

# SOW MEAT NOT ATTRACTIVE at current prices

That's the finding of a feasibility study led by Ontario Pork which puts it at almost 50 cents a pound more than commodity pork

**T**raditionally, sow meat has been a very low-valued commodity. In 2008-2009, Ontario pork producers were paid particularly low prices, often in the range of \$10-\$20 per 550-pound sow. In 2009, Ontario Pork decided to investigate the feasibility of slaughtering and selling sow meat for further processing in Ontario. Ontario loses a large market because it currently sells its sows to the United States, where they are made into sausage which is sold back into Canada.

Anita Ivanauskas, consultant with Ontario Pork, led the feasibility study in concert with Field Gate Organics in Zurich, Ont., and Opal Management Consultants. "Field Gate was selected because of its interest in the project, because it was a local, federally inspected plant and had a good team who were

enthusiastic about the research" says Ivanauskas. She said Field Gate processed 15 sows which were supplied to Springer Meats and Heidelberg Foods for further processing.

Both Springer Meats and Heidelberg Foods were pleased with the performance of the meat within their formulations, but noted that the price point would need to be less than market hogs as commodity pork is currently used in their formulations and they would need supply and pricing assurances if they were to change.

As the investigation moved into the second phase of testing, the price of sows began to increase. By the end of November 2010, the cost to purchase sows rose to over \$250 per 550-pound sow. Given the relatively high shrinkage (waste) of up to 55 per cent that occurs when processing sows, the cost to

further processors at that time would have been more than \$1.20 per pound when commodity pork was selling for 71 cents a pound.

Ivanauskas says that "upon completion of the second test, an analysis of the cost to purchase, slaughter, process and transport sow meat proved to be particularly disappointing."

It is believed that price fluctuations were due to an overall decrease in sow numbers both in Canada and the United States, which resulted in a higher price for sows.

Although the project was not successful in attaining the anticipated results, there was considerable interest in the use of sow meat for further processing. Should a slaughter facility decide to enter into this market, there is now research to show that there is a market for sow meat. 