

The Marion Star

Hog farmers embrace technology

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Marion County 4-H members show hogs at the annual county fair each summer. The county ranked among the top 10 counties in Ohio in terms of hog and sheep production, according to a 2011 United States Department of Agriculture report. (Photo: James Miller/Marion Star file photo)

MARION – As Marion County’s largest industry, agriculture has constantly adapted to survive.

With decades of experience in farming and pork production, Marion County Commissioner Ken Stiverson said he has seen technology advance “a hundred fold over the last 25 years.”

“They still think they run around out there in bib overalls and a pitchfork,” he said. “The way I did it when I started, you can’t survive like that anymore.”

While most land and money goes toward crop production in the county, pork farmers are the top animal farmers in Marion, according to Stiverson. He estimated more than 1,000 sows are raised within the county each year.

The county ranked among the top 10 counties in Ohio in terms of hog and sheep production, according to a 2011 United States Department of Agriculture report.

Many of those advances have made their way to pork farms across the state, according to Kyle Brown, district director with the Ohio Pork Council. For example, he said, food portions are delivered digitally and proportionally to all his hogs at Maken Bacon Farms in Morral. That food is also better suited for growing large, healthier pigs.

“It doesn’t take as much water and feed to produce as much pork as it used to. It’s becoming more efficient with the resources,” he said. “The knowledge and technology is there to be able to do it.”

Another example of technological precision Brown cited was the care of the piglets. In addition to automatically adjusting temperatures of the barns as seasons change, piglets are given special care in a “nice, warm room” as opposed to older, humbler huts.

Protecting livestock and crops are crucial to providing agriculture jobs, which Stiverson claims make up “one out of every seven jobs in the state,” from those working in the fields to shelf-stockers at grocery stores.

“You’re not going to continue down the road if you neglect either one of those,” he added.

Brown said agriculture has always been successful in “doing more with less,” noting that jobs continued to be created as advances in the industry come into practice.

“Don’t ever be satisfied with where you are at,” he said. “Be open minded.”

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