

Swine Management Reviewed by Penn State Specialist

Swine producers have their biggest problems with "management of the herd through the farrowing facilities," according to Dwight Younkin, Penn State livestock Extension specialist.

Speaking on "Managing the Swine Herd" at the Farm and Home Center this week, Younkin explained that scheduling of the animals through the farrowing facilities accounts for much of the difficulties. "Nothing will replace having a break in the farrowing house" rather than having overlapping farrowing schedules, Younkin emphasized.

The problem of scheduling becomes particularly critical with an operation which has



Dwight Younkin
Discussing Swine

SIX or more farrowings a year and there are some problems even with four farrowings, he said.

He noted that four farrowings a year give the farmer about two and one half months to get the animals out of the building. Many farmers can manage this.

But when they go to six times a year and have only one and one half months something often happens to the farrowing schedule and this results in a continuous farrowing.

The easiest system to manage is a farrowing to finish system in the same building on a twice a year schedule. This gives five and a half months to finish. A small additional finishing facility is needed.

But a farrowing to finish system is now too expensive for many farmers, Younkin said.

If remodeling or rebuilding is anticipated, Younkin suggested the use of larger pens — about five to five and a half feet wide by 12 feet long — to enable leaving the pigs there longer. There are fewer problems with moving the larger pigs, he explained.

Younkin suggested farmers use a system of two farrowing buildings and one finishing building, using alternating four-month farrowing schedules in each of the two farrowing buildings. This enables three and a half months between farrowings in each building and has the advantage of putting lower stress on the animals and providing greater flexibility with scheduling.

Care of Breeding Stock

Another very important phase of swine management involves the boar. With 20 sows, the farmer can possibly get by with two boars but he is "likely to have trouble." There should be three boars, he said.

If farmers want to accomplish breeding within three days even more boars are needed. "You can't have too many boars if you want to keep on a

good breeding schedule," he said.

He warned farmers never to use a boar before it is eight months old.

He also emphasized the importance of keeping breeding stock cool during hot weather. Boars should have a wood lot where they can wallow. If a wood lot is not available, they should be sprayed.

Sows are particularly affect-

ed by hot weather for about 21 days after breeding.

Cold weather doesn't seem to affect either sows or boars. "In the winter, all the breeding stock will need is a dry place out of the wind," Younkin said.

He advised selecting gilts on the basis of good mothers. He warned against picking strictly on the basis of size and scale. The larger animals may be late maturing.

In selecting the boar the farmer should not go after the smoothest one but the most vigorous and active one. The boar should weigh 250 pounds at six months with not more than 1 1/2 inches of back fat.

Stating that not very much is known about the best feeds to use for sows, Younkin noted the case of a farmer who listened to advice from a friend and made additions to the feed he was

receiving from the mill. He ended up with too much calcium in the feed and lost some of his animals.

During lactation the diet should be about 15 per cent protein.

Scouring in little pigs the first few days is from "something in the farrowing house." The scours shouldn't concern the producer unless the drop- (Continued on Page 10)



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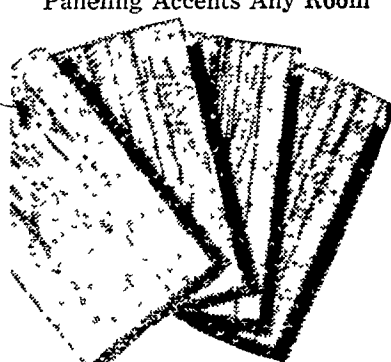


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