

## Computers: NPPC Supporting Role

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A great deal of the country has become computerized...that is except the pork industry. We have always claimed to be so technologically advanced in our industry using the most modern techniques in our production systems. However, we are still in the stone age when it comes to data processing. Someone told me the other day that the decade of the 50's was the atomic age, the 60's was the space age, the 70's was the computer age, and now we are entering the age of genetic engineering. The point is that we are behind the times, but we can catch up. It will be a challenge though because the future is happening faster now. Today is the tomorrow you planned for yesterday.

NPPC can represent a supporting role in certain areas of computerization of our industry. Other areas demand a lead role from the nation's pork producers. One of these lead roles should be assumed in the recording of the comprehensive swine record system analysis. Development of the software for this project finally received an appropriation from USDA's Science and Education Administration after about two or more years of solicitation by NPPC. The project will start this spring with Dr. Dave Bache of Purdue recognized as the leading investigator. This should have been developed years ago so that we could have avoided all these fragmented, uncomparable programs being put into use now. The three areas of record keeping which will receive attention in this project are economic, performance, and disease resistance or health maintenance.

Performance testing, other than for an individual producer's own records could command a supporting or lead role from the national organization. Some time ago, I was doing some dreaming in a newsletter article. I stated that I would like to see all this computer analysis for all the various entities done in a central location. I went on to say that among others, breeding companies could use the software and hardware to record and analyze their performance records. I found out that this created somewhat of a stir in that a certain company thought that we had already taken this project to completion and that they had been left out of the planning.

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Another area of industry records has to do with those for pedigrees. The talk preceding this one conveyed our position on this subject as we have been in contact with NASR about it. NPPC is willing to cooperate with the registry associations in any way we can to make pedigree records more uniform and accessible to the smaller associations that can't afford to put a computer on line.

The Pork Council is in the process of putting together a long overdue system for expediting our checkoff program. In addition to many other internal functions, the checkoff funding program is being done almost entirely by hand. By the middle of 1981, we hope to have the aid of a computer in this area.

The last but certainly not least important of the thoughts which come to mind when someone mentions NPPC and computers is electronic marketing. Let me back step a moment to explain a program coming up next summer. NPPC has taken the lead in sponsoring a national forum to identify ways in which pork producers can obtain more information from packers to use in their own genetic improvement programs. The current grade and weight marketing programs only attract the very best hogs equaling about 10½ percent of all those marketed. The remainder are essentially sold on price averaging. Any improvement in the consumer acceptability of our product is going to be difficult to make without more complete information and some additional motivation.

Electronic marketing could tie in very closely with such a quality incentive program. To be successful with our producers, any electronic marketing program would have to offer the maximum in competition between buyers rather than only serving to bring the buyer and seller together. Also, any program would have to receive input from both buyers and sellers in its development to be successful and it would have to be producer owned.

I have attempted to present what I see as some of the computer issues with which NPPC could become involved in the future. Some are probably closer and realistically attainable in the near future. Others are going to require considerable dialogue before a final direction is achieved. I see the need to develop a centralized producer owned computer system to handle as many of these different areas as possible. We must initiate a program with so much vision that we can meet the challenge. This is necessary to avoid having to scrap many Mickey Mouse programs later. This program designed now must be adequate for the future, for within our lifetimes, pork will become the number one meat source of protein.