

Swine Backfat Probing Comes To County Farm

Backfat probing, one of the newest tools in the swine industry, was used this week to help a Lancaster County farmer have his herd of pure bred Landrace gilts certified as meat type individuals.

Backfat probing, as the name implies, is a method of measuring the thickness of the back fat on the body of a living hog. The eye of a good judge can estimate the amount of fat on the back of a hog, but even the most trained eye is not accurate enough to select breeding animals which will transmit to their offspring the ability to turn feed into red meat instead of fat.

Measuring the thickness of the fat on the 10 six month old gilts on the Bird-In-Hand R1 farm of Elam Reiff, Jr. was John Wolgemuth, Asst. Manager of the Lancaster County Farm Bureau, Inc.

The backfat probing, developed and tested jointly by the U. S. Department of Agriculture and several state university experiment stations, is a practical method of measuring the amount of fat on the body of a hog without slaughtering the animal.

In early certification studies, litter mates of breeding stock were slaughtered and the backfat thickness was entered on the record of the retained stock.

The ten registered Landrace gilts used in the Lancaster County probing trials were purchased from the Willow Tree Farm at Nobleville, Indiana and were

of meat type certified sire and dam. Farrowed on February 11 and 15, the gilts weighed an average of nearly 200 pounds with the lightest one over 180 pounds at the 180 and 182 day mark.

Probing is a fairly simple operation and does not cause any undue injury to the swine. A small slit is pierced in the skin of the animal at three locations along a line three inches from the backbone. The first probe is taken at a spot just behind the shoulder, the second just above the first rib, and the third just in front of the ham.

After the slits have been made in the skin, a small steel ruler is inserted into the opening and pushed thru the fat. When the ruler touches the muscle tissue the reading is taken and disinfectant is applied to the incision.

An average of all three readings is recorded, along with the weight of the gilt on her application for meat certification.

At the Reiff farm, the highest reading was a backfat thickness of 1.3 inches while the lowest was 0.9 inches with no average under one inch and no average over 1.3.

According to Dwight Younk, Extension Swine specialist from Penna State University, the ideal for breeding gilts of this age is 200 lbs. of weight and between one and one and three tenths of an inch backfat thickness.



PROBING TO FIND THE THICKNESS OF BACKFAT on a six months old purebred Landrace gilt is John Wolgemuth, assistant manager of Lancaster County Farm Bureau. A slit is cut in the skin of the gilt and a small stainless steel ruler pushed into the along the gilt's backbone. The thickness of the backfat indicates the ability of the hog to turn feed into red meat rather than fat. Backfat probing is one of the steps in certification of meat type swine. The probing was done on the farm of Elam Reiff, Jr. Bird-In-Hand R1. —L. F. PHOTO

Reiff, beginning in the present herd sire from the Iowa The sire of the Reiff purebred Landrace business herd of Don Koch, Latmer, boar is out of the world record litter of Landrace swine about three years ago, sells Yorkshire business, Reiff bred a year at Blue Ball and at faster growing, leaner breed Reiff swine will have the state Landrace sale at than any others he has tried fluence in the swine herds Harrisburg Formerly in the Last year, Reiff, bought his (Turn to page 7)

NEW TRACTORS

COMING!

Yes, the rumors are true that John Deere will soon be announcing a new line of tractors. We'll be previewing them at "Deere Day in Dallas" August 30. What's more, we've been told that these new tractors represent an amazing leap forward in power farming—an advance so progressive that it sets an all-new high in tractor performance, ease of handling, and operator comfort. Watch for our announcement date when we return from Dallas. We are looking forward to showing you firsthand what these tractors are going to mean to you in greater production, lower labor costs, and more leisure time.



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