

Berks-Lebanon producers talk TB, hog housing

BY LAUREL SCHAEFFER
Staff Correspondent

MIDWAY — Berks and Lebanon swine producers met at the Midway Diner on route 78 last Wednesday filling the banquet room to capacity.

The producers were interested in hearing the latest developments concerning their hog industry and improving their general knowledge.

Among the many speakers present was Alan Oser, of quality control for Hatfield Packing.

Oser discussed the incidence of Tuberculosis being found in market hogs slaughtered by his company, after explaining his figures can deferentiate between Pennsylvania hogs and out-of-state hogs better than USDA figures which use data from all Pennsylvania Slaughter Houses.

Oser noted that Hatfield has been finding three times as much TB in Pennsylvania hogs as compared to out-of-state hogs. And terminal markets within the state are posing the largest problems because hogs purchased at these markets are too difficult to trace to the producer. The incidence of TB is highest in these hogs as compared to direct bought hogs, he said.

With direct buys, Hatfield notifies the producers when TB is found in two or more sites within a carcass and the farmers' are penalized by losing 50 percent of the price of that hog.

The quality control engineer went on to explain the three categories of TB that concern him.

The first type, which encompasses about 85 percent of the TB found in slaughter hogs, is where TB can only be found in a primary site such as the head. In these instances the carcasses pass inspection with the removal of the infected area, there is no monetary loss, and producers are not notified.

In the second case, TB is found in two sites such as the head and a visceral organ and the carcass is passed only for cooking, reducing the value to about half of that of a good carcass.

The cooking requirements on these carcasses are rigid and

render the meat to "almost uselessness," Oser explained.

Fifteen percent of the TB found falls under this category. If the hog is bought directly from a producer, the producer is notified and money is deducted for the loss.

The other category includes all condemned carcasses where TB is found in the head, guts, and lymph nodes of the body.

These carcasses must be tanked. Oser noted however, that this degree of TB rarely is found.

Oser said the rate of TB in hogs slaughtered at Hatfield from Pennsylvania producers averages 0.27 percent while only 0.1 percent of out-of-state hogs are found with TB.

Also addressing the pork producers was Dan Myer, Penn State University extension agricultural engineer.

Myer discussed new developments in farrowing and nursing units and maximizing the environment in growing and finishing units.

Myer discussed several types of finishing facilities and related air circulation and temperature control to the different styles of housing.

Myers also reminded the producers that optimum growing temperatures for finishing hogs is between 55 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit.

In large finishing houses he recommended solid partitions every 120 feet to reduce disease spread and, if possible, to keep the age spread between hogs at only four weeks.

Producers also had the opportunity to hear a panel discussion on buying and starting feeder pigs.

Participating in the discussion were producers Wilbur Lutz, Sinking Spring; and Mike Firestine, swine producer and farm loan officer for Lebanon Valley National Bank. Dr. Jerry Applegate, veterinarian; and Ken Keiphart, Penn State extension assistant also participated on the panel.

Lutz, who markets about 4500 hogs per year stressed the importance of buying hogs weighing 55 pounds since most are shipped

from Maryland or North Carolina.

"We'd buy local hogs if possible but it's hard to get 300 to 400 at a time," Lutz remarked.

The Lutz's start their hogs on bedding, aureomycin solumet, and a high level protein diet.

He noted they have more problems later in the growing period because of out-of-state facilities with ventilation problems than with newly purchased feeder pigs.

Firestine noted he fattens about 500 head per year and buys his hogs locally. He emphasized the importance of backgrounding his feeder pigs to see the conditions they were raised under and only medicates heavily when necessary.

Firestine also said he stresses the importance of adequate ventilation and uses a complete feed. This producer also said he won't buy a hog unless its tail was docked.

Applegate said there aren't enough feeder pigs produced in Pennsylvania to supply the demand, a comment previously mentioned by Lutz. Applegate urged the producers to look beyond the price of the feeder pigs to what they are actually buying and how much money will have to be spent once they are home.

The largest problem he feels producers in Pennsylvania have is not being prepared for the feeder pigs once they are purchased.

Applegate reminded the



Dan Myers, left, Penn State Livestock specialist and Herb Shick, treasurer of Pennsylvania Pork Producers, were among guests at the Berks-Lebanon swine producers day.

producers that these purchased hogs are probably intermingled with hogs coming from several different farms and are lost socially within the group this creates a large stress on them.

Other stress factors usually can be more properly managed to reduce added stress.

The veterinarian recommended an all-in, all-out system in raising the feeder pigs suggesting that it will probably increase space utilization and decrease the costs of producing the hogs.

Applegate also told the hog producers that 20 foot high ceilings are poor for raising feeder pigs.

"Straw won't help," he added, "it will only keep their bellies warm."

"You will pay for heat one way or another," Applegate continued. "If not through propane, then with corn."

Keiphart also echoed Lutz by noting that he feels producers are

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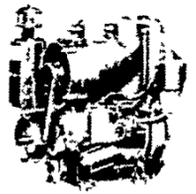
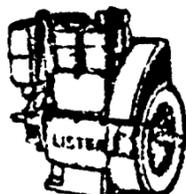
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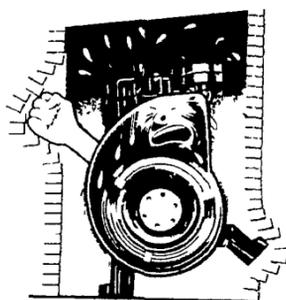
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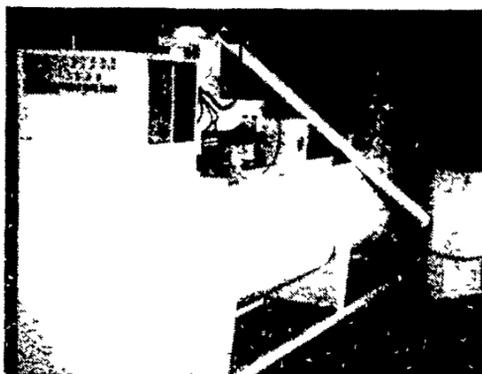
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