

Producers, Pigs & Pork



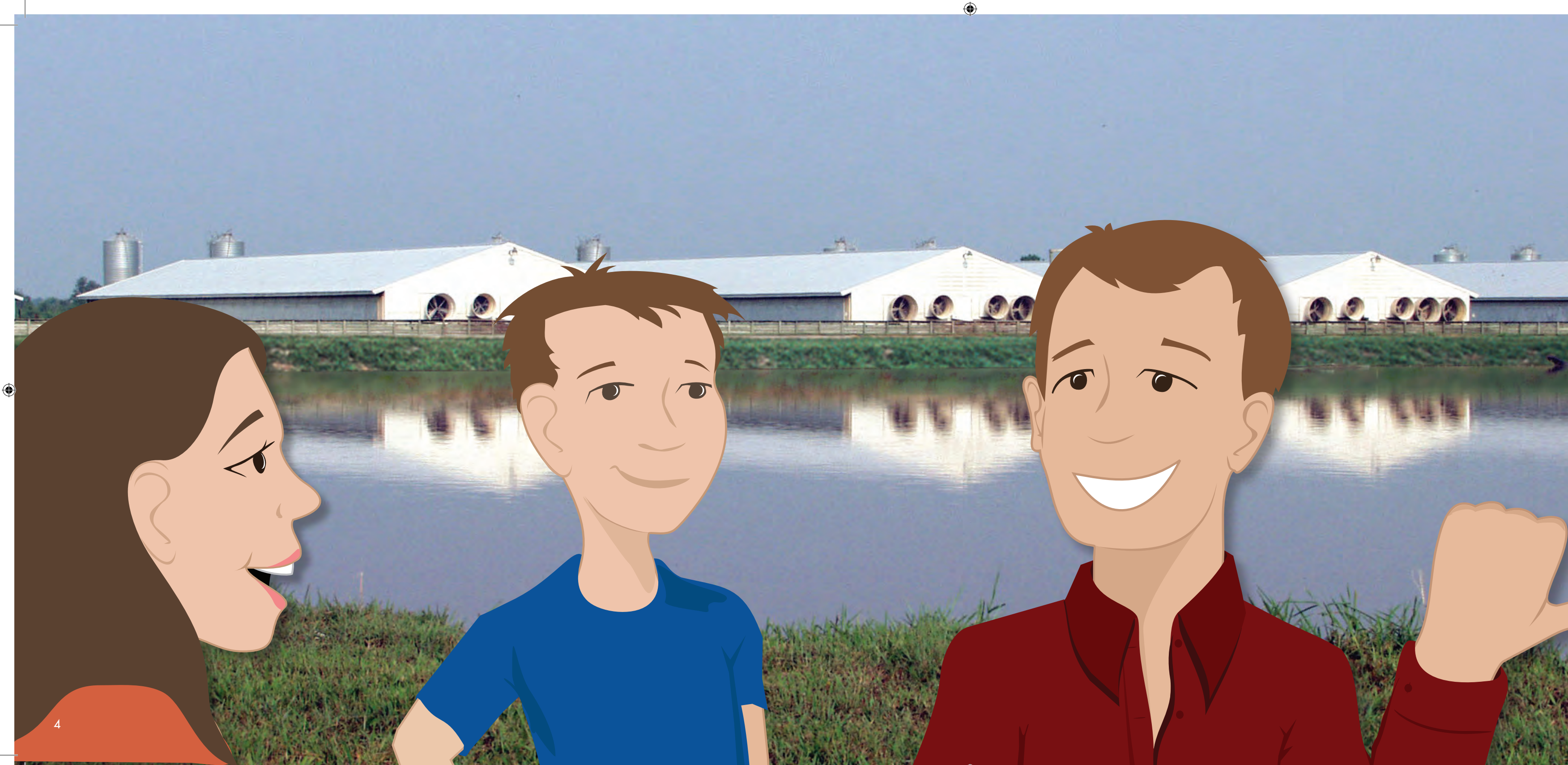
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"Hi, Dr. Sarah. Thanks for letting me ride along with you today," said Billy. "I'm excited to get started on my school project!"

"No problem, Billy," said Dr. Sarah. "We're going to have a great time! Today we are visiting Mr. Jones who raises pigs. He is called a pork producer."

"Cool, let's go," exclaimed Billy.





"Hi, Ed. This is Billy," said Dr. Sarah. "I'm showing Billy some of the things a veterinarian does. Mind if I show him around your farm?"

"No problem," said Mr. Jones. "Welcome to our farm, Billy."

"Hey, I know you," said Billy. "You coach one of the little league teams, don't you?"

"That's right, slugger, I do!" replied Mr. Jones. "When I'm not busy here on the farm, I like to help out with my kids' sports teams. My family sure spends a lot of time at ball games!"

"Mine too," said Billy.

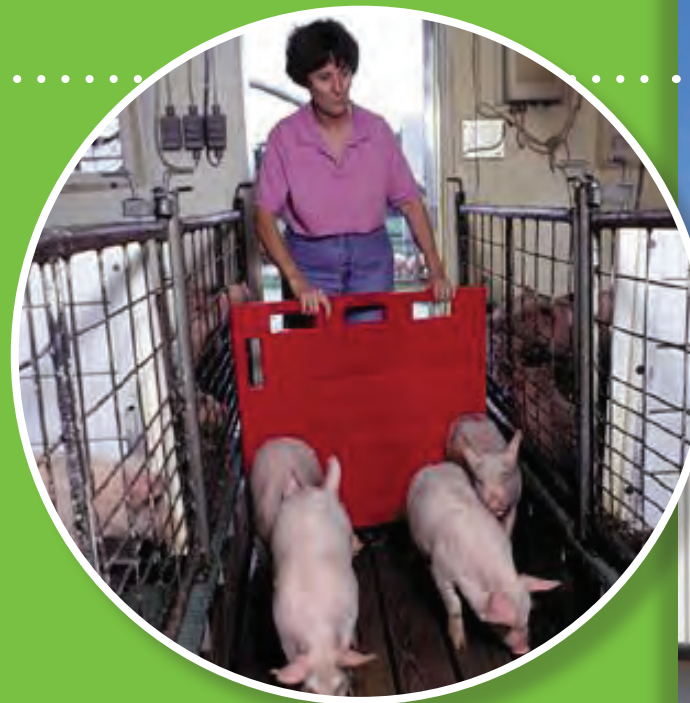
“This farm is very special to me and my family, Billy,” said Mr. Jones. “The farm is our business and it’s been in our family for more than 100 years. You see, my full-time job is raising pigs. Just like your parents have jobs, my job is working here on the farm.”





"Wow," exclaimed Billy. "Does it take a lot of people to take care of your pigs?"

"It does," replied Mr. Jones. "You see, Billy, my family and I do a lot of the work, but we need extra helpers, too. I hire people from the community to work here on our farm. I also support local businesses when I buy supplies in my hometown - ordinary things like light bulbs, cleaning products, and even groceries for my family. Our local businesses depend on each other."





"We have a lot to see, Billy, so let's head over to the barns," said Dr. Sarah. "Now, before we go inside, we need to put on coveralls and boot covers."

"But my boots aren't dirty," said Billy. "Why do I have to wear boot covers?"

"They may not look dirty," said Dr. Sarah, "but your shoes could carry germs that you cannot see into the barn. These germs might not make people sick, but they could make a pig sick. The coveralls and boot covers will help keep the pigs' barn as healthy and germ-free as possible. Ready to go?"

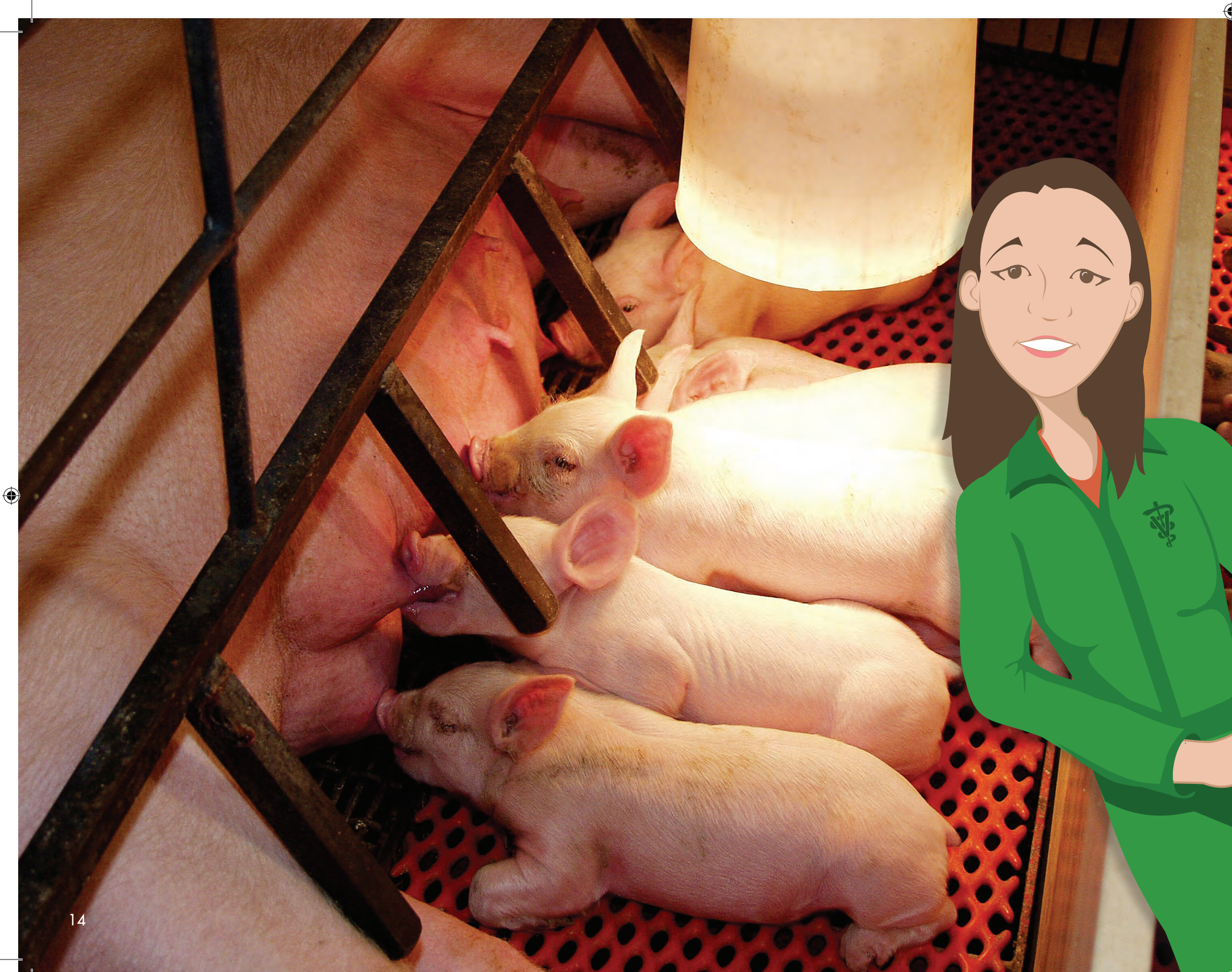
"I sure am," replied Billy.
"Let's go!"



"This is fun," exclaimed Billy.
"I've never been in a pig barn
before. Where is all the mud?"

"Actually, Billy," said Dr. Sarah,
"today's pork producers
typically raise pigs in very clean
barns where there is no mud.
In these barns, the producer can
raise or lower the temperature
to keep pigs warm in the
winter and cool in the
summer. These barns also
have big fans to circulate
fresh air and keep the pigs
comfortable, so you won't
see any pigs rolling around
in mud here!"



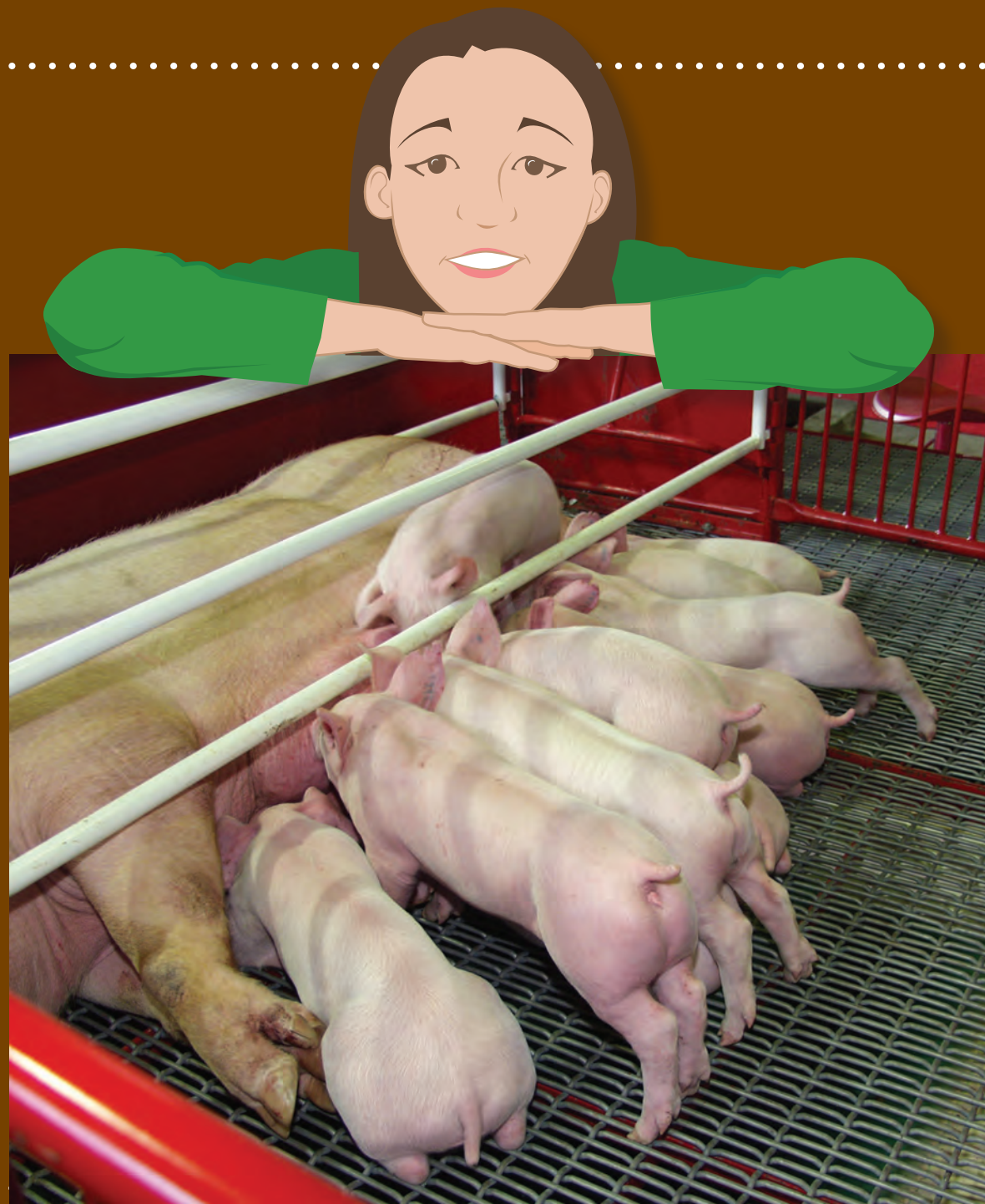


Pork producers work hard to provide comfortable shelter for pigs. If the barn gets too warm, a special sprinkler system is used to cool the animals. Pigs do not sweat, so the water lowers the animal's body temperature.

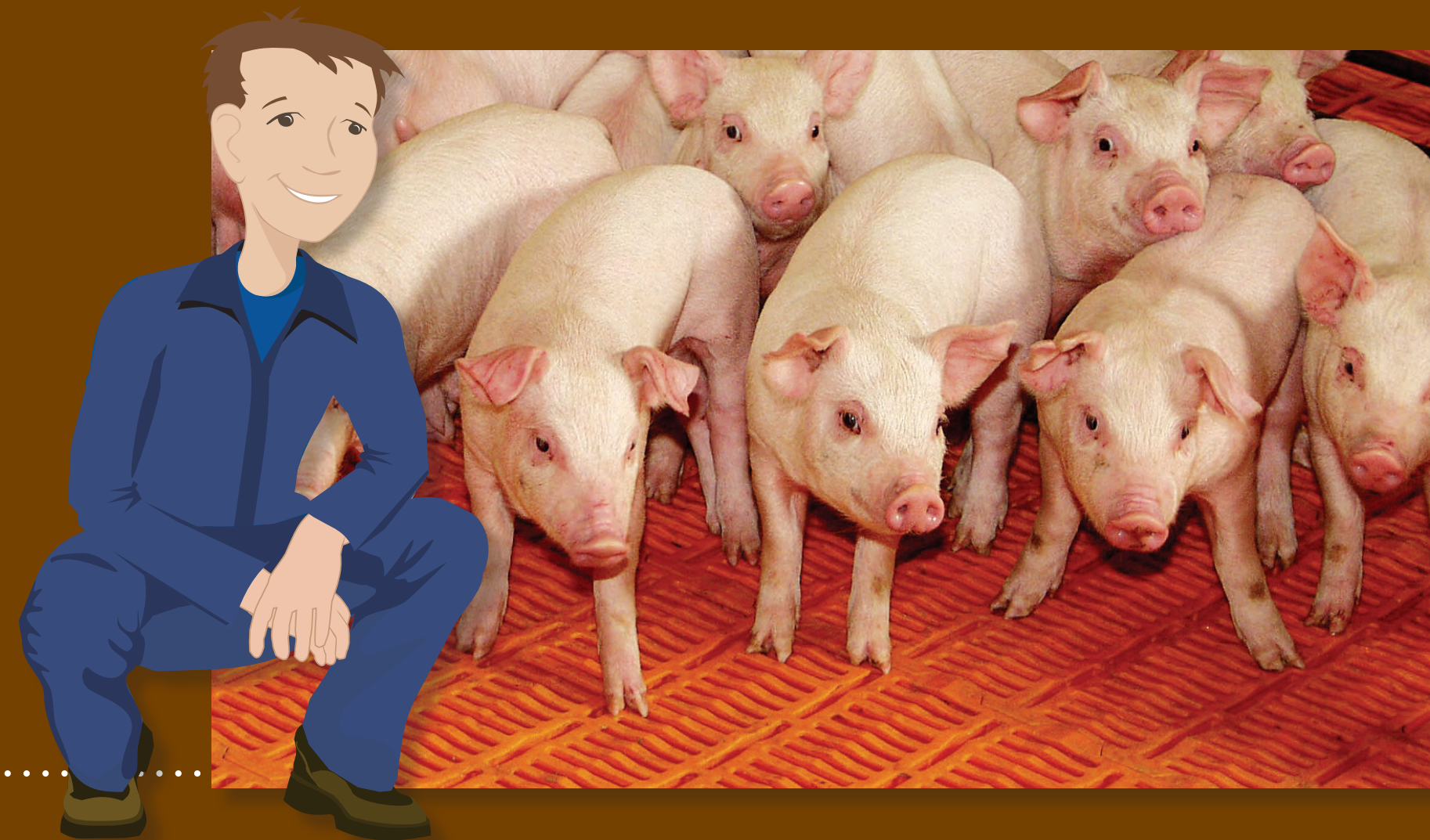
If the barn is too cold, heat lamps may be used to warm smaller pigs. Keeping pigs comfortable is very important to pork producers.

In this barn newborn pigs, called piglets, are kept safe in farrowing stalls with their mothers. Mother pigs are called sows.

The farrowing stall protects the piglets from injury and allows the sow to safely feed her piglets.



When piglets are about three weeks old, they are ready to be weaned, which means they are removed from their mother's milk and moved to another barn where they are fed solid food and given water to drink. Here, the pigs begin to grow quite fast.



As pork producers move pigs around the farm, extra care is given to make sure the animals stay calm and move easily. Sorting boards are used to help guide pigs down the alleyway. If a pig turns the wrong way, the board can be used like a gate. The board also protects workers from getting stepped on or knocked down by larger pigs.

Safety is very important to pork producers and their employees.



At this age and size, the pigs are moved to another barn where they will remain with other similar size pigs until they are big enough for market.

These pigs eat quite a lot of feed, but they don't overeat. They will quickly reach a market weight of about 270 pounds in just five months. Market weight is the weight at which they may be sold.

"How's the tour going?" asked Mr. Jones.

"Great," said Billy. "Dr. Sarah was just telling me how fast pigs grow. But I do have a question, Mr. Jones. What do pigs eat?"

"That's an excellent question, Billy," replied Mr. Jones. "My daughter Emily is checking on feed for the pigs right now. Why don't you give her a hand, and she can tell you all about what pigs eat."



"Hi, Billy," said Emily. "I heard you ask my dad what pigs eat. What do you think pigs eat?"

"Well," replied Billy, "all the books I've read show farmers feeding pigs leftover food and table scraps. But what your pigs are eating sure doesn't look like apple cores and potato peelings!"

"You're right, Billy," said Emily. "Our pig feed is made from corn and soybeans that my dad grows right here on our farm. And some farmers use other grains like barley or wheat. We also add extra minerals so the feed provides lots of nutrition for the pigs, because good feed helps pigs grow fast."

"How much feed do pigs eat every day?" asked Billy.

"Pigs eat more as they grow, up to nine pounds of feed per day," replied Emily.





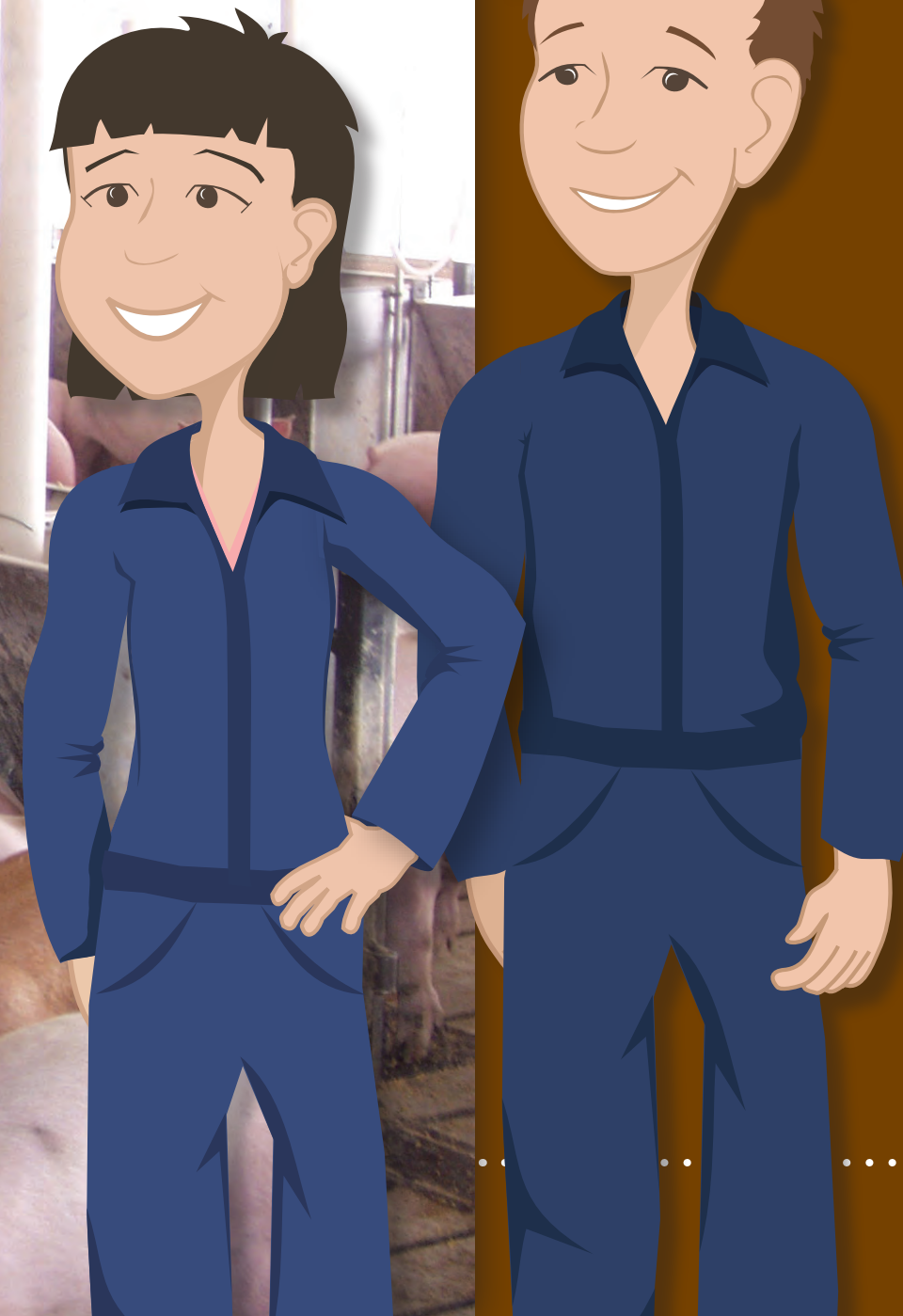
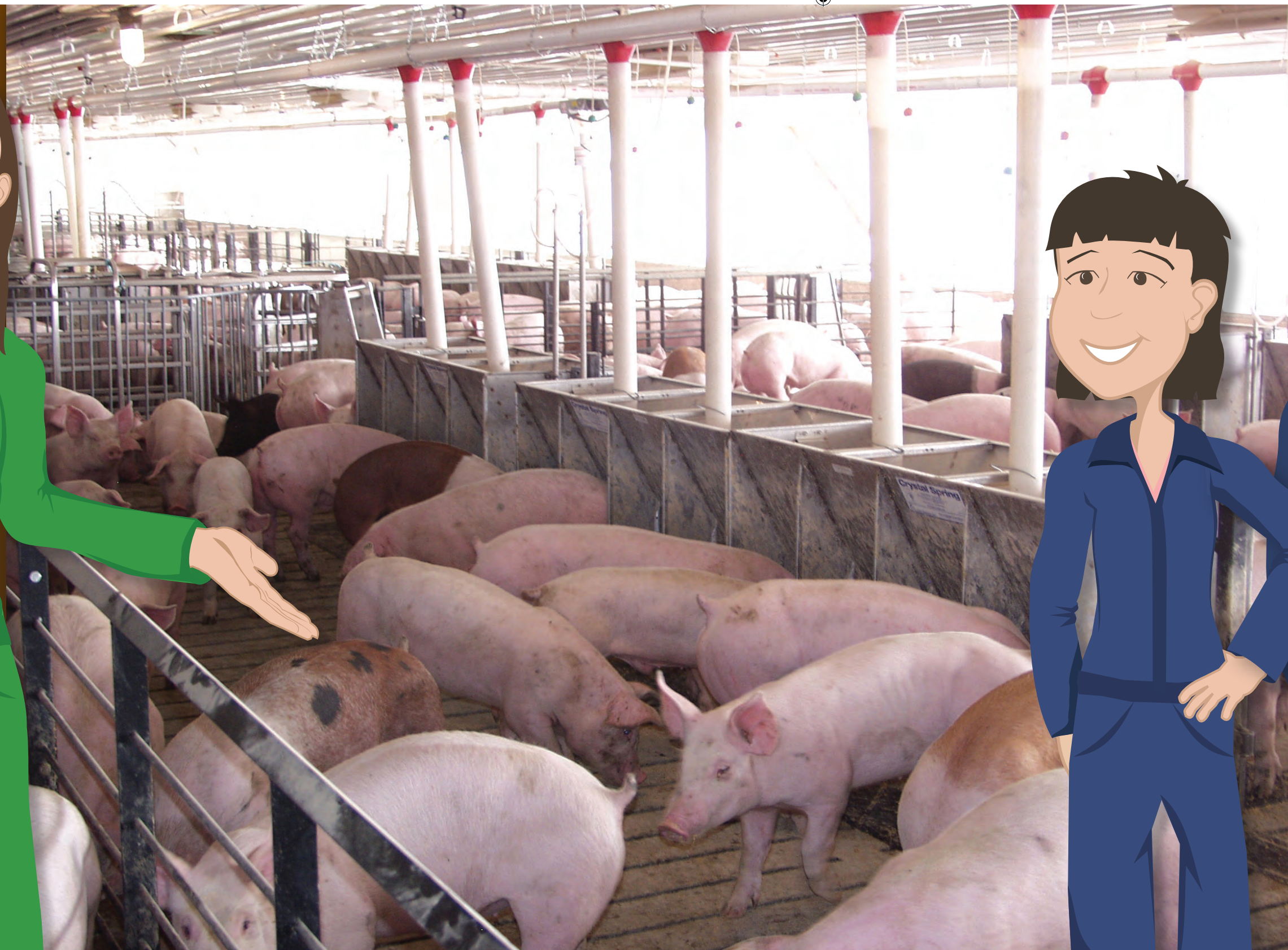
It's also important for pigs to have lots of fresh, clean water. Typically pork producers have waterers in the barns that allow the animals to drink as often as they need because pigs drink up to five gallons of water per day when grown.

Making the animals comfortable and providing them with high quality feed and plenty of water are just a few ways in which producers keep their pigs healthy. Another way is by working with veterinarians to prevent sickness as much as possible.



By doing everything they can to prevent health problems, pork producers and veterinarians make sure the pigs need only occasional treatment with medicine.

Preventing illness is much easier than treating a sick animal, that's why the goal of every pork producer is to raise the healthiest pigs possible.



"Well, Billy, I think we're all done here in the barn," said Dr. Sarah. "Why don't we head outside?"

"Sure," replied Billy. "Thanks for showing me around, Emily."

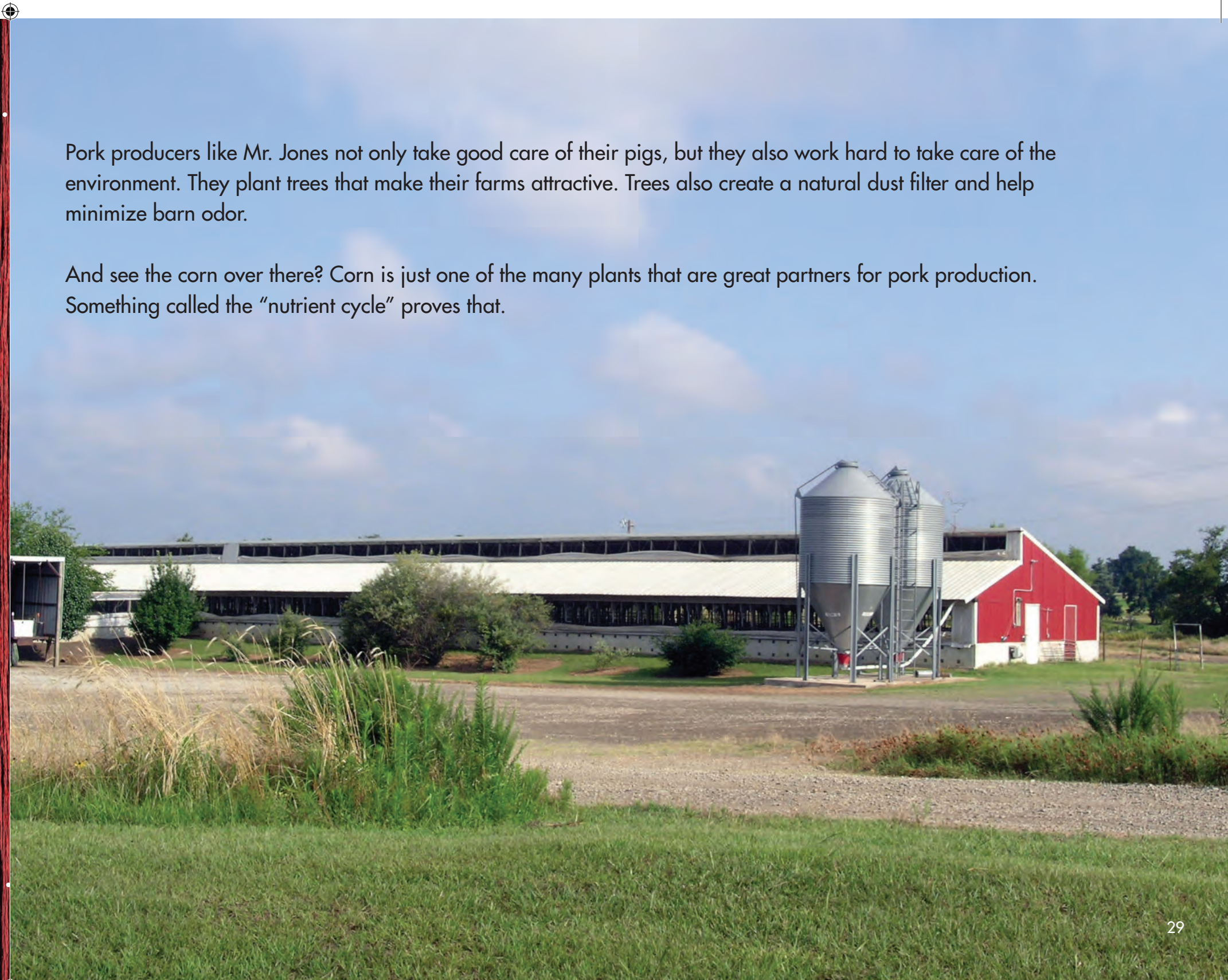
"You're welcome, Billy," said Emily.

"You know, Dr. Sarah," said Billy, "pigs really need a lot of special care to grow. I didn't know pork producers work so hard. The tour of the barns was really fun, but I can't wait to explore the rest of the farm!"



Pork producers like Mr. Jones not only take good care of their pigs, but they also work hard to take care of the environment. They plant trees that make their farms attractive. Trees also create a natural dust filter and help minimize barn odor.

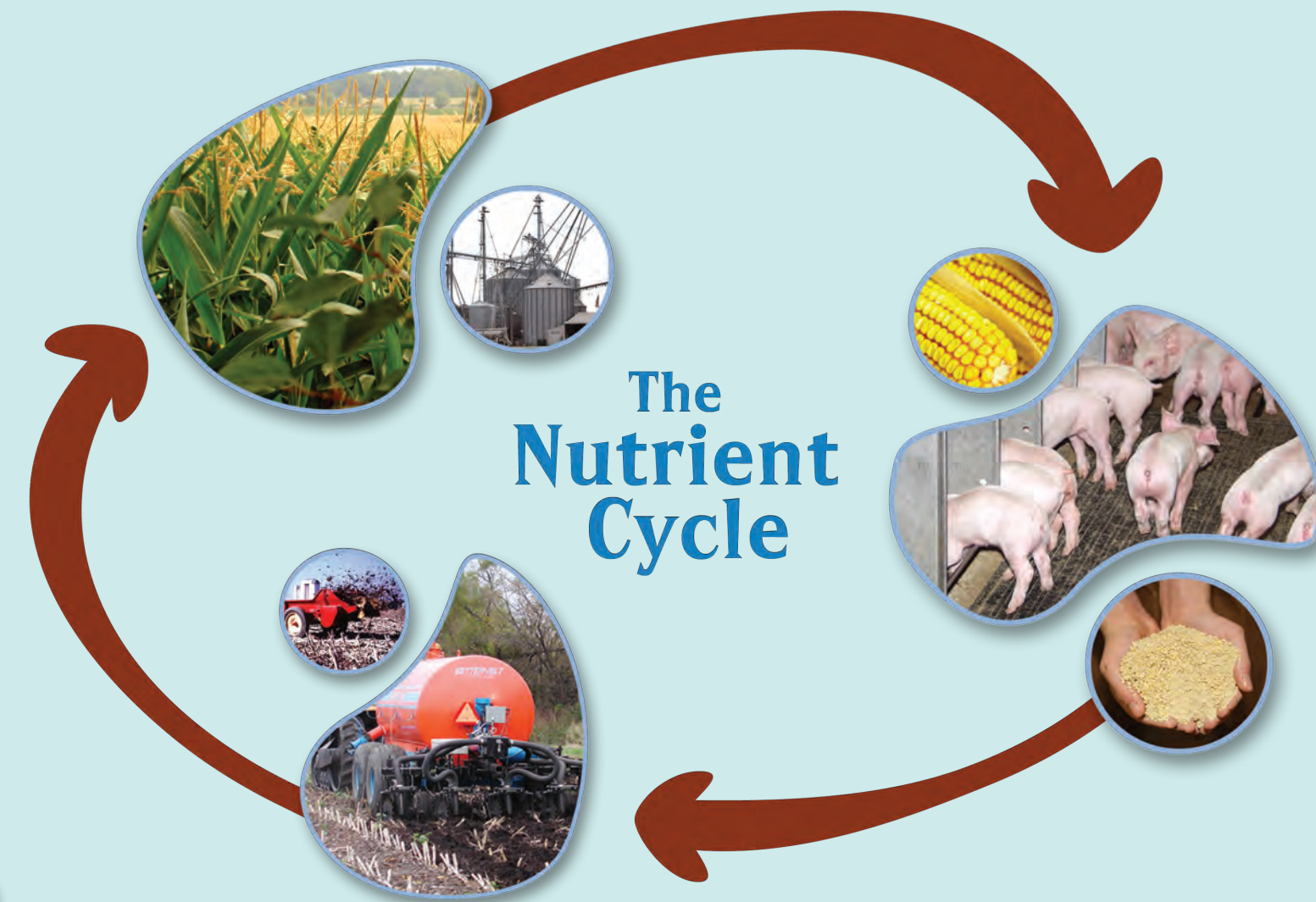
And see the corn over there? Corn is just one of the many plants that are great partners for pork production. Something called the “nutrient cycle” proves that.



Here's how the nutrient cycle works on the Jones' farm.

First, grain crops like soybeans and corn are grown in Mr. Jones' fields. Next, feed is made from the grain. The grain provides essential nutrition for pigs' growth.

Pigs can't convert all of their feed to muscle or energy, so manure is produced. The manure from a pig barn is then injected into the soil in Mr. Jones' fields. This manure contains many important nutrients for plant growth. The next crop Mr. Jones plants will benefit from the nutrient-rich soil. And the nutrient cycle prepares to repeat itself all over again!

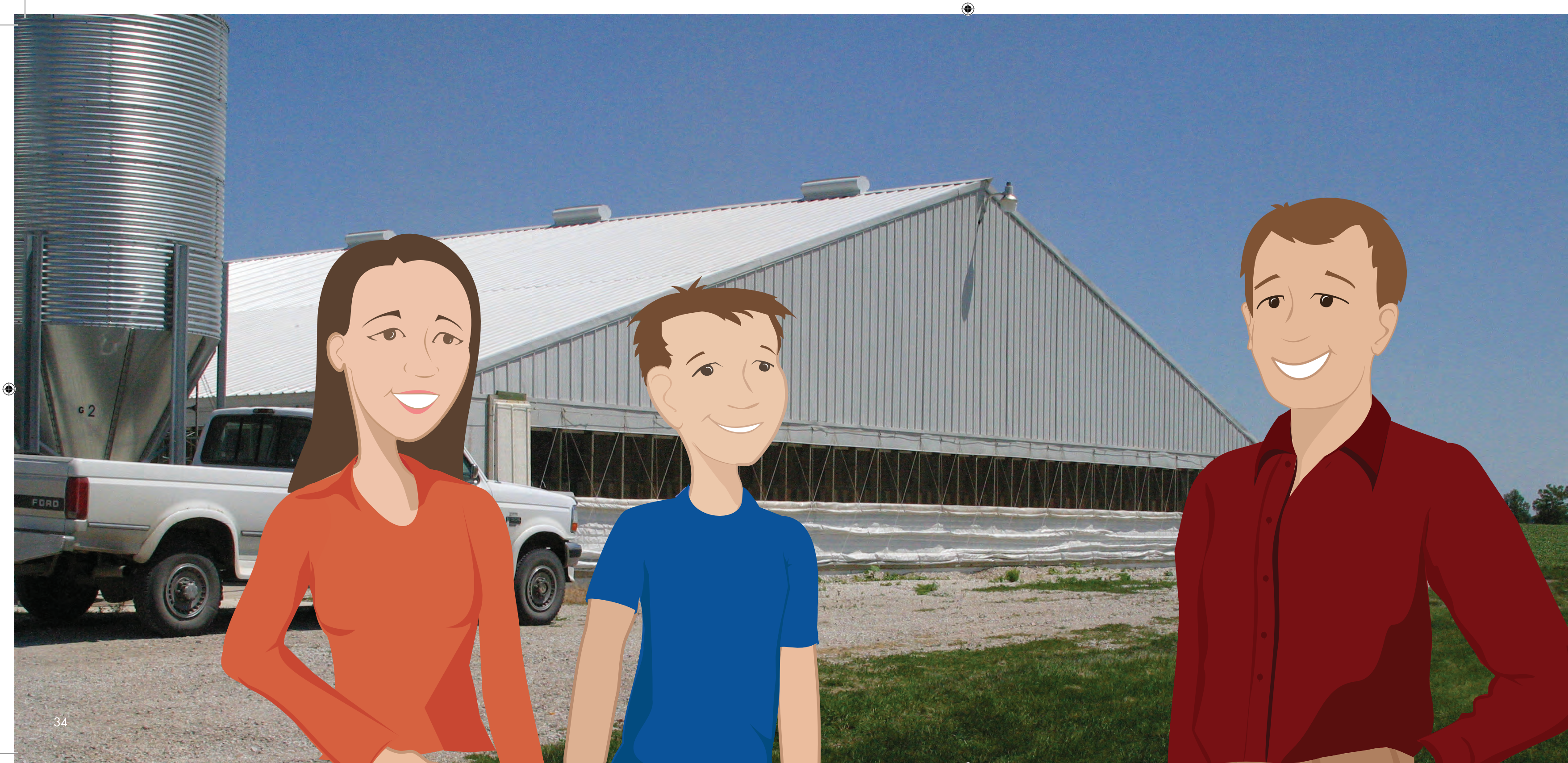


"That's pretty cool, Dr. Sarah," said Billy. "I would never guess that pigs and plants go so well together. Hey, Mr. Jones—do you know your pigs are part of a nutrient cycle?"

"I sure do, Billy," replied Mr. Jones. "It's a pretty important part of what happens here on the farm. My family takes care of the land so that it remains productive for the next round of plants. We work hard to protect the soil, water, and air. In fact, Billy, everything we do helps us raise healthy pigs and protect the environment. As pork producers, that really is our job."

And Billy, perhaps the most important thing of all is to remember that pork producers raise pigs as food that becomes pork chops, ham, sausage, and bacon for people all over the world."





"So did you learn a lot today, Billy?" asked Dr. Sarah.

"Wow, I really did," exclaimed Billy. "I think I might like being a veterinarian...or maybe a pork producer!"



