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**Letters to the Editor**

**Controlling Trichinellosis**

HOW WONDERFUL TO SEE your article in *Sierra Sacramento Valley Medicine*, "Parasitic Diseases of Pork," (July/August, 2009). Thank you for the good technical and historic perspectives. I love historical stuff like this!

I wrote an article long, long ago for a dry "Proceedings" conference on Trichinellosis in Miami, Florida, in 1972. I was the EIS (Epidemic Intelligence Service) Officer of the US Public Health Service assigned to the California Department of Public Health in Berkeley at that time. The article summarizes the reported cases of trichinosis for the time 1930 through 1971.

As I wandered through all the data, I learned a lot about the history of the condition. You may like (or, already know of) the story of how we finally got trichinellosis under control in this country.

The Public Health advocates tried and tried to get the hog industry to cook the garbage they fed the hogs. As with every such engagement between Public Health and any industry, they refused to even discuss the matter (costs, no government mandates, lack of industry respect, etc.). In the back and forth over several decades, we Public Health folks got nowhere.

THEN, along came an epizootic of *vesicular erythema* among the hogs. I have no idea what this infection is or what it does to the hogs, but with its discovery in one state, the state next door quarantined that state's hogs. As the infections spread nationally, we wound up with every state quarantining every other state and the industry was shut down ("frozen").

The remarkable SOLUTION they came up with was...drum roll!!... to mandate cooking the garbage they fed the hogs. And their justification for mandatory state laws to require it was, "Protection of the public's health from trichinellosis."

Later, they shifted from garbage to grain-feeding which had the same effect.

So, we sometimes do the right thing for the wrong reason. This is a case in point.

- Don Lyman, MD, Chair, SSVMS Public & Environmental Health Committee