

For immediate release



NDP and Liberals back proposal to phase out sow stalls in Manitoba; Conservatives commit to working with producers to facilitate a phase-out

September 21, 2011, Winnipeg: The Manitoba New Democratic Party (NDP) and the Liberal Party of Manitoba agree it's time to phase-out sow stalls in Manitoba.

"Standards of care within the livestock industry need to improve", says the NDP in their policy statement, which also encourages discussions between industry and advocacy groups on how best to implement a phase-out.

Manitoba Liberals' policy calls for "work with industry on new guidelines" and a "move towards an industry that respects the welfare of animals, but not necessarily an outright ban by 2017."

Meanwhile, the Manitoba Conservative Party expresses a commitment to "working with producers and the Manitoba Pork Council to help the industry facilitate the phase-out of sow stalls."

As yet, none of the three provincial parties has committed to a specific date to end sow stalls. But all were responding to the Canadian Coalition for Farm Animals (CCFA) and Canadians for Ethical Treatment of Food Animals (CETFA), two national animal protection organizations that advocate 2017 as a firm date to phase out sow stalls in Manitoba.

Earlier this year, Manitoba Pork announced it will encourage —although not require --producers to end use of sow stalls by 2025. That time-frame, say CETFA and CCFA, is too long.

Sow stalls are small steel-barred pens barely larger than a sow's body. Female pigs are confined within these cages during their four-month-long pregnancy, unable to walk or even turn around. Many jurisdictions around the world—including major trading partners of Canada such as the European Union, seven U.S. state, New Zealand and Australia—are either phasing out or have already banned sow stalls.

Public response in Manitoba to CCFA's and CETFA's anti-sow stall campaign, which launched in May and includes television ads, "has been very responsive and supportive," according to Twyla Francois of CETFA. "When they learn about the awful conditions sows face in crates," says the Winnipeg-based Francois, "they can barely believe such unnecessary cruelty exists."

"We are pleased at least two provincial political parties have indicated definite support for eliminating sow stalls in the Province," adds Lynn Kavanagh of CCFA. "And that the NDP acknowledges animal care needs to be better. We certainly agree with them. Sow stalls are stark symbols of a system which degrades animal welfare in the name of productivity."

All MLA candidates from the NDP, Conservatives and Liberal parties were surveyed in early September. Respondents to date show unanimous support for ending the use of sow stalls, including an industry or legislated ban, as well as financial aid to producers to transition from crates to group housing systems.

"We're very pleased these MLA candidates are showing strong support for the issue," said Lynn Kavanagh of CCFA. "**All** Manitoba politicians need to support this vital change," she said.

- 30 -

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