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Two winners share Aherne Prize at Banff Pork Seminar 2015

Banff, Alta. January 22, 2015. Two hog innovations were recognized with the F, X Aherne Prize for Innovative Pork Production at the 2015 Banff Pork Seminar in Banff, Alta.

Lyle and Maaik Campbell of Birnam Pork, Arkona, Ont. won for an innovative piglet weigh scale which boosted profitability in that operation. And Greg Feenstra and Dave Uttecht of Heartland Pork, LLC in Alpena, South Dakota, U.S. won for their “EZ Tub” hog handling innovation which significantly reduces stress on animals and people.

“Innovation is always fascinating and this award is one of the most popular aspects of the annual Banff Pork Seminar,” says Dr. Michael Dyck of the University of Alberta, chair of the F.X. Aherne prize committee. “The prize recognizes those individuals who have developed either original solutions to pork production challenges or creative uses of known technology.”

The award is named after industry icon, the late Dr. Frank Aherne, a professor of swine nutrition and production at the University of Alberta in Edmonton and a major force for science-based progress in the western Canadian pork industry.

The Campbells’ innovative solution to weighing young piglets was low cost and had a direct benefit on their bottom line. Birnam Pork produces weaned piglets that excel in the grower-finish phase of pork production. They needed some way to weigh those piglets so they could ensure they were meeting marketing objectives and getting paid for their efforts.

Their scale was built onto a lightweight base that is easily transportable and washable. A lightweight container on top is tall enough that 18 day old piglets won’t jump out, but low enough to be reachable. It features a tray to carry spray markers and a spot to collect sow cards. The scale design allows for numbers on the scale to be viewable from all sides. It is flexible enough to use with smaller piglets and can be used to calibrate feeders.

Greg Feenstra and Dave Uttecht of Heartland Pork designed the E Z Hog Tub hog handler. It helps reduce stress on pigs and people during loading, produced faster loading and lower plant losses. And it accomplished that with very little expense.

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Animal handling and welfare are major concerns for the pork industry. Research shows pigs need time to flow through alleyways. The primary cause of stress when moving animals through an alleyway is that handlers have a tendency to move too aggressively, crowding pigs to encourage movement. That causes animals to bunch up and balk at transitions such as doorways.

The E Z Tub circular tub-style design works with pigs' natural response patterns to aid in the loading of market hogs. The pen and gate configuration lets the handler work where hogs can see them and uses the pigs' circling behavior to set up a flow onto the trailer. That reduces stress and produces fewer discounts for injured animals at the packing plant.

The Banff Pork Seminar is coordinated by the Department of Agricultural, Food and Nutritional Science, University of Alberta, in cooperation with Alberta Pork, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development and other pork industry representatives from across Canada. Program and additional information including a Special Report on the 2015 Seminar is available at www.banffpork.ca.

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More information:

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Media note. For news articles and the *Inside BPS* blog from the 2015 Banff Pork Seminar, please visit the Banff Pork Seminar Special Meeting Report link at www.banffpork.ca.