

educating the public about modern pork production

*John Kellogg, Kellogg Farm
Yorkville, Illinois*



From his window, John Kellogg can see the houses and neighborhoods that have sprung up all around his 1,450 head sow farm located just 45 minutes southwest of Chicago. It would be natural to assume that his hog farm's suburban location would create a challenge for John, but he prefers to focus on the benefits it brings. "Being so close to urban areas gives us a great opportunity to educate and conduct tours," says John, who believes that today's pork producers have a responsibility to help educate the public about modern agriculture.

A Legacy of Production and Education

The Kellogg Farm has operated in Illinois much longer than most of its neighbors. The original land was purchased from the government in the late 1840s during the administration of James K. Polk and has raised hogs since the early 1960s. John is the fifth generation to manage the farm, his children the sixth. It is because he values his family's legacy caring for livestock and producing food that John has invited classes from the Naperville School District and Chicago City Schools to visit his farm. "Most groups have no idea what a modern farm is like," says John.

Noting that the pork industry has had to respond to difficult questions about its management practices over the last decade, John feels that the best approach is to bring up the sensitive issues in the context of what Kellogg Farm is doing to address them. "Five years ago, we broadcast our manure onto fields as fertilizer, but today, we incorporate it into the soil and have planted windbreaks to reduce odor." These are the types of advances that John is more than willing to share with his tour groups. In addition, he says it's important to maintain the farm "like you would a good home, as the first impression is the most lasting".

Remaining True to its Roots – Raising Pork and Increasing Awareness

While some farms in urban areas have transitioned to Agri-Tourism, the Kellogg Farm remains a working farm that produces grain and corn in addition to the hogs. Because they aren't in the tourism business, John tries to limit tours to groups that can have the greatest impact on helping to educate the public. Over the last two decades, John has welcomed not just school groups, but teachers, reporters and legislators to his farm. He also likes to include other pork producers when he hosts a group as a way to encourage his colleagues to open their own farms to the community. "Once we get visitors past their initial concerns about odor, the response is almost always positive", says John.



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