

## Fatigued Hogs

**IMPORTANCE:** According to Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) figures, between 0.8 percent and 1 percent of market hogs (800,000-900,000) become non-ambulatory from fatigue or injury during transport or shortly after unloading. Condemning these hogs would create disposal and animal protein supply problems.

**BACKGROUND:** Concern over “downed” animals entering the food chain has been an issue since the first case of BSE in a cow was discovered in the United States in December 2003. There is no food safety risk from allowing fatigued, lame or injured hogs (without neurological problems) into the food system. Despite that fact, some legislators and activist groups are working to ban any non-ambulatory animal from being processed for human consumption. That position would be detrimental to the U.S. pork industry, create an unnecessary burden on the environment and is not supported by science. In January 2004, USDA published an Interim Final Rule on the disposition of non-ambulatory “disabled” cattle. The rule for cattle is final, and some legislators want to expand it to other species.

**NPPC POSITION:** Excluding non-ambulatory, “high-risk” cattle from the food supply is an appropriate regulatory response to the discovery of BSE in a cow in the U.S. But scientific evidence has not shown that hogs are susceptible to BSE. NPPC opposes banning fatigued or non-ambulatory hogs from the food supply. The American Association of Swine Veterinarians defines a non-ambulatory or fatigued hog as one “that becomes fatigued without trauma or disease and refuses to walk.” This condition is a result of an acid-base imbalance and is self-reversing after the animal is allowed to rest. Additionally, the USDA FSIS monitors animal handling and slaughtering practices at packing plants, including the treatment of downed or fatigued animals. All non-ambulatory or fatigued hogs are inspected by FSIS inspectors and veterinarians regarding their fitness for processing and entering the human food supply. Strong regulatory safeguards for humane treatment in the processing of animals already exist. The pork industry has developed a Trucker Quality Assurance Program to train people responsible for the well-being and safe transport of hogs as well the handling of fatigued hogs.

**OPPOSITION POSITION:** Animal-rights groups claim that harvesting “downer” animals is inhumane and that meat from such animals is more likely to be unfit for consumption. Allowing downers to enter the human food supply undermines consumer confidence.

**NPPC CONTACT:** Annamaria Castiglia, DVM, Director of Science and Technology, (202) 347-3600, castigliaa@nppc.org.