

2016 Group Sow Housing Seminar
Managing People in Group Sow Housing Systems

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(Edited for clarity and conciseness)

Julie Menard: **(Slide 4)** In our maternity we always try to produce the best piglets, which will be good through to the consumers. We are producing quality. We export to more than 50 countries, and more and more countries are asking, “Well are your sows in group gestation?” This is a question coming more and more often. People are more and more conscientious of where their pork is coming from. We have also a local market and we just want to sell quality. Welfare, I think, is becoming more and more of a standard I think it’s a must.

(Slide 5) Animal welfare in Europe. Group sow housing has been compulsory from January 2013 and I went to visit them some years ago, they were already having a lot of experience. I think it came from Europe but we learned what they did well, what they did badly and I think that’s the most important, is not to do the bad things two times. So I went to visit some farms in France and tried to learn from them.

(Slide 6) So I visited a young producer in Brittany, it was an ESF system, but it was a lot of space. I said, “Oh my God, it’s going to cost a lot in Canada”. I mean it costs a lot in Europe too. But, you know, I found wow we’ll not do that, we need to manage space.

(Slide 7) I visited also this one system which is free access stall, and I had seen one also in Italy. I said, “Wow it’s funny because it’s not very different than our crates”. I was very attracted by that system. But after a few years I said, no that’s not for me. Real group sow housing is when they are loose in the pen and they have their own behaviours. So a few years after I will show you what we decided to do.

(Slide 8) So as of March 2014, as you know, group sow housing for renovation, new construction, we have to be conformed by July 2014. And then the existing buildings, its 2024.

(Slide 9) So sow welfare is a must. In April 2013 my boss came to see me and said, “Well Julie, we have two different projects. One is to renovate an existing barn and the other one is to build a brand new barn”, so it was a big year for us. And when they asked me what type of housing, I said well that’s for sure, we’re going to put pens. And just like John said earlier, it’s just like cold water from a lake; you just have to jump in it. Cold or not we have to try it. So we were to try it.

(Slide 10) But then, like many of you producers, I started to ask so many questions. Which system do we use? There are so many systems available. How many sows per pen? Do we put 40, 60, 80 depending on the system. One ESF system says it’s 80, another one says it’s 60,

another one says you can put 120. It's really a lot of questions. Which one fits the best to your existing barn, which one fits the best to my brand new barn? All these type of questions, and when a producer is investing you have to really advise him well because he's going to live with it. I mean it's a big decision, it's a big responsibility for you advisors to give to your producers so that they make money after all. So I really felt a big, big responsibility as the advisor in the company.

(Slide 11) So I went to visit two different places with my builder and one with a tech advisor. We went to visit two companies in the U.S. and I've seen three different systems. These are not the pictures from my visit, but example systems. We visited a shoulder stall system, an ESF system and also a free access stall system like at Prairie Swine Centre.

(Slide 12) So in each individual system I discovered different things. Well what are the advantages of each system, what is the amount of feed? I knew that with floor feeding, competitive, well it will take more feed. The ESF seems to take less feed. That's what's critical in spending all this time in the U.S. We talk about aggression, leg problems. Large pen, less aggression. Small pens, more aggression. But very few talked to me about people management, and when we start these types of projects it's about the people.

(Slide 13) The people, they just have to adapt the people. But it's not like that all the time. If you put the bad people in some of these systems you will just put your money in the ditch. So in my search to find the best system, I met Dr. Parsons, Thomas Parsons. Thomas is a great man, he's working with an ESF system since about 10 years at the University of Pennsylvania. He came to visit me about two, three times. I met with him at the Lemman Conference, he's one of the specialists. And he's probably the first one that talked to me about training gilts, but also training the people on the farm, which was kind of unusual.

(Slide 14) One of his rules is that he said the "rate of success is directly proportional to the size of the payment the guy working in the barn has on the ESF". It's a good quote. And this was my challenge. So when you have employees, they must like the project. You don't want them saying "Oh anyway, my boss has a lot of money and he will spend his money but", I think it's not a good mentality to have within your company. So we always try to make it like it would be their own.

(Slide 15) So we started renovation of the Stepputat Farm in the spring of 2014. This is the type of system we adopted. We have visited the farm in the U.S. where they were putting 10 to 12 sows per pen. Very productive sow farm, 30 pigs per sow per year. Everything seemed good, like no aggression and everything was smooth. But sometimes we have to be careful with what we tell you when you go to visit these farms, especially in the U.S., so. I will not go in politics. So I said we will put 12 sows per pen, 22 square feet. We put all these nice places to eat. We said well it's going to be the perfect world, we're very excited. So then we decided it was an old barn, a working barn, so we mixed the parity sows. Because I

already have a department or a section for my first parity, so we said well we were not having enough space to put them at 30 days, so we put them at 50 days and we mixed different parity of sows by size.

(Slide 16) Oh boy. I can tell you that when old sows have never been together, you can put iodine in their nose, you can do whatever you want, I mean they fight like hell. We have such a lot of leg problems, dewclaw lost, aborted sows, high culling rate, non-productive dates. It was not smooth at all. For the first experience with the group sow housing, it was not the best one. But I think we had not been intelligent enough or took enough information, but you know it's some years ago, but it's really difficult to mix different all parity of sows together.

(Slide 17) But with the help of my breeding herd manager we brought improvement. We learned to group by parity and it really worked to do that. Now we put the first parity or the gilts as a gilts group together and try to keep that group over the different parities. Then put the parity two and three together, four and what you do with the old one, you know we manage it more by parity so that they know each other.

We increased the amount of feed at grouping time, because we said well if we put more feed they will be more calm. Three meals a day and this is where I got elephants after a year and a half because they are just big like that because I increased so much the feed. So this is another thing to really be careful. We fixed the flooring because some dewclaw were lost. We modified the water system, put one bowl, add another bowl, then switch to nipples and we dimmed the lights to calm them down because of the small pens.

(Slide 18) But then this remodelling farm project I never asked the people if they wanted to have that system or not. I just say, "Well we have a new system, just take it and it should be good". But really I felt Mario is a famous guy, he wanted to take the picture like this. They were so funny these guys, they say, "We're going to take a picture with your pens" and then they go into the pens and then they take the sow and she was very happy. I mean she did not move even, he's an open minded guy, he's very enthusiastic. He likes to acquire new experiences, he's stimulated by new projects and he bring me solutions. And when you work with your people, they will bring you some new things. He's very intelligent and he has at home horses, dogs, cats. This is a very good candidate to put on a sow farm. And you know when they like animals, when they like to bring a new idea, they will help you to tune your system. So with Mario we did quite a lot of improvement on that farm.

(Slide 19) The second project was Saint-Dominique Farm. Saint-Dominique Farm is a 2,700 sow barn, brand new barn and it was a great opportunity. So what we did, we took these three barns here that we destructed as of right now. These three barns were two deck floor for pigs. Not slat floor at all, solid flooring so you see in summer time it was not very good. So we decided to destroy it and build a brand new sow

barn on the back. And so it was a good opportunity to try a new system to compare and to gain experience.

(Slide 20) With this new project on group sow housing, you have a 2,700 sow farm, you have to decide which system you're going to put there and the company invests quite a lot of dollars in that. So you have to make a system which will work. You almost have no choice because it's built for 25 years or more. I mean when you build, you have to live with it.

So I made a decision after many visits and after talks. Also some people in France were having a similar system to the Gestal system, and it was a free access stalls, and what I thought is that let's support the local dealer. I mean sometimes we go very far away, these guys who are here and I said but it's going to work, and they gave me good service. But you know, I think that we have to tune it up because we're the second farm in Quebec and we did adopt that because I thought well it's going to be easier to train the gilts and they will learn by themselves. So it's why we chose that system.

(Slide 21) In the Saint-Dominique project, this is the blueprint. So very shortly on the down side and the far right we have our quarantine or we have offsite GDU, but this is when we get our gilts in, they are 190 to 200 based, and we have four different sections where we train them, where we detect the heat, where we tag them. And after that, after one to two months they are going into the stalls for 28 days where they are detected, bred and then they are put in the pens. So this is for first and second parity and they will be there from 30 days up to the time of the farrowing crates, and upstairs we have the P3 plus gestation. And we really followed the European rules. We have 2% of sick pens. We have different width for the crates, 24 inches, 26, 28 depending on the size of the sow. So we really respect everything.

So I chose the best tech advisor to help the engineer with the blueprint, someone who knew very well the production. So we just fixed how many pens and how many sows per group, and he was the one to follow the construction. I mean I've met some people here today which were really good with construction, but I don't have that quality and I needed to have someone which would be good and follow the project.

(Slide 22) But as someone said this morning, things are not always going the way we want. My tech advisor quit for some personal reasons and I lost the person responsible of the project. So I had to find someone else to help me, because I mean by yourself you cannot do everything. And so I started the search, the quest to find the best person.

(Slide 23) So the summer of 2014, the project started up but the builders ask more and more questions. When you have a big building like that, someone has to help you and answer to the questions.

(Slide 24) So what I did is that I did an information meeting in September 2014 where I had 3 different goals. The first one was to

expose the blueprints. The people like to know that, so I invited all my farm people from the sow farm who were interested to come to that information meeting, 35 of them came. We explained the animal flow and my real goal was really to find the best candidate to pilot that project. I mean a big project like that you should have people in charge of it, and the people who are to work in it were the best one for me.

(Slide 25) So I did expose the structure, pretty simple. I was to have a general manager which was to be the conductor of that farm. Then he was to do the team management, having a specialist as my farrowing house manager. I tried to have someone from within the company who would come in charge of farrowing house, another one in breeding with good communication between both of them and having a manager under them with a mutual between the two different departments.

(Slide 26) Amongst the skills required for the farm manager, I think that this is good for every farm. I think that people have to be respectful and honest. These are two very different, very important qualities. Respectful – being respected and respect each other because if you have a team you will need to have that respect between each other and be honest, because in some farms you go to the numbers never fit. Sometimes when the litter size is too low, just ask yourself is it my guy or is it really my sows because hiding numbers is very, very simple. Organized. They have to be organized in a large sow farm. You have to be very organized. Technically excellent on management and health, but also problem solving. I mean you don't want to always be there to solve the problem for them, so you must have a person responsible in these farms and driven to action and results because we needed a lot of good results, especially when you have to pay back these big barns which cost a lot.

(Slide 27) Other important features of the guys working in these types of barns are to care about animals, hard workers, especially when you start doing the project they have to work sometimes extra hours. It's very important to be able to work as a team. If they are not able to work in a team of nine or 10, forget it. And to adapt, you have to adapt to the new system, to the new ventilation, to the new team. So finally, taking the project as their own.

(Slide 28) The chief of that farm, what I was looking for, needs diversified competence. A great ability to communicate. If you want to have a good team working together, if the chief cannot communicate to his people forget it, you will have a war within your team very quickly. So you must do some meetings. They have to communicate on day to day what is the work to do and what are the things to correct and to improve. They have to be good at production, good in construction and it was the one to help me to build the brand new theme because I'm always taking my people to help me on that, not deciding everything myself because it was, "Oh it's Julie who decides so I have nothing to say". No, you have to implicate your people and bring them on your side.

(Slide 29) So my first candidate who gave me his name is Michel. You know they sent me that picture one day because I asked them something on piglets and they sent me that picture of the farm. Michel is on the far left. He's a natural leader, natural communicator, very enthusiastic and the people want to follow him and he can make the people to work together very, very easily and they are very happy to work together.

(Slide 30) He's a guy who thrives on new projects. You should have people who are very interested. When you start a new project on group sow housing I think you have to be excited about it. He likes challenges, he never sees problems, always sees solutions. Nothing is better than when you go on the farm, that someone also tells you good things, not only the bad things. I mean it's good to find solution and he was an excellent candidate for my farm manager. That guy started the first batch farrowing project in 1999, then he moved to one of our contracted client where he has been leading a team of our own personnel with some of the contracted farm personnel and increasing the results, making the guy to invest in his barn. But he also has beer with the owner, which is a plus. It's a quality for a farm guy.

(Slide 31) My second candidate who gave his name was Martin. Martin wanted to be the general manager. Pretty young too, graduated from agricultural school, very good at numbers, he's studying in accounting. He came from a private farm background so he was able to repair things, to think about how to make the things happen. He was very bullish, he just like come in F. Menard and wanted to be hired just right at the start.

(Slide 32) But because he was just six months with F. Menard, he had not proven his potential. When you hire someone how do you know if he's really good. So I offered him a position under the chief.

(Slide 33) We have some rules at F. Menard for moving up in the company, I will always favour the people internally. Like we said, you are not the king in your kingdom, or something like that, but sometimes you're much better to take someone that you know for 5 to 10 years, give him a promotion. You know his potential, it's a good motivation for the farm people because they know that, "Well I can access a higher role sometimes" and it show to other the potential opportunities. So I always favour my people internally instead of taking people from outside.

(Slide 34) So my farrowing house manager position was still open, but I still had some time and nobody had the qualities. Some of the people gave their name but I said no, they are not the perfect person I'm looking for my farrowing manager. So there is – in a sense I learn from Luc Menard, which is not my brother but my husband. Just to tell you, I'm a Menard married with a Menard, just to clarify it. And F. Menard is not my father, he's my father in law. So I'm a Menard, Menard married to a Menard with a F. Menard which is my father in law. And my sons are perfectly normal. So I try to wake you up a bit. But my husband is pretty slow and I'm pretty quick, so sometime it makes some fights. But he teach me something very important, "Be patient, sometimes you're too

quick at doing things”. So he always teach me be patient, so I waited and it was very, very positive because I will show you later.

(Slide 35) So the fall/winter 2014, I was having my two people, Michel and Martin, follow the project. They went to the farm every week. They were working on their farm and every week they were going once a week to the farm to answer the questions of the builder and really tune that as if it was their farm. They answered the questions from the builders, they adjusted the farm to their taste. They made like it was their farm even if it was an F. Menard farm, they really behaved like if it was their farm.

(Slide 36) So in March 2015 the team was put in place, the farm was to be newly populated but my farrowing house manager was not there yet so I have a part of my team, and I got an idea. Why not make an open house. It was a time that the PED was starting again in Quebec and I was very afraid of opening that to everyone, but I said at least my farrowing house or maternity people it will be good and maybe someone will give his name. So I make the open house in the idea of showing the employees the most high tech building. It was at the time just before it got populated and to attract the farrowing house managers. So I had two people who came to visit on that Saturday morning, a girl and a man.

(Slide 38) And what was good, the Saturday the farm visit, Monday morning at 10 o'clock, this is the break time for F. Menard people, I receive a call from Robert. Robert used to be my farm manager for 12 years, a specialist in farrowing house, line three multiplier farm with 630 sows, and he worked with three people on the farm including his wife. So a very, very small team.

(Slide 39) And I was very surprised he called me, but you know he wanted to move to that big farm. Even if it was not a very young guy, he wanted to come to that 2,700 sow farm, nine employees. The reason was he needed a challenge and it was really like a gift in my life when Robert came. So then I had my complete team to move on.

(Slide 40) So the following month, Martin left. No ownership to F. Menard, he accepted a position with another company. So I did good not choosing that guy, he was not really 100% with us. Cannot have two chiefs in the barn, because Martin and Michel were sometimes having strong ideas. You have to be careful of putting two chiefs because it's like in the pen, you will have some fights. So Michel, with the help of the tech advisor and me built this thing. We took half of the people which were experienced, but half of the people which were brand new, which was really, really good to mould our team.

(Slide 41) We did some personality profiling with the human resource department. We had some testing to know which type of personality we are and what I am. When I look at what are the personality profiles of my team at Saint-Dominique, I see that Michel is a developer. I have Robert, a specialist, another as a scientist and I have a cooperative facilitator

idealist, and two controllers. And I will show you what this means as far as part of this team.

(Slide 42) So Michel, the developer, likes new challenges. And this is what the profile said, that's not what I said. This is what comes when you do your testing. He likes new challenges, he's a positive motivator. So this was excellent where he is. The specialist, Robert, is rigorous and organized. He likes things in farrowing house well done and this is what we need. On the other side we have a scientist, direct, precise, very dedicated person, a decision maker. And both of these guys are supported by people – a cooperative facilitator, idealist, all of them are calm, patient, open minded, social. And my two controllers on the breeding herd are analytical, practical mind, bringing solutions, excellent to tune a new system, excellent for the breeding and to fix the number of mating's per week and all this. So intuitively we built a brand new team which were really completing each other.

(Slide 43) So this is the picture of my team. Like I said they complete each other. As you can see we have young people, older people, different colour people and it's all over time that we built that team and it's really what's unique about them is that there's really the passion in that farm.

(Slide 44) The day the first sow farrowed. Michel in the morning, I was just eating my cereal and then I just receive a text which said, "Oh we got 16 born alive, very calm sow, it's just like Christmas". And I found it so cute, I mean the first farrowing I said, "Hey, look we have the first sow farrow in Saint-Dominique". So it's really good to have good people like this motivated.

(Slide 45) So what I learned from these people, they're really the ones who make the project work. Without them I would not have been able to do the project that's for sure. I needed all of them. You have to motivate also the people, like making the project their own. I mean they have to feel like it's their own farm, even if it's employees. Put the good people at a good place, I heard that with time. Sometimes one person will not fit in a team and then you take that person, you bring them somewhere else and with that new team they will fit. One of the black men, which is in the picture, he was on another team. He was not well accepted, I brought him to Saint-Dominique. He's such – like in French we call it *joie de vivre*, this means he's always happy. He comes from Africa, he's always smiling. He's just like a good conductor within that team and he really fits well. So we really did a good choice.

Give clear objectives and make sure to follow up. I think that the people need to know where they're going, but you have to follow them up. I mean they need security, they need to have feedback, this is very, very important, and listen to your people. I think I learned so much from them and the people are intelligent, and one of my goal in life is to make the people more intelligent and more educated and more knowledgeable and that's them which will give this back to you.

(Slide 46) So I will summarize. What are the skills required for group sow housing. I think you should have a good sense of observation and be a detailed person. If they get a dewclaw problem or if they get a lost tag, or if you got some off feed sows, you should have people which are really looking at their animals.

(Slide 47) They have to be quick also to intervene. If they look at the animals but they are so sloppy that they leave them in the pen, I mean she's going to die anyway. So you have to have someone who will get her help very quickly, treat her quickly and you will save quite a lot of sows that's for sure.

(Slide 48) I also learned that you need to have a good judgement and be a decision maker. So these are the rows of the sick sows or the sows with lag problems. They put a row like this, they called it the hospital row. And so when they have a small problem, we get them out and we put them in a small pen, treat them for a few days and then we put them in stalls, and I will say that we save the majority of them.

(Slide 49) You must have people questioning themselves. So at first the drinkers were not at a good place, they were in fact here. And so the animals were always having their dunging area where they were supposed to lie. So they were sleeping on the slats and having all the shit into the solid flooring. So we changed the water to put them more here and we also added toys. But it's really my employees who think it's really working. They go to sleep in the solid part, and then here's the eating and drinking area. And since then the pens are very, very clean.

(Slide 50) Mike is also very initiative. So we put close to our feeder, we're retesting them at 60 days of gestations because we were having some surprises putting them in the pens and having some open sows from time to time in farrowing house. So now we are retesting them in the pens and we put like a green card when it's done, and the red card when it's not done, and we put all the cards from the pen, because we have 80 sows per pen into that box so that when we need to have a sow card, we find them altogether.

(Slide 51) You must have calm people and people who care about animals. If you're too speedy and too nervous it will be worse, the animal it will take two times more time to put them in pens as compared to when they are very, very calm with the animal.

(Slide 52) Also I think that it's very important to have people who like to learn and are easy to adapt. You know these young guys have a quality, they are born with a computer and me as an old woman, I'm not born with a computer. So there is just John which is atypical and is really, really good with all the technology. But I think that you have to use these young people to put in your farm, they like it so much that they will help you to adapt the system and I think it's a real plus for this new barn.

(Slide 53) You must have motivated and positive persons. These are the girls in the farrowing rooms, they're mostly people coming from agricultural school. When you are in trouble, like braking with mycoplasma and influenza one month after we moved pigs in, you have to make the farm work and we were really in trouble. But I think that when your team is positive you get back to the normal. Now it's back to negative influenza and negative mycoplasma and I think that when you're positive you will get back to normal quickly.

(Slide 54) You must have also people who always want to improve. We hired Laval University students this summer to find out how to minimize aggression in the small pens. They were very open to this project and I think it's very important advice. A good student for summer time does not cost a lot and gives you a lot. I can tell you they are so intelligent these young people from the university, you have to hire and it's a good experience for them.

(Slide 55) They must be also collaborative. We changed everything in gestation following that project and one staff has been very collaborative in changing all his setup, and I think that because we finally put all the gilts at 30 days into the pens, we then also keep the older sows more in crates, we keep the two and three parities together, four and five. So it's very important things to minimize the fighting.

(Slide 56) So in conclusion I learned a lot from the Stepputat and Saint-Dominique farms. I think it was two very different types of raising gilts and sows in pens, but I learned a lot. And the success of these group sow housing projects will have a great impact on all our future projects because what we learn, we will do the good things again but the bad things we'll not do again.

(Slide 57) And what I really like about group sow housing is that the sows are very calm. You can see them lying down, we can go in the pens, they will not move, it's nothing, no noise as with crates. It's very much like the natural behaviour and all the people working with that really have fun to work with it.

(Slide 58) As a conclusion, these are the people who make the project work. These guys really work well and really helped the project to work.

(Slides 59 - 60) And happy people make happy pigs, but also happy pigs make people happy. Thanks a lot.

Facilitator: Okay, questions for Julie?

Audience: How many sows in a group did you settle on at your new gestation barn in the large pens?

Julie: Eighty and with the feeder, we have one unit for 16 sows. We could have gone to one unit for 20, but we decided to go to one unit for 16 sows so take no chances. And I think it's fair because we gave them 22 square

feet, but you know how it is, it's a static pen and sometimes you have one week where you will have more breeding, some week you will have less breeding.

So when the guys get to 90, 92, said, "Julie, can I put them in the pen" and I said yes because we have the space. That's one thing that Dr. Parsons told me. If you put 18 square feet you're going to have 16 eventually, if you put 20 you will have 18, if you put 22 at least if you go to 20 it will not be too harmful. So I like that idea because people are people and they will always push to put more in pens. So at least if you have the facility to accommodate I think it's fairly good.

Facilitator: Another question?

Audience: When you went to the Gestal, you had the choice of going to the other type of feeder. Did you have any problems going in and finding animals or ID'ing them because you can't sort them out? Did you take that into part of the consideration?

Julie: You're right. I start work to go to a standard ESF and I will be frank with you, the training part of gilts was what made me fearful. Maybe I was too fearful for nothing, but no this was one thing we were thinking it was to happen and that's what happened.

It's 80 per week, everything is very simple on paper. But when you start to do the breeding you have more sows, higher farrowing rate, lower farrowing rate, then the pens is not like adjusted right. You always have to go and get some animals out of the pen and then it's pretty complicated. And this is one thing that I will not talk for Gestal, I don't know, my system is that I don't have a sorter, so we have to find out. And this is where we lose a lot of time, and yeah we lose a lot of time. I thought at the start that we were to open the gate and everyone were to be like not to go in the farrowing crates and it was very simple on the paper, but that's not the way it worked. So yeah, we lose a lot of time there.

I'm just – they had the questions on the number of people and I'm – at F. Menard we always try to have like one person for 300 sows and we always try to have – like we are paying for 42 hours and a half per week, and they work five days a week. So one weekend over two and we are having one here working at the weekend will have a holiday during the week. So we respect that, but then the challenge is that I have one more person right now in my farm, and I got some pressure from the back that maybe I have too many people. But, you know, it's you need a lot of organizations within these type of barns and these are good questions to solve, dynamic, static. It's not the end. Maybe in two years from now we'll all be here again and not saying the same, but we still have a lot to learn from this system.

Facilitator: Yeah, question?

Audience: On the people end, and trying to inspire those who you work with, what do you think is their motivation? Because coming from a family farm background, there's a huge amount of buy in because you know, it's what you do, right, and there's a lot of ownership over that. I'm not sure what your corporate structure is like, do you offer ownership opportunities to your employees or what kind of gets them out of bed in the morning? Is it just the paycheque or what is it do you find?

Julie: That's for sure they have a paycheque incentive. I mean we pay them bonuses. But money is not all. I mean the people on the farms, the young people more and more work to have fun, okay. Because if you go in the morning and it's not fun, go back home, you know. So they really like to work together, it's just like a team. You know, there are eight, nine, 10 persons, they all I mean do activities together and I really try to create the family type enterprise.

I do some producer things with my people also, that's also the chief, every three months where we just look at how to improve, what to do. I try to find a good idea from one farm, bring it to the other farm. They all interact between each other. They like to compete because we have every year a contest on the best farms, and I send every month a sheet where they are ranked according to the best up to the list with one. So it's very clear. We're very transparent. No hiding anywhere in life, everything is known in some point of time. But they always know what the best ones are doing, "Why are they having that litter size, why are they that high farrowing rate".

So it's a large family of 120 persons and really try to get always the best results because – but I have to manage also their salaries so that they are not paid too much. But it's really competitive, but healthy competitive structure and really bring them like a family. I change between them, try to improve, try to have fun together working. It's, yeah, it's really the way you run your people. If you run them like shit, they will give you shit – sorry for the term. But that's really the way. I think that as you can see I like very much my people, I have probably the best people. But there is a lot of material which is very important, if I have a spoiled apple within my group, it will not remain there. It's why I hire so many young people. Since three years I took over that position and I said we'll not keep the bad, even if it's an old person, I mean old in the sense of working since a long time – no you're a good guy, I think that since yesterday. But, you know, some people who are not the social, you know we don't pay the people for not working at home. If you're not happy, if you're not doing a good job, bye-bye you.

You know, I just want to have motivated persons and I just want to have persons who are interested in working at F. Menard. If you're not interested, there is some special type of program for that with the government, you know you can get paid. No, no I'm very strict on that. And the other rules I put with my technicians is that if one person is not good for your farm, it's not good for the other farm. Because in the past they were passing it to the other one, you know it's a cheap shot, but. So

I said, no, no, no if it's not good for you, it's not good for your friend in the other farm. So if it's not good for you, you have to get him out of your farm and get a brand new one. And you know, we are in good regions for people, but 90% of them has never worked with pigs. They all come from I different cities, they were not good enough at school, they come to give their name, they want to try new things. So sometimes they come and after a year they say, "Well I'm not in the good file".

But most of the people you see in these pictures don't come from agricultural school, they just come from a neighbourhood, they hear about F. Menard, they said, "Oh well I'm going to try to do that". But sometimes when you teach them they are a really good candidate. Much better than a person which works since 30 years and he's stubborn and he has old ideas and he just want to cross foster piglets and to make his main things like he was doing 20 years ago. That's not the way we want to go. So it's, yeah, we worked a lot on that.

Audience: When you give an employee the bye-bye slip, do you give them an explanation of where the shortcomings are?

Julie: You have to tell them so that they learn. Because some of the people if they don't know, it's funny because one of my tech advisor is really good. He's so good at firing some of his people that the people tell him thanks. But there is nobody like GP. But sometimes you have to explain to them because if they have a bad behaviour, they have to learn. And with a human resource person, we give advice. We advise them before doing that. We'll give a letter, we'll say well your behaviour in that case was not good. Then we give a second one, because there is a lot of law in Quebec saying well you cannot fire someone like this, it's not the way it works. So you have first, second, third and then finally. We can fire a person right away is for welfare.

If I know that a sow has missed water for three days let's say in the farrowing crates because they do the weaning and they forget to open the valve. They must get the big letter saying don't do that two times, you know. Or doing a feed, you come in the barn there is feed on the floor, no water since three days and the guy on the finishing floor don't even see that, I fire one of the guys like this.

Or if they come and you know they beat the sows, I cannot accept that. Because you know the people more and more we have all these media looking at us. So we have to be very strict on welfare things.

Facilitator: Thank you Julie, you're always on top.

Julie: Yeah, I don't know. But I do my best. Thanks.