



# THIS IS BIOTECH

## BEYOND MOOSE AND MOUNTAINS: BUILDING CANADA'S BIO-BASED ECONOMY.



### Prevtex Microbia: How This Little Pig Medicine Went to Market

**Prevtex Microbia Inc.,  
Sainte-Hyacinthe, Québec**

Success in the biotechnology world is hard to come by. While upstart companies may have fascinating research and innovative technologies, bringing an actual product to commercial success requires deep pockets, and for good reason – getting government approval is a long and costly affair.

So when a technology born in a Canadian university laboratory becomes a successful commercial venture, it is cause to celebrate. Not only does it prove to the scientists toiling away in institutional settings that their work can make a difference, but it can also be profitable. Prevtex microbia Inc., with its commercially successful swine vaccine *Coliprotec*, is just such a success story.

The science behind the animal health company originated in the Reference Laboratory for *Escherichia coli* (ECL) of the Faculté de médecine vétérinaire at the Université de Montréal. This lab, already well known as the only one of its kind qualified to report to the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) on animal-related *E. coli* outbreaks, had been working on a vaccine that would stop post-weaned piglets from contracting diarrhea. But until it was spun off into the private biotechnology company Prevtex microbia, there were no plans to bring the benefits of the performance-enhancing drug to swine producers that could give them a chance to combat a costly and sometimes deadly disease. Today, the company's product is produced and distributed in Canada coast to coast.

"We are a very small company to go from a university lab in just three years to being well on our way to becoming a commercial world player in the next five," says Michel Fortin, president and CEO of Prevtex microbia. The company's flagship product, *Coliprotec*, is a vaccine that helps piglets newly removed from their mothers fight off the pervasive *E. coli* bacteria that is the most common cause of piglet diarrhea. These "scours" are hard on a piglet's health; they limit the animal's weight gain and, in up to 5% of cases, can cause death. If this occurs, the pork producers' bottom line is impacted with lost productivity, food safety can be an issue and the animals can be subjected to stress. Finding an easy, non-antibiotic medicine for *E. coli*-induced diarrhea is an important tool in the medicinal arsenal for animal health, says Fortin.



Products like *Coliprotec* are designed to help the farmers maintain their herds by keeping piglets healthy as well as giving piglets a better weight-gaining capacity. The vaccine is easily distributed in the water and because it is not an antibiotic, it will help reduce the over reliance on antibiotics in animal health, says Fortin. Already, the European Union has banned antibiotics in animal feed and the rest of the world is becoming increasingly apprehensive about antibiotic overuse.

Bringing Prevtex microbia's products to world markets is Fortin's plan. He calls it his 12/3/4 strategy; to be selling animal healthcare medicines in 12 countries, on three continents with four approved products.

With the Canadian swine industry at only 25 million animals produced for consumption a year, a fraction of the world's one billion animal production, the national market is indeed a big stage for this company getting ready for world wide interest and demand.

But the pride of being Canadian is evident in everything Prevtex microbia does.

"We have broken the ground and successfully launched the first live bacterial vaccine that has been fully developed and licensed to be produced, distributed and commercialized in Canada," says Fortin. "That's a great achievement for our scientists and farmers and spells success for Canada's pork production industry overall."