

**BECOMING A  
NIMAN RANCH FARMER**



**THE PROTOCOL**

*Summary Version*

*(Please read entire document thoroughly)*

**Thank you for your interest in Niman Ranch!**

The Niman Ranch Pork Company is one of the fastest growing, most successful niche hog markets around. With over 500 farmers contributing to our success, Niman Ranch Pork has become a nationally-known brand, famous for how the hogs are raised, and how incredible the pork tastes.

If your hogs qualify, you will receive a premium above cash price, and have the protection of an established floor price. Thank you for taking the time to learn about a company that respects your commitment to responsible farming practices.

Qualified Niman Ranch pigs:

- **Have never been given antibiotics of any kind - ever;**
- **Have never been given added hormones or artificial growth promotants - ever;**
- **Have been fed all-vegetarian diets;**
- **Have been raised to the highest care standards, and according to the Animal Welfare Institute "Pig Husbandry Standards";**
- **Are born and raised on American family farms and are harvested and processed at U.S.D.A. inspected facilities within the United States;**
- **And meet our high pork and carcass quality standards.**

Additionally, Niman Ranch Farmers are responsible for:

- **Following Niman Ranch Protocol at all times;**
- **And accurately reporting their market hog numbers to Niman Ranch.**

The contents of this packet include a summary of the official Protocol for becoming a Niman Ranch hog farmer. We will be happy to provide a complete copy of our Protocol to farmers with a strong interest in marketing pigs to Niman Ranch.

*The Staff of the Niman Ranch Pork Company*

Revised 11-10-07

### **1.) Antibiotic free**

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The hogs that you sell to Niman Ranch can never have been given antibiotics, therapeutically or sub-therapeutically. We realize from time to time that you may have sick hogs that must be treated with antibiotics. This is fine. However, we require that you mark the treated pigs, or separate them off, and sell them through another market. We also require that you keep a record of your treated pigs. You may use the "Antibiotic Treatment Form" located on the final page of this document.

### **2.) Artificial hormone or growth promotant free**

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While we know that using hormones for growth promotion is more common in the cattle industry, we also require that you do not use growth promotants such as ractopomine.

### **3.) Meat and meat by-product free**

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Meat and meat by-products include animal fat, meat and bone meal, fishmeal, tankage, blood or plasma, etc. This excludes milk products and egg which are allowed. A Niman Ranch staff member must look over and approve all of your rations and feed tags. Additionally these items must be filed with the USDA before Niman Ranch can buy any of your hogs. Niman Ranch periodically takes random feed samples to test for the presence of meat by-products and antibiotics. We encourage farmers to continually check labels and rations to insure compliance. Feed companies may change ingredients without prior notice.

### **4.) Animal Husbandry Standards**

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Niman Ranch hog farmers follow the highest husbandry standards in the industry. Before a farmer ever sells hogs to Niman Ranch, their farm must be audited to ensure that he or she is complying with these rules. Following this, a Niman Ranch staff member will continue to audit the farm one or more times each year. For our complete list of pig husbandry standards, please contact a Niman Ranch Pork Division staff member.

### **5.) Pork quality acceptance**

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Only farmers who raise the highest quality pork will be accepted into the Niman Ranch program.

Qualified pigs must be sired by NR approved boar lines. Additionally, farmers must be committed to using top-quality genetic lines, or those that will produce pork with excellent eating quality. A complete list of Niman Ranch recommended boar lines and/or genetic sources is available from Niman Ranch staff members.

### **6.) Needles and Injection Requirements**

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Niman Ranch allows zero tolerance for retained needles found in our hogs. We will not purchase pigs from farmers who refuse to follow our injection protocols:

A.) Intramuscular injections must always be given in the neck muscles, behind and below the ear, but well ahead of the shoulder. Subcutaneous injections (under the skin) should be given in the same location. In baby pigs, subcutaneous injections may also be given in the loose flaps of skin in the flank or elbow region;

B.) Whenever possible, "highly detectable" needles must be used (please contact Niman Ranch for details on purchasing);

**C.) Needles must be inspected between each injection. Injections must be administered in a way that allows the farmer to identify pigs that may have retained a needle;**

D.) If you suspect a needle has been retained in a pig, Niman Ranch may still purchase the pig if the following procedures are followed. [Note: The farmer will not receive a discount for this pig, but weight of the carcass may be reduced should excess trimming be needed]:

- 1.) Affected pig is permanently identified (ear tag, ear notch, ear punch);
- 2.) Incident is documented in writing by the farmer, noting date, method in which the pig is ID'd, approximate location of the needle (ie: neck, left side), and size/type of needle retained;
- 3.) At time of sale, farmer notifies NR that affected pig will be arriving. Farmer must also notify their trucker (or Sioux Preme staff if it is a direct haul);
- 4.) If the pig cannot be individually identified, steps 2-3 must still be followed, and the suspect pigs may be sold in groups of no more than 20 head at a time. These carcasses will be individually inspected.

## **7.) Field Agents**

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Niman Ranch employs several Field Agents who work closely with their assigned group of farmers. The duties of the field agents are to audit farms, work with farmers on record-keeping and market hog inventory projections, recruit new farmers, and assist producers with technical information. If you have not been contacted by a field agent, please call the office immediately and we will help you make contact with your field agent.

## **8.) Pork quality testing and bonuses**

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Once you begin selling pigs to Niman Ranch, we will continue to monitor the quality of the pork you raise. We currently work with meat scientists at Iowa State University who evaluate our farmers' pork weekly. With this information, we are able to determine which farmers are raising the highest quality pork for Niman Ranch. Annual bonuses are paid to farmers based on this information. Please contact a Niman Ranch Staff member for more details on our pork quality testing program.

## **9.) Other Audits**

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Your farm will be audited once or twice each year by your Field Agent or another Niman Ranch Staff Member. The purpose is to ensure that our farmers are following all of our required protocols. Niman Ranch reserves the right to have third party auditor inspect your farm. From time to time, some of our customers may request to audit your farm. All audits are a mandatory requirement for selling into the program.

## **10.) Reporting hog numbers and working with the Shipping Manager**

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When you commit to raising pigs for Niman Ranch, you will start receiving a Monthly Producer Report. This report is sent to you at the end of each month and asks for the following month's delivery plans as well as a 6-month projection of hogs you will have available to sell. Company sales are based on forecasted projections, so reporting timely and accurate hog numbers is an important task you will be asked to do as a Niman Ranch farmer. There are two ways to report your information. Some regions use a Shipping Manager as an information collector and delivery coordinator for the farmers in their group, and other farmers coordinate directly with the Niman Ranch office. Please speak with a Niman Ranch staff member for specific details on how to report and coordinate your market hog deliveries.

REPORTING HOG NUMBERS IS CRUCIAL! If you do not accurately do this, we cannot guarantee that we will buy your pigs!

## **11.) Trucking allowance**

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Niman Ranch agrees to pay a trucking allowance for *Niman Ranch approved hogs* to the packing plants. All qualified producers who have been booked and approved for delivery will be paid a trucking and yardage allowance based on their miles to the kill facility, weight shipped (calculated on either your carcass or live weight depending on your kill facility) and number of head shipped. Niman Ranch will calculate mileage on mapquest.com by using the farmer's home address (submitted on the Quality Standard Affidavit) as the starting point, and the kill facility's address as the ending point. When P.O. Box numbers are used, a home address must be submitted as well. When addresses do not register on mapquest.com (rural routes, for example), the farmer's 5-digit zip code will be used instead. Your trucking allowance will be added to your check. Your trucking allowance will be added to your kill sheets. Please contact a Niman Ranch staff member for exact details on how your trucking allowance will be calculated.

## **12.) No Show/Cancellation Policy:**

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Farmers who have confirmed delivery of Niman Ranch approved hogs may be liable for the shipping expense of those hogs if they fail to deliver at the specified time and location without proper notification.

**Cancellations:** Farmers may cancel their hog delivery by noon the Friday prior to the scheduled delivery time from their loading location without penalty. Cancellations must be made through the appropriate source by contacting the Shipping Manager, Field Agent, or Niman Ranch Procurement Manager.

**No Shows:** Farmers who have a confirmed scheduled delivery and do not deliver the pigs as directed may be liable for their portion of the trucking expense based on the number of pigs they were scheduled to deliver.

## **15.) Responsible farming practices**

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Niman Ranch expects certified farmers to raise hogs in an environmentally safe and approved manner that adheres to all county, state, and federal standards. This includes, but is not limited to manure management practices, stocking densities, and disposal of mortality.

## **16.) Veterinary Services Program**

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Niman Ranch offers its farmers consultation services with a veterinarian proficient in natural hog production. Our veterinarian can provide you with expert advice and consultation on business practices, disease control, economics, facility design, feed, herd health maximization, management practices, nutrition, pig flow, record keeping, scheduling, and any other topic related to producing hogs under the Niman Ranch Protocols. Please contact Niman Ranch staff members for more details on our Veterinary Services Program.

## **17.) Payment for market hogs**

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Quality pork demands a quality price. Our goal is to provide a robust market for family farmers who want to remain independent. In summary, when you raise pigs for Niman Ranch, you can expect:

- a floor price to protect farmers from low prices;
- a premium above the cash market;
- additional bonuses based on pork quality testing;
- summer marketing bonuses for any additional hogs you deliver over the prior year's sales (June-August);
- reimbursement for trucking live hogs to slaughter;
- additionally, a variety of marketing contracts are available, if desired.

Please contact a Niman Ranch staff member for a complete copy of our Pork Purchasing Policy, and more details on summer bonuses and marketing contracts.

## Checklist for Potential Niman Ranch Farmers

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Before you can sell hogs to Niman Ranch for the first time, you must do the following:

- Contact your Field Agent.
- Report your market hog inventory to your Field Agent as directed.
- Have pork quality approved by Niman Ranch staff.
- Gather copies of your feeding formulas (rations) and feed labels from **all** premixes, concentrates, additives, etc. Your Field Agent will need to collect and file this information in order to complete the paperwork necessary to certify you. **Labels must show ingredients!!** Niman Ranch needs this information at least one month prior to buying the hogs, however **it is recommended that farmers turn in the feed information before any hogs even eat the ration.** It is best to be confident that the feed doesn't contain any unapproved ingredients that could disqualify the hogs.
- Begin keeping simple herd health records. If you have to treat any hogs with antibiotics, please identify them (see #1, page 2) and record them. Your Field Agent will also need to document your vaccination program as well as parasite control program, so have that information available.
- Arrange to have your farm inspected by your Field Agent to verify husbandry protocols. **We prefer to visit farms when you are farrowing.** Do not delay. Visits must be arranged several weeks in advance and we cannot take your hogs before an inspection is done.
- Contact your Shipping Manager to schedule your market hog deliveries. It is recommended that this is done at least one month in advance.

