

PRODUCT CARE

Mexican pork processors often complain that many distributors and retailers are not properly equipped or trained to handle their products. They report incidents of physical damage to the product as well as a failure to use proper refrigeration methods.

Refrigeration equipment is becoming more widely used by retailers, but processors say that they often maintain excessively warm temperatures to cut electricity bills. The result is that the products deteriorate before the labelled expiry date, the retailer accuses the processor of providing faulty products and the processor must replace the product. The processors' image in the eyes of the consumer is also tarnished. One of the roles of producer merchandising staff at supermarkets is to ensure proper product handling.

TRANSPORTATION

The bulk of Canadian pork products are shipped to Mexico by refrigerated truck. Air transport is feasible only for high-value products. Ocean freight is not practical because there is no fast, direct ocean freight service capable of handling perishable products. There is a shortage of refrigerated storage in many Mexican ports and poor links to major markets. Rail transportation in Mexico lacks sophisticated refrigeration facilities and is used only for live pigs.

Canadian pork is usually transferred to a Mexican truck at Laredo, Texas. Trucking time from Toronto or Montreal to Laredo is approximately 40 to 48 hours, non-stop with two drivers. One driver takes four-to-five days. Including customs clearance, shipment from the border to Mexico City can take another five days.

A few Canadian trucking companies ship to major Mexican centres or to the border with full truckload (FTL) refrigerated service. Less-than-full-truckload (LTL) is poorly developed in Canada although some services are available. One way to avoid this problem is to ship by FTL to a refrigerated bonded warehouse in Mexico and distribute the product from there. There are also some possibilities for freight consolidation in Canada.