

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NEW ZEALANDERS URGED TO BACK LOCAL PIG FARMERS THROUGH LOCK-DOWN AND BUY NEW ZEALAND PORK

Kiwis are being encouraged to support New Zealand's pig farmers by only buying 'home grown' pork during the COVID-19 restrictions.

New Zealand pig farmers are deemed an essential service and are continuing to farm through Alert Levels 2-4, but with many restaurants closed, the sector is concerned about a possible surplus of pigs.

Now, NZPork has launched a social media campaign to encourage Kiwis to back local farmers and choose New Zealand born and raised pork over imported pork.

"Approximately 60 per cent of pork consumed in New Zealand is imported with much of it produced using practices illegal in this country," says David Baines, chief executive of NZPork.

"Consumers should check product labels to ensure it is 100 % New Zealand pork or look for the Born and Raised in New Zealand PigCare label. If it says 'made in New Zealand from local and imported ingredients', then chances are it's imported.

"We encourage people to ask their retailer for home grown pork, and when buying online, search for '100% NZ Pork'.

"You will be buying a fresh and healthy product and supporting farmers working hard through the COVID-19 restrictions to maintain high standards of care for their pigs and keeping New Zealanders fed."

As part of the campaign, Kiwis will get the chance to 'meet' some of the farmers behind their pork.

"Pig farmers know that the more contented the pig, the better the pork," says Mr Baines. "We'll be sharing the stories of some of New Zealand's pig farmers talking about what makes New Zealand pork such a delicious and quality product."

Imported pork is also often heavily subsidised, which coupled with the lower welfare standards, means it is cheaper than New Zealand pork, he says.

The pork sector is closely monitoring the pig supply situation in a bid to ensure it won't face an animal welfare crisis during the COVID-19 restrictions.

Commercial piggeries typically supply pigs to market on a weekly basis with much of their produce going to independent butchers.

However, with butcher shops unable to fully serve retail customers and restaurants closed during Alert level 4 in Auckland, and the hospitality sector in the rest of the country operating under Alert level 2 restrictions, there are fears of a surplus of pigs on-farm.

“Pig farmers are concerned about potential animal welfare issues. Overcrowding of pigs in pens constitutes a significant welfare issue under the animal welfare code.

“Reduced production capacity, due to measures designed to prevent the spread of COVID-19, has also presented processing challenges and wholesalers do not have the blast freezer and storage capacity to freeze the surplus volume.”

Most manufacturers of bacon and ham now mainly use imported pork in their products and do not operate boning rooms or employ staff who could process the additional New Zealand pigs, said Mr Baines.

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For more information, please contact:

David Baines

021 707 577

david.baines@pork.co.nz