



Struve Labs: Partnership Promotes Healthy People, Pigs

What are you doing in the next 10 minutes? Did you know another person will be added to the national organ transplant waiting list during this time? The nonprofit organization Donate Life America notes that 22 people die each day because the organ they need is not donated in time. *What if pigs could be part of the solution?*

They can through xenotransplantation, noted Dr. RexAnne Struve, owner and director of research at Struve Labs International in Manning.

“One pig can produce nine organs for human transplant, including a heart, two lungs, two kidneys, skin, pancreas and bowel,” said Struve, who specializes in specific pathogen free (SPF) pig production for biological companies, pharmaceutical firms and researchers nationwide. “Pigs’ capacity to help people is phenomenal.”

Struve should know. Not only has she been a veterinarian for more than 40 years, but she raises Caesarian derived colostrum deprived (CDCD) piglets—the gold standard of SPF production.

For many years, Iowa Select has provided Struve with sows that deliver piglets on the same day. “We couldn’t accomplish our goals without Iowa Select Farms,” Struve said.

Research equals hope

CDCD piglets are delivered in a sterile bubble via c-section in a surgical suite at Struve’s veterinary hospital. The piglets are raised in isolettes (incubators) for seven to 10 days.

“These pigs have no immune system,” said Struve, who became the first female veterinarian in Carroll County in 1976. “Biological companies that develop and test vaccines need pigs that don’t already have antibodies in their system.”

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-RexAnne Struve, DVM

As the piglets grow, they are moved to a lab east of Manning. “Pigs leave our facility no earlier than five weeks of age and no later than eight weeks,” said Struve, whose company produces 162 CDCD pigs every three weeks.

“Biomedical researchers from California to New York rely on these pigs,” said Mark Sheeder, operations manager at Struve Labs International, the only company in America that provides CDCD pigs on a commercial basis. “Our pigs offer great models for cancer research, diabetic therapies and more. Currently, there are heart valves, ligaments and skin from pigs being used to help humans, but eventually we will be able to do whole organ transplants. There will be nine viable organs from each transgenic pig to donate to humans in need and organ transplants will eventually become as common as knee or hip replacements, with an abundant supply for anyone in need.”

Improving human health is personal to Sheeder, whose youngest son, Tristan, has cerebral palsy and has required more than 100 hospitalizations.

“We’re grateful for the Hansen Home for Hope,” said Sheeder, referring to one of the many outreach programs supported by the Deb and Jeff Hansen Foundation through Iowa Select. Located near Blank Children’s Hospital in Des Moines, the Hansen Home for Hope serves families with children undergoing medical treatments.

The Struve Labs International team is proud to work with a home-grown company as professional and caring as Iowa Select. “We value partners who are rooted in their rural communities,” Struve said. “We’re all in this together.”



PROFILE

Struve Labs

MANNING, IOWA



Employees: 16-19

Annually, Iowa Select Farms provides 72 bred sows to Struve Labs International to support ongoing biomedical research. The sows produce nearly 2,808 piglets that support cancer research, diabetic therapies and produce nine organs viable for humans in need.

