

## Why Pig Farmers Are Audited

Audits are very common in business. When we think of audits, we think of banks, taxes, businesses for sales tax, etc. Especially anything that has to do with finances. But did you know pig farmers are audited? In fact, multiple types of “audits?” Let me tell you about the types of audits we do on our farm.

### 3rd Party Audits

Perhaps one of the most complex audits is the 3rd party audits. 3rd Party Audits are required by our meatpacker, Hormel Foods. Other meatpackers also require 3rd party audits. The purpose of the 3rd party audit is to reassure Hormel Food customers that their suppliers follow the [Supplier Responsibility Principles](#). According to Hormel, audits are a “valuable step in validating that we as an industry are doing everything possible to raise pigs and provide pork in a humane and caring culture.”

To ensure that pig farmers are following their responsibility principles and we take care of pigs humanely, they employ a 3rd party company auditor to visit their suppliers.

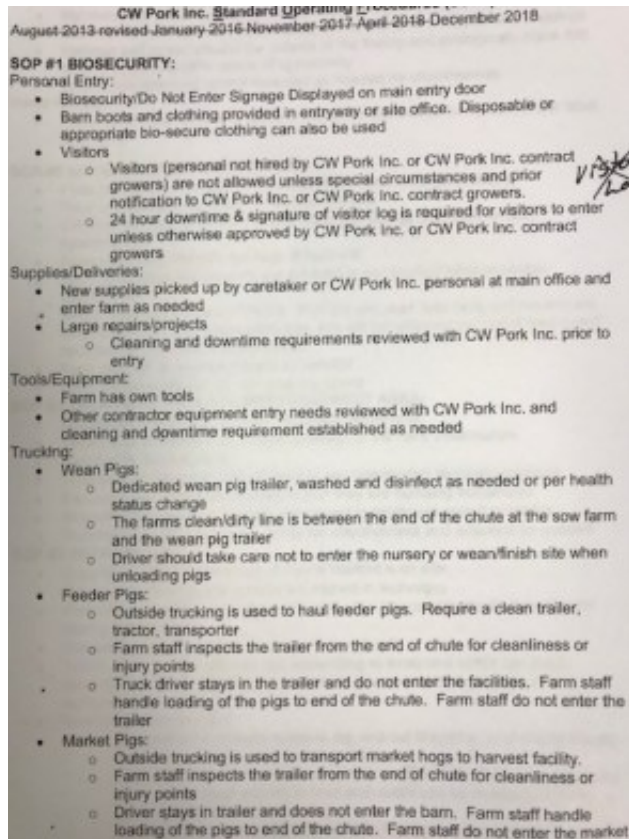
We completed our first 3rd party audit a few months ago. Once notified that our farm was selected for the audit, we worked with a local management company to help us get ready. We decided to use this company because of all the documents that are required for the audit and we wanted to make sure we were prepared. We were required to complete all documents in the FACTS Animal Welfare Audit, which was about four pages long, listing all the document requirements. While the audit was no cost, we paid \$400 for the management company. It was necessary. We spent quite a bit of time to prepare. In the end, we have a thick 3-ring binder containing our Standard Operating Procedures. The audit, performed by [Valdus](#), was 20 pages long. Not kidding. 20 pages.

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Page 1 of 4 of the required Standard Operating Procedures

On the day of the audit, the auditor was on our farm for an intense 3 – 3 1/2 hours. The particular farm that was audited was another site where we have pigs. It's a small farm of about 1200 hd of pigs. The day started with the auditor going through all the documents. He then talked with our employee. The last part of the audit entailed walking through the barn and selecting random pigs and examine them for any deficiencies.

So what types of documentation are required during the audit? Here are a few examples: Client/VFD documentation, observation log, training records for all employees, biosecurity plan, euthanasia plan, emergency action plan, animal care policy, barn repairs and maintenance, rodent control, medication/treatment policy, broken needle procedures, and nutrition/feed management. These are just a few items that are audited.

So how did we do? We passed with a score of 99%. Here is our summary:

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**Auditor(s) Name:** Glee Goodner

**Attendees:**

**Audit Scope:** Animal Welfare Review - Audit

**Audit Score:** 99% (591/597). A site must achieve 82% with no critical failures to pass the audit.

**Animal Observations:** Numbers observed: 315

Observation	%
Adequate Space	100.00 %
BCS 1.0	0.00 %
Severe Lameness	0.00 %
Abscesses	0.00 %
Deep Wounds	0.00 %
Scratches	0.00 %
Shoulder Sores	0.00 %
Tail Biting Lesions	0.00 %
Hernias	0.00 %
Prolapses	0.00 %
Vulva Injuries	0.00 %
Ear Hematomas	0.63 %
Belly Nosing	0.00 %

FACTS Audit Results

## Feedlot Permit Audit

Many counties, including ours, work with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to administer feedlot permits. Our county employs a feedlot officer whose job is to audit feedlot permits. We had our audit today. Feedlot audits are primarily looking at manure management plans along with any air and water quality issues. The cost of the audit was \$675. The feedlot officer was here about an hour max. Seems the cost is a little excessive in my opinion.

## PQA Site Assessment

Every three years, we are required to be [PQA Plus](#) and TQA certified. The Pork Quality Assurance program is designed to help pig farmers and their employees use best practices to promote food safety. Our meatpacker, Hormel Foods, require we be certified before we are authorized to sell them pigs. It's a good program, and honestly, we would go through the program whether we were required or not. Once the PQA Plus certification test is taken and passed, our farm is required to go through a [site assessment](#).

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PQA Plus assesses 27 key aspects of swine care and pre-harvest pork safety for all phases of production through the full lifecycle of the pig while they are on the farm, including pig handling and load-out for transportation.

The four areas reviewed during the site assessment are Animals, facilities, caretakers, and records. There is definitely some crossover between the PQA Plus site assessment and the 3rd Party Audits.

Here is an example of some of the questions asked during a site assessment.

13. Do all caretakers have a current PQA Plus Certification or are within 90 days from their new employment date?	Yes	
14. Does the site have a valid PQA Plus Site Status?	Yes	
15. Is there a written record of emergency backup equipment being periodically tested? NA if the site is outdoors or naturally ventilated.	Yes/NA	
16. Does the site have documentation of annual caretaker training specific to their daily duties?	Yes	
17. Does the farm have a written zero tolerance policy for willful acts of abuse or neglect?	Yes	
18. Does the site have a reporting mechanism in place for caretakers to report abuse or neglect?	Yes	
19. Does the site conduct internal site assessments of the facility, animals, caretakers, and procedures (breeding = quarterly; non-breeding = semi-annually)?	Yes	

PQA Plus Site Assessment

## Summary

One advantage of our multiple pig farm audits is the reassurance it gives to consumers. I fully understand the importance of building trust with consumers. Do I think it makes us a better pig farmer? Not really. These are things we already do on our farm, audit or no audit.

*We care for our pigs because it's the right thing to do, not because of an audit.*

Having said that, I do understand the importance of the audit for the future. And I think it's great that consumers can be reassured, through documentation, how well we take care of our animals.

Check here for more information about [Hormel Foods](#).

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