

Costco Gestation Crate Statement to Suppliers

Dear Suppliers:

As you well know, Costco Members show their interest and concerns about animal welfare by contacting us on a regular basis. All of us at Costco take animal welfare seriously and consider humane animal handling a business imperative.

Lately, there has been concern about how farmers treat their pregnant sows. When it comes to the housing of sows, the American Veterinary Medical Association and the American Association of Swine Veterinarians have shown us that both group housing and maternity pens have advantages and disadvantages.

While group housing offers more space for the sows, when certain breeds of pigs share a space, they can become aggressive, with dominant sows physically attacking others, biting them and stealing their food. Maternity pens were designed to protect sows from this bullying when they are most vulnerable, during their pregnancies.

We understand that there may be certain times during a sow's gestation period during which it would be best for her to be separated from the rest of the group; we find that separation acceptable, as long as it meets the intended needs and provides the appropriate protection and safety for the sow. Furthermore we believe that animals placed in maternity pens should have adequate room to turn around.

Dr. Temple Grandin PhD, Professor of Animal Science at Colorado State University, reminds us that "the issue here is the lack of free movement for the sows over time".

Costco and Dr. Grandin are "Encouraging you to be innovative in the design and implementation of group housing for pregnant sows." We are asking you to continue to seek solutions, including genetic selection for less aggression in the sows. Dr. Grandin and other experts agree that genetics, along with improved group housing will greatly improve sow well-being.

Here at Costco we are encouraging you to make this transition: we want all of the hogs throughout our pork supply chain to be housed in groups with access to safety zones and expect that this transition should be accomplished no later than 2022.

We recognize that through the years you and your suppliers have embraced new ways to improve the welfare of the animals in your care. Costco is expecting you to continue seeking improvements that promote good animal health and well-being. We also want to ensure that changes to current farming and processing methods represent real improvements for the hogs and are backed by solid scientific research.

Sincerely, Doug Schutt

Costco Wholesale

Executive Vice President, Merchandising

