

# New, efficient barn opens to curious visitors



Visitors from near and far, producers and other community members, gathered near Mayerthorpe on October 12 for a barn opening. The \$1.8 million state-of-the-art facility will feature an over-4,000-head contract finishing operation, shipping three full cycles annually to the Olymel processing plant in Red Deer.

Operating the barn will be Pigs R Us Inc., owned by Niko Preugschas. Niko's father, Jurgen, was instrumental in constructing the barn and is a former chair of both Alberta Pork and the Canadian Pork Council.

"We're very proud to have completed this project," said Jurgen. "Barns like these are the future of the pork industry: energy-efficient, easy to keep biosecure and designed with reduced stress to people and pigs in mind."

Notable facility features include four, 1,000-hog rooms separated by a hallway that includes all necessary barn controls, to reduce wear caused by ammonia vapours from manure. A window in each room provides some natural light and an escape hatch for workers in the event of an emergency.

The hallway and rooms are all stark white to reflect as much of the LED lighting as possible, and the hallway floor has a very shallow grade—as opposed to a flat walk, then ramps—to make the journey from barn to truck effortless for pigs. It also helps with clean-up and reduces loading time by about one-third. The facility also has a convenient a 120-foot wash bay for feed trucks alongside the loading zone.

Electronic feeders and waterers are situated next to medication dosers to eliminate waste and allow for responsible control. A mechanical pulley system opens and closes ventilation panels on ceilings. The entire set-up is controlled by the Maximus-brand integrated management system, located in a centralized electrical room, which is found near the barn's showers and bathroom for workers.



Ventilation controls (*top left*) and medication dosers (*top right*) are located in the main hallway. An integrated management system (*bottom left*) allows remote controlling, and a side-by-side wash bay and loading zone (*bottom right*) saves space.

“It’s really the best thing you can have in a barn,” said Jurgen. “Whether Niko’s just around the corner, in the house, or in Hawaii, he can keep an eye on what’s going on right from his smart phone.”

Barn construction began in May 2018 and wrapped up in October, with a first load of pigs scheduled for delivery at the beginning of November. Jurgen’s project oversight was complemented by the efforts of Paddle River Concrete and MDR Plumbing & Heating of Mayerthorpe; Stalwart Electric, Pembina West Co-op and Klondyke Construction of Barrhead; Entwistle Concrete Products; Cloverdale Paint of Edmonton; DSC Construction of New Norway; and Penner Equipment of Lacombe. Funding was provided by the Agricultural Financial Services Corporation (AFSC).