

## How to keep pork profits

NEWARK, Del. — Rising production costs and lower hog prices have combined to put heavy pressure on profits for pork producers. At times like these, tighter management procedures can help you stay in the black, said University of Delaware extension livestock specialist Dick Fowler.

Feed accounts for 55 to 80 percent of swine production costs. One of the easiest ways to improve feed utilization is to cut waste at the feeder.

Chances are, if the feed trough or cup that the pig puts its nose into is half full, you're letting him waste too much food.

Adjust the feeder to that he must lick the feed from beneath the adjustment plate, instead. Hogs have plenty of time to eat, so let them work for their food, advises Fowler.

Allow one feeder space for every four pigs. Balanced rations mean better weight gain. Rations low in calcium, phosphorus and salt produce poor results.

The growing pig requires 0.6 percent calcium, 0.5 percent phosphorus and five pounds of salt per ton of complete ration.

Have a feed sample analyzed periodically to be sure it contains the proper amounts of these nutrients.

Vitamins stored in the presence of minerals for three months lose some of their potency. So use fresh ingredients for farm mixing.

Moldy feeds reduce intake, causing hogs to take longer to reach market weight. If the feed bin hasn't been cleaned recently, it probably needs it now.

Water is a cheap nutrient, so be generous with it. Hogs drink one to two pounds of water for every pound of feed they consume. To be sure they get enough, allow one waterer for every 25 pigs.

Proper bedding can reduce the amount of feed required to maintain body temperature. To maximize feed efficiency, provide animals with a bedded, dry, draft-free place. Two open front shelters pulled together with the third side boarded up will give adequate protection for growing feeder pigs, or for brood sows during gestation.

Check weights for your market hogs and sell at the lowest weight that will command top price, advises Fowler.

Cull poor producers. Old sows should be replaced with gilts. Record group farrowing averages and cull individuals that farrowed fewer pigs than the average of the group they were in. Pregnancy test 30 to 45 days after breeding.

The Delaware Extension Service now has two pregnancy testers available for producers to use. Contact your county extension office if you want to use one of these machines.

Open sows do not pay; they cost. Identify and cull them.

Parasites are profit takers, too. Both internal and external parasites can drain dollars from your pocket. Establish a regular deworming program for your sow herd.

Deworm sows before breeding and again prior to farrowing. Use broad spectrum dewormers to control large roundworms, whipworms and lungworms. Use one-day treatments.

To produce worm-free feeder pigs, feed an anthelmintic-antibiotic from 20 to 40 pounds, or use two separate one-day treatments at 25 and 35 pounds.

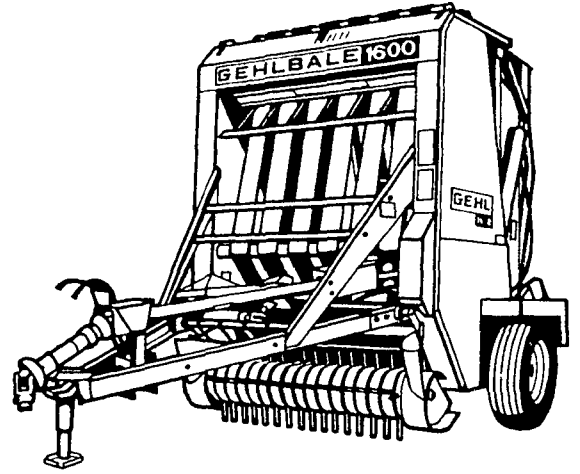
Use single-day dewormings to treat market pigs.

soon after their arrival on your farm and again at 75 and 110 pounds.

External parasite problems include mange and lice. Scheduled spraying is often neglected because of pressure from other tasks. But, warns the specialist, itching and restlessness reduce feed efficiency and in severe cases can affect reproductive performance. Mange mites and lice can be eradicated with a regular spray program.

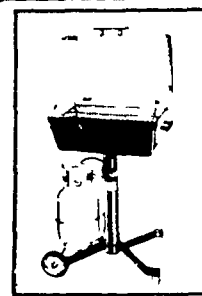
Acceptable insecticides do not kill eggs, so at least two treatments at 10-day intervals are necessary. Lindane and toxaphene are the most effective insecticides. Do not spray where the floor is used for feeding. And follow label directions.

By tightening herd management in these ways, you can reduce production losses and increase your profit, Fowler said.



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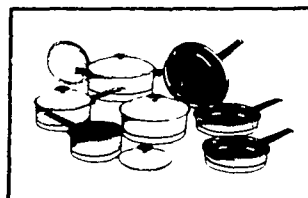
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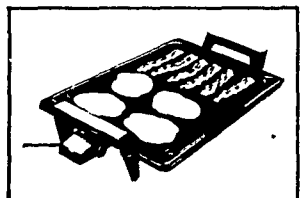
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