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Official Opening of the Sow Research Unit at Prairie Swine Centre

Saskatoon, SK., June 10, 2008: “Reducing costs and improving efficiency is the most important aspect of pork production today, and applies as much to the research community as it does to commercial pork producers,” notes Dr. John Patience, President of Prairie Swine Centre. “This new sow barn embraces that important concept in design, equipment selection and operational procedures.” Examples of the efficiency aspect in design include replacing four buildings constructed in 1980 with one building. In consideration of equipment, high efficiency gas heaters in all rooms, a new high efficiency hot water heater, and in the farrowing rooms low wattage heat lamps will all lower the annual utility costs. Combined these factors should reduce energy consumption by 25-30%. The largest savings however will occur in the daily operations of the pig barn. By having automated feed delivery to all pens, and self feeders for all nursing sows, staffing will be much more efficient. The design of the equipment means less time opening gates, handling and moving animals at breeding. “In total this barn should be at least 30% more labour efficient that its predecessor” notes Dr. Patience.

“Shannon Meyers, General Manager of Fast Genetics and a member of the Board of Directors of Prairie Swine Centre reinforces the importance of being efficient, “the industry is cyclical and regularly goes through periods of profit and loss, only pork producers that know their costs and focus on efficiency will be there to participate when the good prices return. This barn will meet head-on the need to be efficient. It is important to note however that in improving our efficiency we did not have to give up on the unique features required for an effective research design.” The barn has the ability to simulate standard production practices as well as incorporating features

such as free-access stalls (designed in Denmark) so that comparisons of various management systems used in the industry can be compared within this facility. Looking ahead, the barn incorporates the industry trend of accommodating practices such as increasing the age at weaning.

The construction of the new Sow Research Unit was made possible through a Wedge Funding Grant, a joint initiative of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture.

Participating in the Official Opening ceremonies at 1 pm today was Dr. Jim Basinger, Acting Associate Vice-President Research, University of Saskatchewan, Mr. Neil Ketilson, General Manager, Sask Pork, Mr. Shannon Meyers, and Dr. John Patience.

Prairie Swine Centre Inc., located near Saskatoon, is a non-profit research corporation affiliated with the University of Saskatchewan, and is recognized globally for its contributions to practical, applied science in pork production in the disciplines of nutrition, engineering and applied animal behaviour.

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