmers and the pork industry during the Spring and Fall Legislative Action Conferences (LAC). With the inauguration of President Donald Trump on January 20, 2025, the setup for the federal legislative calendar was jam-packed. A nearly record amount of executive orders were signed in the early days of the second Trump administration, which set in motion and elevated a number of topics beyond traditional pork priorities.

This change in administration set the stage for a slow review of agriculture issues, most importantly, a Farm Bill. The current Farm Bill in effect is the 2018 Farm Bill, which has seen various elements of the bill move through other packages or has seen regular extensions or continuing resolutions.

A key focus of the regular MPPA visits to Washington included advocating for the language from the House version of the 2024 Farm Bill, which would preempt legislation like Proposition 12 in California and Question 3 in Massachusetts from being enforced.

The House and Senate Agriculture committees saw a leadership change with the Senate Committee Chairwoman, Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Michigan), retiring at the end of 2024 and the Republicans reclaiming the Majority. This meant Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minnesota) was next in line and became the Senate Ag Committee Ranking Member.

Meanwhile, in the House, Rep. G.T. Thompson (D-Pennsylvania) retained his chairmanship, while Rep. Ange Craig from Minnesota's second congressional district challenged long-time Democratic leader of the House Agriculture Committee, Rep. David Scott of Georgia. Rep. Craig won the support of her caucus and became the Ranking Member for the House Agriculture Committee. It is rare to have two of the four primary leaders of a committee from the same state, but this highlights the leadership of Minnesota's delegation.



*Sen. Amy Klobuchar serves as the Ranking Member on the Senate Agriculture Committee, which elevates the staff she has working on agricultural issues. During the Spring and Fall LAC, Minnesota Pork met with the Committee livestock policy staff, including Allie Lock, Kyle Varner, and Thomas Liepold. Pictured above, left to right - Brian Schwartz, Allie Lock, and Todd Marotz in the Senate Ag Committee meeting room.*

Formal visits to Washington, DC, build on the long-term strategy and relationships developed with Senators, Representatives, and their respective staff leads on agriculture, in addition to key committee staff and leaders. Beyond the trips made to Washington, DC throughout the year, many in-state and in-district meetings take place to continue strengthening the relationship with Minnesota's elected officials. With two members from Minnesota serving as ranking members, they also have a more robust committee staff that have also been connecting more regularly with MPPA in state.



*Representing Minnesota's Sixth Congressional District and serving as Majority Whip in the U.S. House of Representatives, Rep. Tom Emmer remains committed to working on issues directly impacting Minnesota farmers. At the Fall LAC, Minnesota Pork met with Rep. Emmer's agriculture legislative assistant, Luke Sandlin. Pictured above, left to right - Maddie Hokanson, Steve Malakowsky, Lauren Servick, and Luck Sandlin.*

## Spring Legislative Action Conference

The Spring Legislative Action Conference (LAC) event is always a highlight, as attendees are often able to see the famous blooming cherry blossoms while in the district in early spring.

Minnesota was represented in the spring meetings by MPPA farmer leaders Daryl Timmerman, Pat VonTersch, and Todd Slevik. NPPC Board members John Anderson, Steve Malakowsky, Todd Marotz, and Lori Stevermer also participated in various legislative meetings.

Issue briefings for the entire U.S. pork delegation kick off each LAC with NPPC staff-led briefings to discuss the key points of each of the asks that farmer leaders take to their congressional visits.



*Representing the largest agricultural district in Minnesota, Representative Brad Finstad serves on the House Agriculture Committee and always makes time to connect with pig farmers while in Washington, DC. Rep. Finstad adds to the robust leadership Minnesota has on the House and Senate agriculture committee and he serves as subcommittee chair on Nutrition and Foreign Agriculture. Shown left to right - Brian Schwartz, Lauren Servick, Rep. Finstad, and John Anderson.*



After a full day of congressional visits, the entire group was hosted by the Canadian Embassy delegation that works on agriculture and trade-related issues. The reception allowed for networking opportunities, including celebrating and continuing diplomatic relations between the two nations. Canada remains a critical trading partner and shared issues they were seeing at the early onset of the second Trump administration, including tariff concerns, the review of the United States Mexico Canada Trade Agreement (USMCA), and animal health collaborations.

### Fall Legislative Action Conference

The Fall LAC came at a paramount moment leading into the final stretch of the 2025 federal session. There was much optimism amongst the Minnesota delegation that a clean continuing resolution to the federal funding packages would be passed, and after that, there would be an opportunity to address the Farm Bill. However, that optimism was dashed after negotiations fell apart, related to tax credits for the Affordable Care Act became extra contentious, leading to a long government shutdown from October 1 through November 12. This created a challenge with the legislative calendar and available work days Congress would have, and other, more pressing legislation was already on the docket.

In early September, Minnesota farmer leaders Brian Schwartz, Maddie Hokanson, and Dan Roberts, along with NPPC board members John Anderson, Todd Marotz, Steve Malakowsky, and Lori Stevermer, took to the hill for congressional meetings. The congressional meetings were followed by the much-renowned and very well-attended "Baconfest" reception held at the Library of Congress. Many elected officials and key staffers attended the event while also providing a unique opportunity to network with other government officials and fellow pork producers. Minnesota leaders were able to connect with a number of committee staff and key legislators from other states.



**(Baconfest)** - The Baconfest Reception is one of the marquee events in Washington, DC, each fall, with attendance approaching 1,000 guests. A highlight for many Hill staffers and members of Congress, Baconfest is a unique opportunity to share delicious pork foods while networking and building on relationships with key leaders. Minnesota farmer Lori Stevermer connected with Rep. Jim Costa (D-California), a senior Democrat on the House Agriculture Committee.



*Prop 12 was the top priority in Farm Bill discussions in 2025. As part of that work, NPPC had a Prop 12-branded food truck, serving pork breakfast sandwiches to help raise awareness about the negative impacts Prop 12 has on pork prices. NPPC farmer leaders stopped by ahead of numerous hill visits. Pictured left to right - NPPC President, Duane Stateler; NPPC CEO Bryan Humphrys; NPPC Past President, Lori Stevermer; NPPC President-elect, Rob Brenneman; and NPPC Vice-President, Pat Hord. Photo courtesy of the National Pork Producers Council.*

### Key Legislative Issues Lobbied on During LAC

#### 2025 Farm Bill - Protect the U.S. Food Supply:

The 2025 Farm Bill priorities remain similar to previous asks, including a federal solution to California's Proposition 12 (Prop 12), protecting the Food Supply through Foreign Animal Disease (FAD) prevention, Feral Swine Eradication, and expanding market access of U.S. pork products.

Pig farmers advocated for a new Farm Bill that fully funds the programs safeguarding the nation's food supply against threats posed by foreign animal diseases. Specifically, these include the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN), the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program (NADPRP), the National Veterinary Stockpile (NVS) and the National Animal Vaccine and Veterinary Countermeasures Bank (NAVVCB).

Farmers carried the message to congressional members that a Foreign Animal Disease outbreak would have significant impacts on family farmers, rural communities, the nation's economy, and the food security of the United States. Many of the provisions within animal health portions of the Farm Bill are small investments that pay big dividends to preventing the incursion of a devastating FAD, and allow for preparedness to quickly respond and recoup if a disease were to reach the United States.

Language was passed in the 2024 House version of a Farm Bill that would preempt states from imposing rules on animal products raised in other states, similar to language adopted in California and Massachusetts. MPPA and NPPC continue to urge Congress to act on these issues that directly harm independent pork producers. Farmer leaders continue to ask for a federal solution to Prop 12 in any final Farm Bill.

In addition to animal health and Prop 12 priorities, farmers also asked Congress to protect and grow trade promotion programs in the Farm Bill, including Market Access Program (MAP) and Foreign Market Development (FMD). Both programs saw increased funding provided in the House version of the Farm Bill in 2024. MAP and FMD are run through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) where grants and programs are provided to do in-market work to maintain and increase access to new trade opportunities for U.S. agricultural products.

The 2018 Farm Bill provided funding for the eradication and control of feral swine through the Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Program (FSCP). That program has been overwhelmingly successful. Farmers advocated for at least maintaining the funding for the program to help address the threat of feral swine, particularly after seeing the effects of feral swine on the outbreak of African Swine Fever across the globe.

The upcoming Farm Bill offers the opportunity to address these challenges, provide the industry with the tools to prevent further disruption, and keep the food system safe and reliable.



*Representative Michelle Fischbach serves on the high-powered House Rules, and Ways and Means committees in Congress. The Rules Committee sets the schedule and directs when bills get scheduled for full House votes, an important part of moving a Farm Bill to the finish line. Additionally, the House Ways and Means Committee has oversight on international trade agreements, including enforcement. The Minnesota farmer leaders and staff connected with Rep. Fischbach during the Spring LAC meetings. Pictured left to right- Kate Maddock, Pat VonTersch, Todd Selvik, John Anderson, Rep. Fischbach, Daryl Timmerman, and Jill Resler.*

#### **Agriculture Workforce and Visa System Reform –**

Strengthen the H-2A Visa Program to allow for Year-Round Workers:

The H-2A visa program, created by the Immigration Reform and Control Act in 1987, allows foreign workers entry into the U.S. for seasonal agricultural work only.

With the year-round need for work in the pork industry, the H-2A visa program cannot be fully utilized. Farmers shared the consequences of not having a robust workforce and the implications that would have on productivity and the constraints on the pork supply chain. MPPA asked congressional members to support year-round access in the H-2A visa program, in addition to removing arbitrary caps and carve-outs for certain industries in the program.

In addition to the H-2A requests, MPPA members also carried a strong message about the need to protect



*A key element of each LAC is a 'report-back' session where each state conveys back to NPPC staff what they heard during their congressional meetings. MPPA board member, Maddie Hokanson shared comments on behalf of Minnesota during the Fall LAC event.*

access to Guest Worker Programs as rural populations age and shrink. All throughout 2025, the Trump administration emphasized U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activities to deport people in the United States illegally. This has created concern amongst immigrant communities in rural Minnesota, even those here on legal visas and temporary status. Disruptions in the pork industry's workforce could have significant repercussion to animal well-being and pork availability.

#### **International Trade – Expand and Develop Market Access**

U.S. pork producers have a global reputation for providing domestic and foreign markets with high-quality, affordable pork products.

To grow exports and support high-paying jobs in rural communities, Minnesota farmer leaders insisted that the U.S. must open new and expand existing trade agreements and market access deals. Comprehensive trade agreements that provide access and eliminate tariff and non-tariff barriers to U.S. pork have been the best way to grow demand. Farmers shared that the U.S. exports more pork to the 20 countries with which it has trade agreements than to all of the other countries combined.

Pork exports are vital to pig farmers. More than 140,000 jobs are supported by pork exports, contributing \$15.6 billion dollars to the U.S. economy. In 2024, pork exports made up an average of \$66 in value from each pig marketed in the U.S. Key markets for the U.S. include Mexico, Canada, Central America, China, Japan, South Korea, Colombia, and Australia.

With a large emphasis from the Trump administration on the use of tariffs, MPPA made it clear to Minnesota congressional members that farmers oppose any retaliatory actions taken in a trade dispute that can harm business



*During issues briefings, MPPA members hear additional background on the topics and issues they will raise on Capitol Hill. Additionally, many networking opportunities exist to connect with peers from across the nation. Daryl Timmerman connects with a farmer leader at the Spring LAC where more than 120 farmers gathered to lobby their members of Congress.*



relationships, including those that extend to suppliers within the agricultural supply chain. Furthermore, MPPA and NPPC urged support for negotiating new market access agreements, specifically those between the U.S. and Vietnam.

### ***Make America Healthy Again (MAHA)***

Following the appointment of Robert F. Kennedy Jr.(RFK) as Secretary for the U.S. Health and Human Services, NPPC, and MPPA monitor closely the actions being taken as part of the Make America Healthy Again commission. RFK is known for his previous activism and litigation against production agriculture, vaccine skepticism, and overall health science recommendations.

The commission also includes Environmental Protection Agency Secretary Lee Zeldin and United States Department of Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins. The MAHA commission released its report on human health and food that was critical of issues impacting pork, including ultra-processed foods, food additives, Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) status products, and farm production practices.

*Ultra-processed foods* - NPPC and MPPA made the ask for the MAHA commission to consider an NPPC-provided "ultra-processed foods" definition to maintain America's access to nutrient-dense foods that are minimally processed to increase shelf stability, enhance food safety, or improve nutrient availability. Processed pork products - such as bacon, sausage, and ham - allow for increased shelf stability and food safety, while maintaining nutrient density.

*Food additives* - Not all food additives are created equal, and many are used in pork products to maintain food safety, preservation, and nutrient availability. NPPC and MPPA asked that the MAHA commission protect approved food additives used for those purposes.

*Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) status* - NPPC and MPPA ask that the MAHA commission and the Food and Drug Administration exclude animal feed from the GRAS reform, as it could lead to the loss of critical agricultural nutrition tools that safeguard animal health and well-being.

*Farm production practices* - Farmers asked the MAHA commission to follow a risk-based science approach as the gold standard of science, rather than a hazard-based approach that would lead to over-regulation for American farmers.



*Minnesota's junior Senator announced she would not seek re-election in 2026; however, that hasn't negated Senator Tina Smith's enthusiasm to work on a Farm Bill that provides support to Minnesota farmers, including animal health investments. Sen. Smith continues to serve on the Senate Ag Committee and met with farmer leaders and staff during the Fall LAC. Pictured left to right- Brian Schwartz, Todd Marotz, Sen. Tina Smith, Maddie Hokanson, Kate Maddock, and Dan Roberts.*

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## Session Begins in Dysfunction

The 2025 legislative session officially began on January 14, 2025. The Senate convened with relative normalcy as the tied Democratic Republican body struck a temporary power-sharing agreement until the special election in Minneapolis on January 28. That special election will take place in a heavily DFL district left open with the passion of Senator Kari Dziedzic (DFL-Minneapolis). The 34-33 DFL advantage returned after Sen. Doron Clark was elected.

A wrinkle in that normalcy was Senator Nicole Mitchell (DFL – Woodbury) and her burglary trial. The trial was originally scheduled to take place on January 27, but a Becker County judge granted Sen. Mitchell a delay until the legislative session was over on May 19. State statute allows sitting legislators this latitude.

Even though the Senate was facing its own set of unique challenges, they pale in comparison to what was happening in the Minnesota House. After the November election, the results showed a 67-67 tie. This is the first tie in the Minnesota House since the 1978 election. The two sides had originally struck a power-sharing agreement on committee chairs and members, but then two races won by the DFL were contested in court.

After a judge ruled that Curtis Johnson (DFL – Roseville) did not live in the district he had just won, Johnson resigned his seat and Governor Walz called a special election for January 28. The only problem is that it was not yet Johnson's seat to resign, so another court case was won by the House GOP that said the Governor must cancel that special election and call a new one.

Adding to the chaos in the Minnesota House, DFL legislators chose not to show up to the Capitol at the beginning of session. The purpose of this was to deny the GOP a quorum so they could not act with their temporary 67-66 majority. The GOP disagreed and moved forward, organizing the House with the belief that 67 members constitute a quorum in that current makeup of the House. Later that week, the Minnesota Supreme Court sided with the DFL, saying that a quorum is 68 members; a majority, plus one.

How the session started was an accurate precursor to how much of the session went. As proper special elections were held and seats were filled, the Minnesota legislature was split by a single DFL vote in the Senate. This made it clear large issues the GOP had from previous DFL-trifecta sessions would be addressed during the session, despite neither party being able to lose a single member's vote. It created a unique, alternating gavel situation in the House where committees had co-chairs, one from each party, and a Senate that largely was uninterested in working on overly controversial policy or fiscal issues. This led to a few final issues being the key trump cards for reaching a deal at the end of the session.

The first year in Minnesota's biennium is considered the budget year, where the state is required by law to pass a

balanced state budget according to the February forecast. Given the split in power at the legislature, joint budget targets were not agreed to in the early days of the session, and became part of a larger discussion on issues and was used as leverage for policy discussions later in the session.

The fiscal forecast for the state showed a modest budget surplus of about \$400 million, but also projected large deficits in the out years of more than \$6 billion.

## Regular Session Adjourns



On May 19, at 11:47pm, the Minnesota Legislature adjourned its 2025 regular session. Much work was left undone and, a special session was needed to pass outstanding budget bills.

Special sessions have become increasingly common in Minnesota,

especially during times of split government. Some budget areas, including the agriculture budget, were passed before the regular session deadline. Lawmakers still had nine of the sixteen budget areas and potentially a Tax Bill and Bonding Bill to pass.

The interim time between the regular session and the special session saw the official conference committees put on hold, while legislators continued to meet as part of "working groups" to reconcile language and budget differences.

## One-Day Special Session

Governor Walz called back the Legislature on June 9 for a one-day special session to complete the state's biennial budget. The agenda consisted of fifteen major budget and policy bills to be completed all in one day. While there was an agreement among legislative leadership going into the day, there was some doubt on whether or not the deal would hold together at the individual legislator level.

The day began in the House with the debate on the most heated topic of the special session: free and subsidized MNCare for undocumented adults. After hours of passionate debate from both sides of the issue, the bill moved forward on a mostly party-line vote. While there was still some heated debate after this bill passed, it did seem to relieve some of the pressure, as all the other bills moved at a much faster pace.







The special session concluded around 2 AM on the morning of June 10, successfully passing all the bills to Governor Walz's desk for signature. The 2026 regular legislative session will begin on February 17, 2026.



### **Minnesota Rocked by Political Assassination**

Days after the conclusion of the special session, Minnesotans experienced an unprecedented act of political violence.

Speaker Emerita Melissa Hortman and her husband Mark were murdered in their home in a targeted political attack early Saturday, June 14. Hours before, Senator John Hoffman and his wife, Yvette were shot in their home in Champlin. John and Yvette recovered and were discharged from the hospital weeks, and days later, respectively. It was later confirmed that the shooter had also approached the homes of two other elected officials in Maple Grove and New Hope but realized they were not home or were interrupted by police activity.

Rural Sibley County man, Vance Boelter was apprehended the day after the attacks and was charged with the murder and attempted murder of the legislators and their spouses.

The fallout from this political violence continues to influence members of the Minnesota House and Senate. An ever increasing list of members are retiring with many citing the loss of Speaker Hortman and the increase safety concerns at the capital.

Speaker Melissa Hortman was a giant at the Minnesota State Capitol. She was one of the most influential legislators and longest serving Speakers in the state's history. Despite her incredibly busy schedule, she always found time to speak with MPPA and genuinely listen to the ideas and concerns of Minnesota's pig farmers. Speaker Hortman exemplified what it means to be a public servant, never forgetting the humanity of the work. Minnesota is better because of her service and leadership

### **2025 MPPA Policy Issues**

Overall, MPPA's legislative agenda fared better than most recent sessions. Going into the next session of the two-year biennium, MPPA will continue to engage on issues left on the table from the 2025 session.

**Agriculture Budget** – The Agriculture budget was one of the omnibus bills passed during the regular session. While much of the Ag Bill has moved away from supporting production agriculture, there were many positive provisions in the bill for the pork industry.

MPPA supported the full funding of the Board of Animal Health (BOAH), which also included a \$1.5 million increase to the Ag

Emergency Account. MPPA was also happy to see there were no problematic policy provisions introduced by the House DFL Co-Chair, such as the Companion Animal Board or the abolishment of the BOAH.

**Environmental Regulation and Budget** – The 2025 session has been much quieter on the environmental regulation front. Many of the bills that MPPA had to vigorously fight last biennium did not gain any traction in this split government environment. The Environment Omnibus Bill that passed during the special session was very much stripped down to a base budget. There was a small amount of positive policy changes around permitting reform.

The permitting reform effort was led by the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce and supported by MPPA. Permitting reform in this bill includes changing the threshold for an EAW by petition to 100 signatures in the proposed project's county or adjacent counties. Currently, only 100 signatures from anywhere in the state are required. The bill also clarifies that local government can begin its permitting process before final approval from the MPCA.

**Tax Bill** – 2025 has been a slower year for MPPA in the Tax Committees, but still an area the organization follows very closely. The Tax Bill passed in special session was another stripped-down bill. Unfortunately, the MPPA-supported provision to lift the appropriation cap on the Beginning Farmer Tax Credit program was not included in the final bill.

**Large Animal Veterinary Loan Forgiveness** – A popular program that incentivizes veterinary students to go into large animal practice was under attack by the Walz Administration in the 2025 session. MPPA was disappointed to see Governor Walz propose to zero out the \$375,000 per year program in his budget proposal. The Senate Higher Education Committee followed his recommendation until some of the funding (\$250K per year) was amended back in on the Senate Floor. The House Higher Education Committee proposed a cut, but still funded it at the highest amount (\$325K per year). Thankfully, the final Higher Education Bill that passed in the special session included the House position at \$325K per year.

**Sick Time Modifications** – MPPA joined a coalition to amend the "Earned Sick and Safe Time" program that was passed by the DFL, two years ago when they had the trifecta. The original bill MPPA supported exempted farms with 25 or fewer employees from the program. The Senate Labor bill includes an exemption that was amended down to 5 employees or fewer. Unfortunately, the Labor Bill that was negotiated in special session removed this controversial policy provision.

**Office of Animal Protection** – The Office of Animal Protection bill received a hearing in the Senate Judiciary Committee this session, but not in the House. The Senate Public Safety bill included a provision that would make felony animal cruelty defined as a "crime of violence". The Public Safety Bill was one of the budgets passed in regular session and did not include any of the provisions from the Office of Animal Protection Bill.

**Bonding** – MPPA didn't have an official position on any bonding, but it is noteworthy that the legislature passed a \$700 million bonding bill in the special session. With a bonding bill requiring a supermajority vote, it has been a few years since one has passed. The relatively small bill relieves some of the pressure by clearing the deck of some critical infrastructure projects that have been held off since the last bonding bill was passed.



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