



## Frequently Asked Questions

### Eliminating Ractopamine From an Exhibition Pig's Diet & Environment

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#### What is ractopamine?

Ractopamine is a beta-agonist feed additive used in production swine diets to promote lean muscle growth. It has been approved for use in swine diets in the United States. In recent years the use of ractopamine has been prohibited in many countries around the world because of concerns about its possible health effects. Some county fairs and other swine shows in Michigan also have decided to eliminate its use in hogs exhibited at their events. This fact sheet is designed to help you eliminate ractopamine from the diet of your 4-H swine project animal and to avoid accidentally exposing the animal to it.

#### How can I tell if a swine feed I want to buy contains ractopamine?

To find out whether a swine feed contains ractopamine, look for "ractopamine hydrochloride" on the feed label (see figure 1). (**Note:** Labels typically list ractopamine as an active ingredient rather than as a medicated feed product.)

#### How is ractopamine fed to pigs?

Feed manufacturers mix ractopamine into their ground or pelleted complete feeds. Swine producers can also buy ractopamine in pellet or powder form and top-dress or mix it into their pig feed.

#### What are some common names for Ractopamine products?

Ractopamine is sold under several product names, including Paylean, Lean Maximizer, Explode, XXL, Overdrive, and Power-Max. Always check feed and supplement labels so you know what you're feeding your pigs and to be sure you're following the label directions.

#### Does it matter whether the breeder fed ractopamine to a pig before I buy the animal?

It's important to find out from the breeder what diet your pig has been fed. Be sure to tell the breeder that you'll be exhibiting the pig at a county fair, show or exhibition that has eliminated the use of ractopamine in swine diets. Although ractopamine is not labeled for young pigs, always double-check to make sure the breeder hasn't inadvertently fed this product to a pig you're thinking about buying.

#### What should I do before I bring my pig home to avoid accidentally exposing it to ractopamine?

Before you bring your pig home, it's a good biosecurity practice to completely clean out and wash the trailer you'll transport it in, the area where it will be housed and the equipment you'll use with it (such as your feeder,

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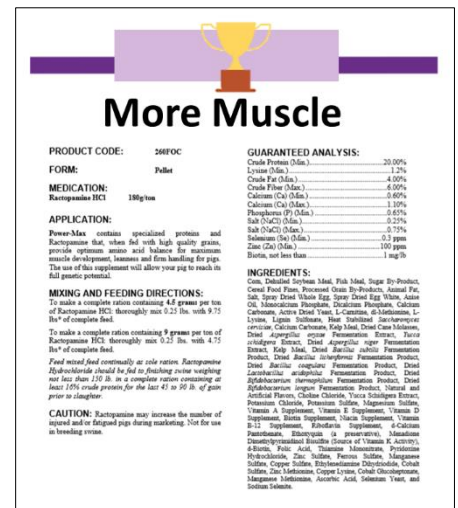


Figure 1. A sample swine feed label.



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penning area, show equipment, feed storage area and feed containers). Ractopamine dissolves in water, so a good wash will help reduce the risk that your pig will be exposed to any ractopamine products in its environment.

#### Are all Michigan county fairs, shows and exhibitions eliminating the use of ractopamine?

Not all county fairs, shows and exhibitions are eliminating the use of ractopamine; these decisions are made on a show-by-show basis. Each year, you'll need to check the rules of any county fair, show or exhibition you plan to exhibit at so you know about any rule changes.

#### What if I plan to show pigs at an event that allows the use of ractopamine *and* at an event that has eliminated its use?

You'll need to decide early in the project year which events you want to participate in and comply with the rules of each event. This may require you to change your feeding plan or to have different sets of pigs that you feed different diets. If you decide to raise different sets of pigs for different events, be careful to completely separate the pigs, feeding areas, equipment, feeders, bins, troughs and storage areas to avoid cross-contamination.

#### The county fair, show or exhibition I want to show at requires exhibitors to have [Youth for the Quality Care of Animals \(YQCA\)](#) certification. How do I get certified?

You can complete [YQCA certification](#) in a face-to-face or online class with a certified instructor. Find out more about the YQCA program and check out a list of training sessions on the [YQCA website](#). YQCA classes scheduled in Michigan are also listed on the [Michigan State University Extension Event Calendar](#).

#### What should the county fairs, shows and exhibitions I want to exhibit at do to help reduce the risk of my pig being exposed to ractopamine left over from past events?

Ractopamine breaks down over time, so in many cases your pig's exposure risk would already be low. To reduce the risk even more, event staff need to thoroughly clean the animal housing area, pens, wash racks and other common areas before any pigs arrive for the next event.

#### Where can I get more information about eliminating ractopamine?

To find out more about ractopamine or to discuss ractopamine-related options for your county fair, show or exhibition, contact the authors:



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