

Nebraska hog housing unit has swine producers excited

LANCASTER — The Nebraska hog housing unit is gaining in popularity because of its efficient use of natural air currents for warmth and ventilation, according to area farmers and Penn State swine management specialist Dwight Younkin.

According to Younkin, who estimates that nine out of every 10 new barns being built for growing and finishing hogs is of the Nebraska type, the relatively new building concept has some noteworthy advantages over more conventional housing.

"The Nebraska unit keeps the hogs much warmer, compared to the conventional, cold type pole barn," the Penn State explained, adding that this factor was really noticed during the recent severe winter in the Northeast. While some supplemental heat is recommended for the smaller pigs, the building depends almost entirely on natural warmth from the pigs themselves as well as the sun. The design of the building calls for some insulation, thus further enhancing the natural warming and ventilation processes. No condensation is another plus.

Farmers in Lancaster County and elsewhere who are using the Nebraska Units are well pleased with the engineering principles which take advantage of natural air movements for warmth and ventilation. The usual Nebraska Unit has no fans or elaborate heating systems. Maintenance costs as well as initial outlays for construction compare favorably with expenses the pig farmer would encounter if he were to build more conventional hog barns.

According to Younkin, the costs for the Nebraska Unit run at about \$70 to \$75 per pig capacity if the unit includes slatted floors and a pit un-



These clean, healthy hogs are typical of the results Joe Zimmerman has experienced since putting his Nebraska Unit into operation last December. Here the Ephrata area swine producer checks for signs of discomfort in his herd. They're hard to find once a farmer learns how to manage the Nebraska Unit.

derneath. Costs are about a third less if slatted floors and pits are excluded and replaced with alternative methods for cleaning and manure storage.

"The costs will be a few dollars more compared to

the cold pole barn," Younkin admitted, emphasizing however, that the Nebraska Unit is warmer and allows for more comfortable pigs.

Despite the advantages of the Nebraska unit, it's not all gravy for the manager.

"There is a management learning process involved at first until the operator knows exactly how to properly ventilate the building through the use of panels or curtains which may be

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The simplicity of Nebraska Units is illustrated by the absence of fans and other mechanical devices.

Hogs are grouped into pens which are virtually self-cleaning because of the sloping floor and slats.

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