

Swine producers

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notes that the front board usually needs to be replaced every 12-18 months due to sows gnawing and pawing at it.

"Woven wire, on the other hand, has a long lifetime," he says.

Purina's Washam notes that durability is only one reason he recommends woven wire for the entire crate.

"When we began construction of a new facility at our research farm in 1979, we installed wire flooring in all 40 of the new crates. Ten were raised 12 inches above floor level, while 30 were placed at floor level," he says. In both cases, the crates were placed over flush pits. Existing crates had solid concrete floors.

Although death loss in the farrowing rooms with solid concrete was, at 11.4 percent, almost half the industry average, Washam observes that the woven wire crates did even better.

"We were able to reduce pig mortality to 8.3 percent on the raised wire," he reports. "We were also able to increase the 21-day pig weight by 1.2 lbs per head to 11.5 lbs. That's a 10.5 lb per litter weight increase over a three week period."

In testing raised wire crates against concrete, metal and wooden slatted floors, Purina also pinpointed other advantages for the sows on wire program versus conventional, including .73 more pigs/litter, 1.3 lbs. higher pig

weight at weaning, and 19.0 lbs. greater litter weight at weaning.

Washam further explains while baby pigs farrowed on stainless steel slats performed better than pigs raised on concrete, they still do not do well as pigs farrowed on raised wire.

"The stainless slats brought about a 16.5 percent reduction in baby pig mortality. But, raised woven wire did better than twice as well, producing a 35.5 percent reduction," he says. "Metal slats also helped improve 21-day pig weight by 1.1 lbs. per head."

Pigs farrowed on raised wire averaged an additional 1.6 pounds per head over pigs farrowed on concrete, he adds. And, the need for scours treatment was decreased by 50 percent when hogs were farrowed on raised woven wire, as compared with concrete.

Purdue's finding that elevated units reduced the amount of time required to clean crates was similarly confirmed by Washam's research, which indicated it took 33 percent less time overall.

"Although metal slatted floors are somewhat easier to clean than concrete (17 percent according to the research), the one third reduction is quite significant, particularly for larger operations on a continuous farrowing program," he says.

The improved environment, coupled with a good nutritional program, helps speed up birth to market time and quicken herd turnover, Washam contends. He

recommends starting baby pigs off on a highly palatable creep ration fed on a clean solid area for the first 4-5 days, then placed in a creep feeder.

By breaking down the added weight gain into extra pork per crate, Washam says he figures the investment necessary to initiate a sow's-on-wire program can be recouped in a relatively short amount of time.

"Figuring in higher weight gains and reduced mortality realized through elevated crates, producers can achieve 19 extra pounds of pork per litter," he claims.

Multiplying the extra pork per litter times the 12 litters which can be run through the crate within a year, the Purina researcher estimates an additional 228 pounds of pork per crate per year.

"If you figure those pigs could sell as feeders for about 90 cents per pound," he adds, "the value of the additional pork per crate per

year is \$205.20."

Since existing crates can normally be adapted to the new program, the major costs involved include construction of flooring and the raised platform.

"We've found that the average cost of the platform is approximately \$100, while the wire will run about \$125," says Washam. He stresses however, that the \$225.00 cost per crate could be slightly more or less depending upon the quality and volume of material purchased.

"By dividing the value of the extra pork per crate per year into the cost of the materials, hog producers will find that it takes slightly more than one year to pay off the investment," figures Washam. "Considering the longevity of the wire, the crates can continue to generate extra income long after the initial investment has been paid off."

Broiler placements drop 9%

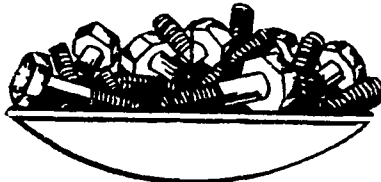
HARRISBURG — Placements of broiler chicks in the Commonwealth during the week ending January 24 were 2,082,000, according to the Pennsylvania Crop Reporting Service.

The placements were nine percent below the corresponding week a year earlier and 13 percent below the previous week. Average placements during the past nine weeks were four percent above a year ago.

Placements in the 21 key poultry producing states were 79,713,000, slightly above the previous week and one percent above the same week a year earlier. Average placements in the 21 key states during the past nine weeks were two percent above a year ago.

Broiler-fryers slaughtered in Pennsylvania under federal inspection during the week ending January 14 totaled 2,093,000, with an average lightweight of 4.22 pounds.

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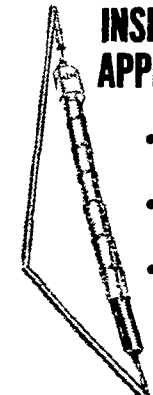
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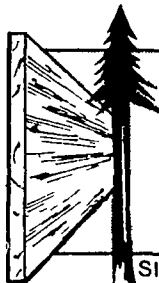
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