

From the Collections

A SASSY-LOOKING PORKER proclaims its favorite feed “a quick stimulant, blood purifier and permanent tonic” in this eye-catching 1910 poster (16” x 20”) issued by Minneapolis’s International Food Company. Proprietor Marion W. Savage, who also owned the famous pacing horse Dan Patch, produced a wide assortment of feed and veterinary remedies for horses, cattle, sheep, poultry, and hogs. According to the company’s advertising catalog, the factory alone occupied a five-story building at First Avenue North and Second Street North and employed some 200 people. Hundreds of signed catalog testimonials claimed stock grew healthier and fatter with International’s medicated food.

Despite the poster pig’s claim, preventing “hog cholera”—misnamed for an outbreak of human Asiatic cholera that coincided with the first appearance of swine fever in the 1830s—was no small task. By 1895 the highly contagious native disease raged so severely that disposal of dead hogs became a major problem for farmers across the country.

Before—and long after—the viral nature of the disease was identified around 1903, many products spuriously claimed to cure it. Not until the universal use of vaccines and a concentrated 16-year effort by government and pork producers, however, was hog cholera eradicated in the late 1970s in the United States.

At present some 16 nations are free of the disease, which does not cause human illness but brings serious economic losses to pork producers. New outbreaks from imported swine are always possible.





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