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Ohio Pork Council Statement on Implementation of Open-Pen Gestation Rule

Ohio's regulation on open-pen sow gestation reflects a carefully considered choice made by Ohioans to place farm-animal care decisions in the hands of veterinarians, animal scientists, and farmers — using science, research, and real-world experience to guide policy. As these requirements take effect, Ohio pig farmers remain committed to providing high-quality animal care rooted in accountability and expert oversight.

More than a decade ago, Ohio voters approved the creation of the Ohio Livestock Care Standards Board, establishing the first state-led, science-based system in the country to set livestock housing and care standards. That decision created a unique Ohio approach — one that balances animal well-being, farmer responsibility, and flexibility for animal health needs. The state's sow-housing standards were developed using this process, with input from accredited veterinarians, animal welfare scientists, and farmers who understand sow behavior and daily care. The resulting regulation supports open-pen gestation systems while allowing farmers and veterinarians to make individualized care decisions when needed for animal health, safety, or recovery.

“Ohio pig farmers are proud to operate under a system built on science and expertise,” said Cheryl Day, executive vice president of the Ohio Pork Council. “The group-housing standards taking effect are part of a thoughtful, Ohio-led approach to animal care — one that puts animal health first.”

Ohio's approach to sow housing is built on respect for animals, for farmers, and for state-based decision-making. The standards apply to farms within Ohio and were developed by Ohio veterinarians, animal scientists, and pig farmers who understand local conditions and animal care needs. Unlike one-size-fits-all policies that attempt to extend livestock-housing requirements beyond state lines through market pressure, Ohio's system focuses on setting science-based standards at home. This grassroots approach doesn't try to dictate how farmers and their veterinary partners in other states raise their animals.

Ohio pig farmers have been preparing for these open-pen gestation requirements for years by investing in facilities and fine-tuning management practices that support sow well-being, all while maintaining the flexibility to address individual animal needs. Proper sow

housing is one of many tools farmers use — alongside veterinary guidance and ongoing research — to ensure animals are cared for responsibly.

Ohio's approach to sow housing reflects a thoughtful, science-based commitment to animal care and continuous improvement. The timeline for implementation gave pig farmers the ability to plan, invest, and adapt responsibly—rather than face abrupt changes that could have forced families out of a profession they love, providing nutrient-dense protein for their communities. Guided by veterinarians and animal-care experts, Ohio pig farmers focus on the health and well-being of their animals while working to meet today's consumer expectations. At the heart of this approach is a simple promise by Ohio's pig farmers: *"We care about our animals and their wellbeing, we care about food safety, and we certainly care about the people and the environment in the communities where we farm."*

About the Ohio Pork Council

The Ohio Pork Council was established in 1968, beginning with nearly 800 pig farmers dedicated to the task of promoting their own product. Currently, OPC has approximately 2,500 members. Their mission is to serve and benefit all Ohio pork producers. To learn more about the Ohio Pork Council, visit www.OhioPork.org or call 614-882-5887.

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