

Stressed pig shows good common sense

LANCASTER — When this little piggy went to market, it carried an FM radio.

Its heart beat faster and faster as it climbed the loading chute to begin its trip to the feeder pig auction.

As its heart rate passed 210 beats per minute, it began to lose some of its muscular coordination. If this kept up much longer, the pig would surely collapse.

But the stressed pig showed its good common

sense by slowing down, then standing still and finally lying down until its heart rate dropped to 200.

In fact, the scientist monitoring the stressed pig said once it was lying down, "it just plain ignored any stimulus to make it move."

The scientist had taped a miniature FM radio transmitter to the pig's back to record heart rate and to get

information about the stress that feeder pigs undergo during each step of the marketing routine.

"We're trying to gain insights on chances in market facility design and handling procedures that could minimize stress," said agricultural engineer Herman F. Mayes of USDA's Science and Education Administration — Agricultural Research

When the rates exceed 110, muscular movements in pigs' hearts lose some of their coordination. That makes blood flow slower than it should, and body temperatures rise.

Prolonged pressuring for physical exertion could cause the pigs to collapse, said Mayes, but the 35 to 85 pound pigs in his study took every opportunity to adjust their activity to reduce those heart rates.

Mayes observed no great differences in the average heart rate as pigs stood, ate, drank or walked. But differences were significant in pigs running, lying down alert and lying down asleep.

As the study continues, Mayes will observe pigs in all of the stressful situations

Mayes work is part of a larger project in the University of Missouri-Columbia's animal husbandry department. The project includes a follow-up study of effects on diet and medication on the stressed pig.

"We're studying weight losses associated with handling and transporting and subsequent weight gaining performance of the pigs," said Mayes.

The studies show that sleeping pigs' heart rates usually remain between 100 and 160 beats per minute.

When the porkers are forced to climb a loading chute to begin their trip to a feeder pig auction, heart rates may jump to 250 to 260 beats per minute.

in which they find themselves.

For example, he said, feeder pigs are often stressed when they are sorted, graded, weighed and penned with pigs that are strangers to them.

At some markets no feed and water is provided. And after the sale, the pigs may remain at the market facilities from one to 15 hours awaiting transportation, which may take another one to 20 hours

Herman F. Mayes, USDA agricultural engineer, holds a miniature radio transmitter he tapes to feeder pigs to pick up heart beats and thus measures the pigs' stress as it goes through the marketing process.

South Central Pork Producers to hold sale

BY MARY MYERS
Staff Correspondent

GETTYSBURG — The South Central Pork Producers Association met recently at the Adams County Extension Office. Members present were from Adams, Cumberland, and Franklin Counties.

Ken Ketterer, Newville, president of the group, conducted the business meeting.

The possibility of holding another feeder pig sale was a major discussion topic. The decision was made to organize the second annual sale. The sale will be conducted at the Shippensburg Fairgrounds in early April.

Other details are to be handled by a committee and announced at a later date.

Representatives were elected to serve on the

Pennsylvania Pork Council. They are Ken Ketterer, Newville; Dave Reinecker, York Springs; Clyde Strock, Mechanicsburg.

Clyde Strock and Ed Hildebrand, Littlestown, reviewed the results of the Slaughter Check Program. It was noted that nine producers participated in October.

This innovative program was the first of its kind to be instituted in the state. The Pennsylvania Pork Producers Council sponsored the event in the tri-county region.

The Slaughter Check Program is designed to assist the producer by examining and testing several slaughtered hogs for various undesirable conditions.

Each producer is sent a report on the findings. If any problems are found, recommendations for controlling the existing conditions are provided along with the final report.

The members provided the Council with suggestions concerning the Slaughter Check Program. The group felt the program was a worthwhile venture and should be continued. Continuance should be on a regular schedule so more producers could participate. Also suggested was the idea that participation in the program be at least once a year to be of benefit to the producer.

Laura Watts, extension agent from Cumberland County, showed the group a slide presentation entitled "Pork Industry Programmed for Profit" and a short consumer-oriented movie, "Fork More Pork."

The next meeting will be held in March. Members will be notified.

The board members will meet on Thursday, February 5 at the Cumberland County Extension Office in Carlisle.



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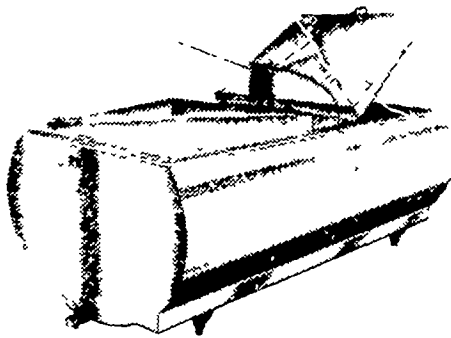
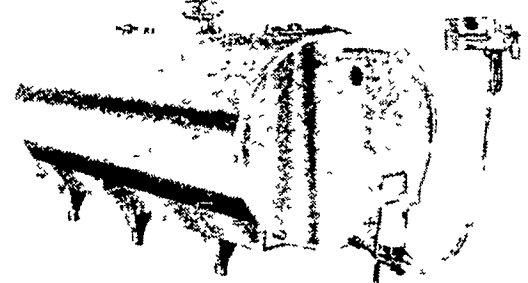
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