[Question sent to Larry Chandler]

The last statement I have from you is that you hadn't visited the center in at least two years, and ARS is confirming that there are in fact deviations. If you had not been aware of these deviations, it's understandable. But I'm giving you the opportunity to reflect on or update your comments to me for the article.

"Thank you for the chance to clarify – I am afraid there was a miscommunication somewhere because I am the Area Director of the Plains Area and have had responsibility for the Clay Center location since July 2012 and I have visited the location several times since becoming Area Director.

At the time you and I conversed, I indicated that no issues with research oversight (IACUC) at the location had been brought to my attention, but if you could provide additional information on the 'deviations' you refer to, I will look at it."

[Question sent to Tara Weaver-Missick]

We're moving along quite nicely now, and an editing question comes up. In 2007, the center set out to help solve the kyphosis problem in swine by creating a population that had the condition at higher rates so it could be more readily studied. See experiment number 5438-31000-074-01, in your records. The research leader, Gary Rohrer, has asked me to ask you: Did this protocol proceed as planned, and was the resulting population useful in searching for a solution to kyphosis?

The only objective from experimental outline 5438-31000-074-01 relating to the kyphosis condition was "Objective A," which was to determine the incidence of pigs born in the BX population born in 2005 with the kyphosis back defect. USMARC scientists did conduct this experiment as planned and evaluated 10 piglets sired by each boar. While not specifically stated as objectives, they also wanted to determine if visual evaluation of the live animal was an accurate prediction of kyphosis score and we needed more data to conduct a genome scan in the BX population. USMARC scientists hypothesized that these results would allow them to develop a follow up experiment to produce a population with a higher incidence of kyphosis. The results from experiment 5438-31000-074-01 indicated that visual evaluation of live animals was a poor indicator of kyphosis score. Also, after including additional data from this experiment with previous observations, it became evident that the loci associated with kyphosis in the BX population were different than those associated with kyphosis in the F2 population they had studied earlier (results reported in Lindholm-Perry et al. 2010; BMC Genomics 11:112). USMARC scientists then concluded that the kyphosis condition was not caused by a single gene and they did not conduct a second experiment.

[Question sent to John Pollak]

The ARS cites your name as Emil J. Pollak. Is that your preference?

E. John Pollak

[Questions sent to Tara Weaver-Missick and Larry Chandler]

We're moving along quite nicely now, and an editing question comes up. In 2007, the center set out to help solve the kyphosis problem in swine by creating a population that had the condition at higher rates so it could be more readily studied. See experiment number 5438-31000-074-01, in your records. The research leader, Gary Rohrer, has asked me to ask you: Did this protocol proceed as planned, and was the resulting population useful in searching for a solution to kyphosis?

Please see above response on [Question sent to Tara Weaver-Missick].

I'm having trouble finding the John Kohmetscher who is listed as the independent member of the center's IACUC. Is he the sheep grower in Fairfield, Neb., listed below as receiving USDA subsidies?

Mr. John Kometscher is a farmer in Fairfield, Neb., who qualified under ARS policy to be a member of the committee.

And are the two Kohmetschers working at the center related to him?

The two employees with the last name of Kohmetscher are employees of the University of Nebraska – Lincoln. Based on the information we have on Mr. John Kometscher, they are related but are not part of John's immediate family.

[Question sent to Tara Weaver-Missick]

Your answer to Q. 4 gave numbers for cows and sheep, but then pig "litters." Can you please provide me with the number of actual pigs, so I can report a total number of animals at the center. If it helps you, the center reported to ARS in 2013 that it had 12,434 cows, 12,727 pigs, and 3,173 sheep. Glad to use those numbers if you want.

Our previous answer reported the size of our breeding populations for all species; you asked for the number of cows. The current number for all animals in 2014 is listed here:

12,617 cattle
13,913 swine
3,770 sheep