

Free Range Pork Farmers Association Newsletter

October, 2007 "Good, healthy food will only be grown if we demand it"

Imported Pork

The Australian pork industry is going through some hard times at the moment and many piggeries are closing their doors. The majority of those exiting the industry are intensive or factory farm facilities.

Now, you may be thinking, isn't that a good thing? Let me explain why the industry is in a bad way first.

The drought is having a devastating effect on grain prices. Two years ago, we would pay \$140 tonne for barley, now it is at least \$425 a tonne. The price of other feed components has also risen dramatically.

The drought is hard enough for all farmers to cope with but the pork industry has a handicap that no other meat producers have to deal with - Imports. Cheap, subsidised imports.

The majority of this pork comes from Canada, Denmark and the USA. In the past year imports have increased immensely, Canada - 29%, Denmark - 44%, USA - 30%. The farmers in these countries are subsidised by their governments and can deliver pork into Australia cheaper than we can grow it! It's a very unfair situation and sending our farmers to the wall.

Apart from the damage these imports do to the bottom line of the pork industry, there are other issues that need to be considered. What are the conditions like for the pigs at these farms? Do we accept their welfare standards to be the same or better than ours? What diseases are endemic in overseas pig herds that do not yet exist in Australia?

There are rules in place for imported pig meat. It must be cooked and have all bone removed. This means that the fresh pork you buy will be Australian grown but not so smallgoods, ham and bacon!

To give you an idea, 67% of all processed pork in this country is made from imported pork. That is the complete reverse of 2003 (33% imports, 67% domestic), so you can see just how much pork imports have increased.

How will you know if you are buying pork from overseas? To start with it will not have a bone in it. If you want to avoid imported product, buy hams on the bone. Check the label. It will state whether or not the product contains imported pork. (Check out the bacon in the Woolworths deli. "Made from local and imported product" How can that be!

As prices get squeezed even tighter, and farmers try to get 'more productive' to compete with the imports, conditions for the poor old pig will just get harder.

Pig Out!

Please, please visit the website and fill out the survey. It only takes a moment and you can have a chat with Porkchop while you are there.

If you could also use the link and send it to as many friends as possible it would really help us get the word out there.

We need a better understanding of people's interpretation of the term 'free range' and just what they expect that product to be when they purchase it.

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