

Tired of the tears over big hog operations

Get a little tired of the crying over modern hog production, such as went on Wednesday at the Fairfield Arts and Convention Center.

The problem with those in opposition of concentrated animal feeding operations, they really aren't proposing real alternatives. Instead, they just come to such meetings to bitch how things aren't like the old days.

Well, folks, times change! I am not a big proponent of these large hog operations, but I am not against them either.

Let me talk to those folks that yearn for the good old days and give some hard facts.

First, there are fewer farms and farmers than in decades



Rex Troute

rtroute@thehawkeye.com

past. From 1982 to 2012, according to a USDA census, farms in Iowa have dwindled from 115,413 to 88,637. Take that a step further in the same time frame, and hog farms have dwindled from 45,768 to 6,266.

In the meantime, hog production has increased to meet world

demand. From 1982 to 2012, hog inventory in Iowa has gone from 14.3 million head to 20.4 million head per year. Actual hog production in a year has gone from 23.8 million to 49.3 million, more than double.

These large hog operations are more efficient than the way hog farmers used to do it. An operator doesn't have to spend his time fixing fence, ringing hogs' noses, chopping ice out of outdoor waters, or strawing down hog sheds.

Today's hogs live in a controlled environment where they are never too hot or cold.

A sad fact is if farmers went back to the old way of raising pigs, they could not attain the

type of production now reached in Iowa.

I don't know how environmentally sound the old method was to begin with as open lots allowed runoff into waterways and creeks.

Let's get to the big issue here. Smell! Ever since European settlers crossed the Mississippi River into the territory that would become Iowa — there have been hogs. And guess what, there has been smell associated with the raising of those pigs from day one.

My Dad used to call that the smell of money when a wind blew that unique aroma up to the

See Troute on page 4D

Troute

Continued from page 1D

house from the western hog lot.

Smell has become more of an issue because rural population has increased, while farm population has decreased. People want to enjoy country living without the typical country smells — which come with cattle, hogs, chickens and any other livestock.

Sorry, agriculture is Iowa's bread and butter, and it was here before town folks decided to take up residence on a gravel road.

Yes, there are some issues with such large hog operations. Occasionally, a manure spill affects a waterway. Who is to say the old ways didn't affect waterways, but in those days we weren't as environmentally conscience.

Let's face facts, these animals are raised to stock shelves at local groceries and meat markets. As to the farmer in Fairfield that said, "I raise animals, not pork chops," I'm sorry to say you are providing the "the other white meat."

In modern farming, efficiency rules the roost like it does in other businesses. Farmers can plant and combine crops with-

out touching a steering wheel. It was only logical that livestock production evolved into a more efficient system. Hogs are not pets, but animals meant as food production.

Everything is getting larger in farming — machinery and the size of farms, while the number of farmers is shrinking. With that combination, it is necessary for work to become more efficient in order to get it done.

Large hog confinement operations simply evolved because of those trends. Now, if the opposition to these operations, can come up with an economical alternative, then by all means let's hear it.

But I am sick and tired of hearing those crying for the old days or simply complaining because the countryside smells like it has since the first Iowa settlers came in 1833.

We are an agricultural state, and if we let certain people lawsuit these operations to death, they may eventually force one of Iowa's largest industries from its borders.

This is the way hogs are going to be produced until some better system comes along. Until that better system comes along, the opposition to large hog operations should stop crying.

Section **D**

Sunday, October 11, 2015

Burlington, Iowa

THE HAWK EYE

Rex L. Troute, business editor

(319) 758-8145 or 1-800-397-1708

FAX (319)-754-6824

email: blz@thehawkeye.com

www.thehawkeye.com/business