



Banff Pork Seminar
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HyLife weaning ramp wins Aherne Prize at 2023 Banff Pork Seminar

Banff, Alta. Jan. 12, 2023: Two employees of HyLife sow farms in La Broquerie, Man. have won the F. X. Aherne Prize for Innovative Pork Production at the 2023 Banff Pork Seminar (BPS).

Robert Lafrenière and Barak Doell developed what they have called the “HyLife weaning ramp”, an innovation that improves working conditions, animal well-being and productivity. They were presented with their award in front of conference delegates by Ben Willing chair of the Seminar awards committee.

“Each year our committee is impressed by the innovation of people in our industry who enter the competition,” says Willing. “The award comes with financial reward in the form of a ticket to the Seminar for two people and support for travel costs to attend. However, the biggest prize for many is the recognition by industry peers.”

The weaning ramp designed by Lafrenière and Doell helps with one of the most labor-intensive and strenuous tasks on a sow farm. Typical process at HyLife involves picking up piglets, giving them a vaccination and separating by gender.

To accomplish this, staff will pick up piglets from the floor, bring them to the person performing the vaccination, and finally, sort them by sex. Repeatedly collecting and picking up piglets places strain on a worker’s body, especially their back and arms, as most of these piglets are 5 kg or heavier. The innovative weaning ramp eliminates the need to pick up piglets off the floor.

“This is a solid example of the goals of this competition,” says Willing. “Grassroots innovation built with team support and an idea that helps others in the industry in their daily work. Frank Aherne, who was a professor at the University of Alberta and a major force for science-based progress in the Canadian pork industry, would be proud.”

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 Irrigation and other pork industry representatives from across Canada.

More complete details and photos are available in the Inside BPS Special Report available by link from the 2023 Seminar website www.banffpork.ca.