

Ask the VMD



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Herd Health in Hogs

Last column, in the first of a two-part series, Dr. Trayer responded to a reader who asked: "What considerations should I make when selecting my new breeding stock for my hog herd?"

This week, Dr. Trayer will comment on the treatment of the new breeding stock after they arrive at the home farm.

In your individual herd health program, it is im-

portant to remember to isolate all new stock for a minimum of 30 days, a total isolation from the rest of the herd.

During the 30 day isolation period, the hogs should be re-blood tested for brucellosis, pseudorabies, and leptospirosis. They should also be treated from internal parasites, worms, and external parasites, lice and mange.

In the treatment of lice and mange, it is hard to

make a recommendation as to what to use because of the constant problem of knowing what is going to be on the market. What has worked well in the past includes lindane, toxophene, and malathion.

The new stock should be checked daily for any evidence of disease. I recommend that the observation exercise be done last in the day, so that if there would be any disease, you would not be dragging it around to your other houses.

The vaccination program for the new additions, should include leptospirosis, using the 5-way bacterin, and erysipelas, again using the bacterin.

After the 30 day wait is over and you've gotten your blood tests back with negative results, if the hogs look healthy, it is time to start inter-mingling the new stock with the old herd. The co-mingling can be accomplished by either fence-line contact, or by putting the new stock into a pen that has the manure from the original herd.

This method of introduction builds up good immunity to enteroviruses, also known as the SMEDI syndrome, and also parovirus. The length of time recommended for this type of getting acquainted program is 30 days.

At the new stock includes a boar, I recommend that the boar be placed in a pen with mature gilts from your finishing floor to see whether he works properly. After this 30 day test period, the animal can be considered ready to add to your breeding herd.

From their day of arrival on the farm, the new stock should be provided with wholesome feed and water, and adequate housing.

Concerning feeding the new breeding stock, I recommend you increase the bulk in the ration and keep them off of a high energy diet their first week after stepping off the truck. This type of ration reduced the potential problems with gut edema.

In actually selecting boar for your herd, you need to start looking at least 3 months in advance. Plan ahead and know what your needs are. You should identify your herd's weak points, such as bad legs, low performance on feed conversion, low carcass quality.

When looking at a herd with poor feed conversion, you have to be sure that it is not the result of a disease, like atrophic rhinitis, holding back the growth rate.

Remember that heredity, or the ability of the parent to transmit specific genes to their offspring, called heritability is not the whole story. Environment plays an important role.

Consider the heritability of the pig's birth weight, where 10 percent of it is only due to heredity and 90 percent is due to the environmental treatment of that animal.

In feedlot performance, or feed efficiency on weight

gain, it appears to be influenced equally. That is 50 percent heredity and 50 percent environment.

Some of the traits you should be looking for in a boar are his behavioral characteristics, temperament and sexual behavior, along with his history of sow productivity, such as litter size, milking and mothering ability, and number of pigs weaned.

If you only had to look at one trait to influence your boar selection, his record of feedlot performance, his growth rate and daily gain and feed conversion, would be the one to spend the most time on and to study the closest. We know that 60 to 70 percent of the variable costs in the swine industry are feed costs.

Other considerations that might be made are the carcass merit, that is the back fat percentage; the soundness of the animal, whether he has a straight underline, good legs, straight bone, good teat spacing, and good mating ability.

The conformation and type of the boar is also important. Body length, height, muscle size, and testicle development are some of the criteria to note. Along with the boar's outward appearance, you should find out if there has been any genetic abnormalities in the boar's history, such as hernias or cryptorchids (retained testicles).

If there is any history in this individual's bloodline of any genetic abnormalities, this eliminates him from selection. You cannot take a chance of the possibilities of

genetically passing this trait along to the offspring.

In summary, you need records, and if you only have one trait to look at, check feedlot performance. Identify problems in your herd that you want to correct.

My minimum criteria for boar selection is: 1. he should come from a litter size of ten at birth, weaning eight; 2. he should have twelve evenly spread teats with no inversions; 3. he should have obtained 230 pounds of body weight within 155 days or less; 4. his daily gain from 60 pounds and 230 pounds should be 2 pounds per day or more; and 5. his back fat should be less than one inch.

Do not over work your new boar, particularly if he is less than 12 months old. Under twelve months, you should not be using him more than once a day; over twelve months, you can use him twice a day.

Keep the boars cool in summer to keep the sperm count up when the temperatures reach 85 degrees Fahrenheit, and above. Otherwise, the sperm count will drop and your litters will start decreasing about three to four months later.

Replacement breeding stock in your females is usually done by selecting gilts from your own herd, unless you are just starting out. My recommendation is to pick the fastest growing, leanest gilts that are sound and from large litters.

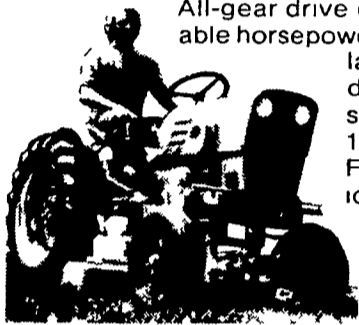
To do this, you need on-farm records. If you only want to look at one trait

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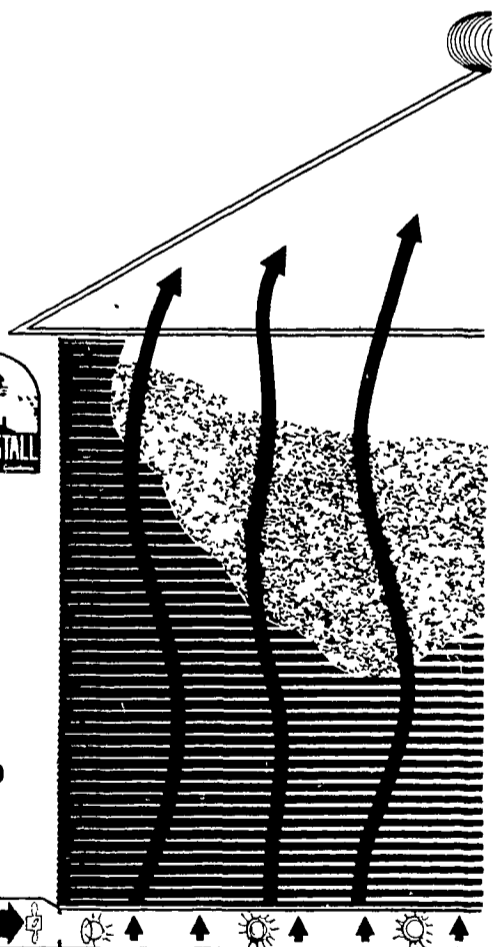
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