

# Vicki Rice

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With the boars loose in the crate behind them, the sows usually back up to them."

As far as any difficulties in handling the 400 pound boars is concerned, the 130 pound farmer says "No problems." She adds they could care less that she's in the pen with them during the breeding.

After the breeding and gestation comes the long awaited day of farrowing. Within twelve hours from the

time they are born the pigs have their first encounter with the former dental assistant — their needle teeth are cut.

When they are three to four days old, their tails are cut off as close to the body as possible so no stub is left to bite. They receive their first iron shot and wind up with orange bellies after having their umbilical cords sprayed with medication.

Who does all of this work? — Vicki, who says she loves

baby pigs, especially the runts who have to be bottle fed.

For the unlucky lot who don't get Vicki's individual attention and tender loving care with a baby bottle, they have to be satisfied with mamma pig and a creep feed ration that is made more inviting with an iron additive that "smells heavenly — like coconut pudding." This helps get the pigs interested in the feed along with helping them get over upset stomachs, according to Vicki.

By the time the pigs are between two and three weeks old, the baby boars are in for another of life's lessons. Vicki handles the castration of the pigs on her own, too.

"When I was first taught how to castrate by the Purina representative Jim Owens, he had me hold the pigs between my legs. But it was too hard — my hands weren't big enough to hold the pig and do the castrating too. So, I got help — a mechanical holder that holds the pig upside down."

At about this same time, the pigs are weaned, wormed and embark on a short ride back to a nursery of double deck cages.

Vicki points out she tries to put each litter together in a cage because "it's enough of a change leaving their mother without getting stuck in a pen with strangers."

She adds, however, she never puts more than ten pigs in a crate. If the litter is larger than ten, there is some inevitable shuffling of pig litters. Likewise, all of the runts are picked out and grouped together.

When the pigs are eight weeks old and have grown to 45 pounds on a controlled diet, they are ready to market, selling to two local buyers.

"When the time comes to move them to the truck, I

load them into grocery carts and push them out," says Vicki. She explains that this assembly line technique saves a lot of chasing and stress. "The pigs go to cages after farrowing — they've never been on concrete. It's just so much easier on us and the pigs to push them out in the cart."

The Rices market all their pigs and buy any replacement gilts they need. Their first purchase of gilts last May started their farrowing operation off last November, and since then they have gotten 10 replacement gilts this past May with an additional 10 coming in September.

The gilts weigh between 190 to 200 pounds when they arrive. After 60 days, during which time they get to the right size for breeding, are tested for pseudorabies, and are acclimated to the barn, the gilts are ready for servicing.

With one complete farrowing under their belt, the Rices have finished with an enviable record. Their average litter size is 9.95 with a weaning average of 9.38.

Says Vicki, "The only pigs we lose are those that accidentally get laid on, and this happens all too often when the weather gets hot. The baby pigs try to crawl up alongside their mothers where the floor is generally moist and cool, and they get crushed."

Like other hog producers, the Rices have had some troubles. Their first year in the business found 13 cases of Smedi in the the barn, and they have a hard time keeping up with the record books too. But says Vicki, "It's a challenge and an opportunity."

She smiles as the interview comes to a close and says, "I always said I refused to be a farmer's wife — I'm not — I'm a farmer."

## Heavy rainfall threatens crops in several countries

LANCASTER — Rainfall in Canada, the USSR, China and South America posed threats to crop conditions last week, according to a weekly report issued Monday by the Joint Agricultural Weather Facility of the U.S. Departments of Commerce and Agriculture. In Australia and parts of the United States, however, rain was beneficial to crop development.

Highlights of the report follow.

**UNITED STATES.** A series of beneficial, intermittent showers spread east last week along the frontal system from the central and northern Great Plains to the central East Coast regions. Rainfall exceeding five inches caused damaging flooding in West Virginia.

Crop development in the Mississippi Delta and Gulf Coastal States continued to be hurt by lack of rain and temperatures ranging four to seven degrees above normal.

In the Pacific Northwest, generally cool dry weather with temperatures two to five degrees below seasonal averages aided late summer harvest activity.

**CANADA.** Cool, wet weather delayed ripening of spring grains and hampered harvesting activities in the southeastern Pacific. The heavy rain, however, helped replenish soil moisture reserves in that region.

In southern Saskat-

chewan, favorable weather aided ripening and harvesting of grain crops.

**USSR.** Heavy rainfall in the northwest has slowed harvesting which will delay planting of next year's winter grain crop.

Widespread areas in the south and east portions of the New Lands experienced improved harvest weather as a mild "sukhovei" — a hot, dry wind—briefly touched the southern fringes of the crop area.

**CHINA.** Continued wet weather in the Yangtze Valley may have caused substantial losses to the nearly mature cotton and rice crops. Most locations received three to four times the normal rainfall, resulting in widespread flooding.

**EUROPE.** Much of the west had favorable harvest weather and the above normal rains in the east fell on areas which had been relatively dry in the previous week, lessening the detrimental effect on the harvest.

**AUSTRALIA.** Substantial rain was especially beneficial to the crop in New South Wales where dry conditions have prevailed recently. Rainfall also benefited the crop in Victoria.

**SOUTH AMERICA.** Heavy rain in Santa Catarina State, Brazil, possibly caused some fields to become waterlogged, posing potential damage to the winter grain crop.



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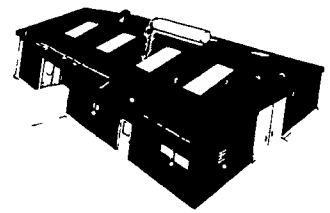


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