SAFE PIG HANDLING

Pig Behavior and You
Training Checklist & Key Learning Points

Explain to the employee why it is important to understand pig behavior.
- Pigs communicate their needs to us with their behavior.
- Being aware of pig behavior can help to prevent stress and injury to both pigs and handlers.

Demonstrate how employees can create positive experiences for pigs during daily checks.
- Move calmly and quietly in the pens on a daily basis.
- The pig's history of positive experiences begins the day they are born. Make every interaction with them count.

Discuss the pig’s three responses to potential threats and what the handlers can do when pigs respond this way.
- When feeling threatened, pigs will freeze, flee or fight.
- Pressuring a pig that is feeling threatened will stress the pig which could cause injury to both the pig and handler.
- A handler should move calmly and position their eyes downward to seem less like a predator to calm the pigs down.

Have the employee identify the pig’s blind spot and practice positioning him or herself in the pig’s field of vision when applying pressure.
- The pig's blind spot is located directly behind the tail. Pressuring the animal to move forward from this position will confuse the pig and inhibit forward movement.
- Apply pressure to the pig's flight zone from a position where the pig can see you.

Show how to prepare and inspect a hallway prior to movement.
- Prepping the area is essential for safe and smooth movement as fear and curiosity are two powerful pig instincts.
- Clear the hall of all debris, wet spots, tools and equipment.
- Make sure lights are turned on for pigs to better see where they are going.

Approach a herd of pigs and describe at what point the herd begins to move away. Discuss how this point represents the limits of the flight zone.
- The pig wants to keep a safe distance between itself and the handler. The point at which the pig moves away from us determines the edge of the flight zone.
- The size of the pig's flight zone is dependent on the pigs comfort level with the handler and the situation.

Show the employee how to let pigs circle around them to release pressure.
- Pigs circling back will follow around the arc of the handler's bubble as they pass.

State barn protocol for the number of pigs to be moved per group in the space available.
- If employees are having trouble moving pigs, reduce the number of pigs per group.
- A balked pig being moved by itself can be encouraged to move by having another pig brought up to move with them.

Demonstrate how to apply smart pressure: visual stimuli, sound and light physical touch, with and without an animal handling device.
- Apply pressure thoughtfully and minimally, do not use handling devices as substitutes for smart positioning.
- Knowing when to release pressure is a safety priority for the employee and the pig.

Discuss barn protocol in the event of treating a severely stressed or non-ambulatory pigs.
- Recognizing early signs of stress and situations that cause severe stress to the pigs.
- Pigs that have been severely stressed require special care. Applying more pressure to this pig could be life threatening for the animal.