LIVESTOCK FARMERS DO MORE THAN RAISE THE MEAT, MILK AND EGGS ON YOUR PLATE. THEY ARE RESPONSIBLE, TRUSTED NEIGHBORS.

Honest Answers to Valid Questions

New can be scary, and when you don’t know what that something new really is, it’s easy to get caught up in what you hear or see on the internet.

Today’s farms don’t quite look like pastoral images in children’s books or the memories of our grandparents’ farms. Just as you update your smartphone when new technology is available, farmers leverage the newest technology to make producing your food, fiber and fuel efficient and safe for the livestock and the environment.

When it comes to new or growing livestock farms, the same questions seem to arise, and we have some answers. But, don’t just take our word for it — we’ve cited our resources and encourage you to do your own research. Visit FarmersDeliver.com to take a look.

WHAT ABOUT ALL THE ANTIBIOTICS FARMS USE, AREN’T THOSE BAD FOR MY FAMILY?

Nope

Antibiotics, in humans and in livestock, can be misused or overused. In fact, the CDC estimates that nearly half of all antibiotics prescribed in our hospitals are unnecessary. But, when used to prevent, control or treat disease to keep livestock (and humans) healthy, antibiotics play an important role. Because of this, livestock farmers are careful to use antibiotics judiciously. Why?

For one, having a tool that helps sick livestock is too important to risk developing resistance from overuse. Today’s livestock farmers are making choices they think keep their livestock healthy and well cared for. This includes consulting veterinarians to make the right decisions about animal health and treatment. In fact, many antibiotics require a veterinarian’s prescription for use, just like your family receives from your doctor. Called Veterinary Feed Directives, they ensure the right amount of antibiotic for the disease.

Secondly, antibiotics are expensive whether you’re a pig or a person! So, farmers won’t treat more livestock than they must.

Third, meat is tested for antibiotic residue. Since 1967, meat and poultry products have been tested for the presence of more than 100 compounds, including antibiotics, by the USDA Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS).

Last, many farms are limiting antibiotic use to disease treatment only and choosing antibiotics that are considered animal-only – meaning antibiotics that aren’t used in humans – when they do use them.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Michigan State University Extension, U.S. Food and Drug Administration
DO LIVESTOCK BARNs LEAD TO DRuG-RESISTANT BACTERIA SUCH AS MRSA?

Concerns over negative health impacts such as MRSA from animal agriculture are unfounded. One of the main reasons livestock are housed in barns is to protect them from outside diseases to keep the food chain safe. With strict biosecurity measures, the likelihood of livestock in a regulated facility causing an outbreak of disease is negligible.

Source: University of Minnesota, Food Policy Research Center; University of Minnesota, College of Veterinary Medicine

BIG CORPORATIONS HAVE TAKEN OVER THE FAMILY FARM?

Farms today look different than they used to, but only the structure has changed. A corporate farm is not about size — it's about farmers setting up their businesses for tax and estate planning purposes. Indiana farms that have been operating for generations, regardless of size, can be corporations. In fact, 87% of all farms in Indiana are family owned and managed.

Today's larger farms are all about economies of scale and growing and adapting to support the families tied to them. And, these larger farms use more local area grain and resources — supporting their rural economies.

Source: Purdue University Department of Agricultural Economics, USDA Census of Agriculture

IF A NEW FARM GOES IN NEXT DOOR, WON'T NEIGHBORHOOD PROPERTY VALUES GO DOWN?

When researching potential building sites, farmers consider many factors such as appropriate zoning, sufficient space, proximity of neighbors, location of public use areas like lakes and parks, land topography and prevailing wind direction. Because of these best management practices, property values should not be negatively impacted.

To support this finding, unbiased qualitative and quantitative research conducted in Indiana shows that in most cases — depending on proximity — new or expanded livestock farms have a neutral or positive impact on neighboring property values.

Source: Indiana Business Research Center

DOESN'T LIVESTOCK POLLUTE OUR WATER?

Large modern livestock buildings — also referred to as Confined Feeding Operations (CFOs) — are required to have environmental plans developed by engineers in compliance with federal and state rules. These documents include nutrient management plans, which are basically a calculation of how much manure will be produced, how it will be stored and how it will be managed until it can be appropriately applied to land as a highly effective fertilizer.

New livestock buildings are also sited per county zoning and are designed and constructed per state rules that specify setbacks from waterways, wells, intakes and the like. By regulation, CFOs are not allowed to have any manure discharge — none, zero, zilch.

Source: IDEM Requirements

WON'T EVERYTHING SMELL LIKE MANURE ALL THE TIME?

While there is no denying that manure — and the smell — is an inevitable part of animal agriculture, livestock farmers do everything they can to mitigate odor and be good neighbors. It starts with choosing the correct building site and designing barns with sophisticated ventilation and manure-holding structures, but that's not all; here are some other smart tactics used to keep the air fresh:

- Planting windbreaks and shelterbelts (trees and shrubs)
- Implementing feed-management strategies
- Covering outside storage structures
- Aerating liquid storage structures
- Avoiding fertilizing fields with manure on weekends and holidays

Manure is a valuable resource that contains all the nutrients needed to keep the land rich and fertile for growing crops. Farmers don’t like to waste this valuable resource.

Source: Purdue University

DOES ANYONE REGULATE THESE BARNS?

In fact, there are literally volumes of ever-changing rules and regulations that farmers must keep informed of and meet or exceed, and there are several agencies providing oversight. Think of it this way: Federal and state agencies regulate how barns are managed, and local agencies regulate where they are built.

Absolutely every detail, from building site to the manure-storage system, is reviewed and approved prior to construction. Once the approved building is ready for livestock, both the livestock and the manure are subject to specific rules around things like transportation, application of manure as fertilizer, feeding practices and animal care.

Keep in mind, it’s in a farmer’s best interest to meet or exceed all standards to make sure their livestock and the land stay safe and sound.

Source: Indiana Department of Environmental Management requirements, Board of Animal Health requirements

OUR LOCAL ROADS CAN'T HANDLE ALL THE ADDED TRAFFIC.

Like any new construction project, traffic is increased on roads when a new barn is being built. But, day-to-day traffic for feed delivery, animal hauling or moving output like milk is all managed within the rules of the county (spring thaw regulations for example) and in compliance with truck weight rules and laws. A study done by Purdue interviewed county highway engineers and found no impact on bridges; the few times damage has occurred, farmers paid the expense directly. Zoning rules and county planning commissions have authority to assess roads and impacts when barns are being considered.

Source: Purdue University Department of Agricultural Economics
Indiana’s livestock farmers are a part of our community fabric, caring for the land and animals that feed their families, and yours.

As community leaders and economic contributors, Indiana’s livestock farm families are responsible neighbors invested in their heritage, their future and the health of the community.

Learn more about Indiana’s livestock farmers at FarmersDeliver.com.