

Media Release



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High Street testing will probe pork provenance

English pig producers are stepping up surveillance of high street butchers to ensure when they claim their pork and pork products are British, they really are British, and are not imported from the continent, where different standards apply.

Pig farmers will be using the industry's statutory pig levy, which pays for marketing, education and research, to launch a programme of provenance testing of pork in independent retail outlets across the country.

"Many butchers are great supporters of British pig farmers and wouldn't dream of selling anything but locally-produced high-welfare pork," said National Pig Association chairman Richard Lister. "But some sell only on price.

"They import cheap pork from the continent. That's fine, if it's their chosen business model. However they must describe country of origin accurately, otherwise their customers will assume it's British, and that's something we cannot tolerate."

Undercover buyers will be visiting independent retail outlets and buying samples of pork and pork products for Stable Isotope Ratio Analysis (SIRA) by the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board.

SIRA tests can determine whether meat comes from Britain by matching four major elements (Deuterium, Carbon, Nitrogen and Sulphur) against an extensive database of farm locations in the United Kingdom.

"It's a process the industry uses to persuade retailers of the importance of honest labelling," said NPA chief executive Dr Zoe Davies. "The ideal outcome from our point of view would be to find no misleading claims, made either verbally or via labelling."

She said British pig producers were adamant all pork and pork products in British shops and restaurants must be labelled honestly because British pig farmers employed markedly different husbandry systems than continental pig farmers.

"In successive surveys consumers have told us they prefer our higher welfare farming methods and as this involves a small extra cost at point of sale we are determined when shoppers buy British pork, then British pork is what they are getting."

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