

# Feed efficiency spells hog profits

NEWARK, Del. — Feed efficiency and profit are closely related when you're raising any meat animal. For the pork producer, profit is tied closely to the number of pigs weaned from a sow herd annually and how much feed it takes to grow a pound of pork.

A hog using four pounds of feed for each pound of liveweight gain needs 720 pounds of feed to grow from 40 to 220 pounds. A hog that requires three pounds of feed per pound of gain will consume only 540 pounds of feed to reach slaughter weight. That's 180 pounds less feed.

Assume that feed costs \$160 a ton. Then the more efficient hog has consumed \$14.40 less feed than the 4:1 ratio animal.

At that price, says University of Delaware extension livestock specialist Richard Fowler, a producer with 100 sows marketing 1,600 pigs per year will spend \$13,040 less on feed by raising the more efficient feed converters.

Looked at another way, this is \$13,040 more profit.

Feed conversion on a nationwide

basis is probably around four or five to one, says Fowler. Producers can improve on this poor conversion by making feeder adjustments, using complete balanced rations, and by such things as removing corn cobs from their swine feed.

The biggest change can come from using better boars — those with feed efficiency records of 3.0 pounds or less. The better the feed efficiency of the boar, the greater his impact on your herd's efficiency rating.

The economics of swine production aren't very exciting, admits Fowler. High-priced boars don't fit into the commercial producer's thinking at all. But high-priced boars with good records are an investment, not a cost.

Huge jumps in feed efficiency won't happen with one boar. His offspring, when mated to a second high-performing boar, will produce pigs with markedly improved records in the trait of feed efficiency. The third generation of gilts represents almost 90 percent new genetic material.

With the careful selection of performance tested boars, these can really turn the profit picture into the black for you — just by saving feed.

For example, if you're weaning 16 pigs per sow annually and have a feed efficiency of 4.2, your direct production costs run about 39 cents a pound.

Improve feed efficiency to 3.2 and these costs drop to 33 cents a pound. Increase pigs per sow per year to 20 and direct costs drop to 31 cents per pound of pig produced.

Direct costs don't include taxes, insurance, depreciation, principal and interest costs.

The breed of boar doesn't matter as much as his individual record, says Fowler.

Trial results from 20 test stations rank Duroc, Yorkshire, Hampshire, Spotted, Chester White, Poland China, Berkshire, and American Landrace from best to poorest in feed efficiency. The leading breed had a 2.52 pounds of feed per pound of gain record; the lowest breed was 2.79. The fact is, there are outstanding individuals in all breeds. Commercial swine

producers should continue to crossbreed using white breeds for mothering ability and the dark breeds for growth rate and feed efficiency.

Growth rate and feed efficiency are important to profit, but so are traits like fertility and mothering ability. Continue to select replacement gilts with good un-

derlines and those from large litters.

Producers looking for sources of production tested boars may contact their local extension office, or the Extension Livestock Specialist, Animal Science Department, University of Delaware, Newark, DE 19711.

## Who speaks

(Continued from Page C18)

added: "We've got to get out and speak out."

Noting that more farmers need to get involved, Nelson Meyer, who farms approximately 500 acres of cotton, grain, and pasture near Needville, Tex., said. "There are plenty of organizations now if farmers would participate at the grassroots level and let the organizations help them." He added, however, "If we get too many organizations, we will have people opposing each other and it will be harder to speak with a unified voice."

Also in Farm Forum the value of a coalition was discussed, as a way for farm organizations to work together.

An example is the "economic

summit meeting" concept involving Nebraska's farm organizations. Today, twelve organizations are currently represented, including American Agriculture Movement, Farm Bureau, National Farmers Organization, and Farmers Union, plus commodity and special interest farm groups.

"Sometimes it seems like nothing is accomplished," said Duane Nuenberg, a Cozad, Nebraska farmer. "But it helps to get to know members of other groups personally. We get a better understanding of how the various groups of work and what their politics are. There are many things we can't agree on, but we hope to keep trying."

Addressing the need to develop rural leadership, the panelists also discussed the Kellogg Farmers Study Program.

Funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation of Battle Creek, Mich., this program has trained over 800 rural leaders in programs in five states.

In the program, farmers have traveled to see state government in action, view life in inner cities or look at how big cities functioned, as well as visit our nation's capital and the various regulatory agencies.

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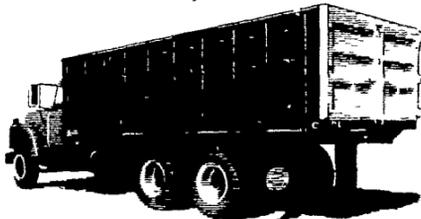
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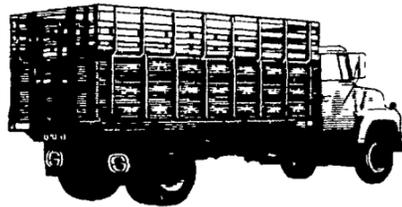
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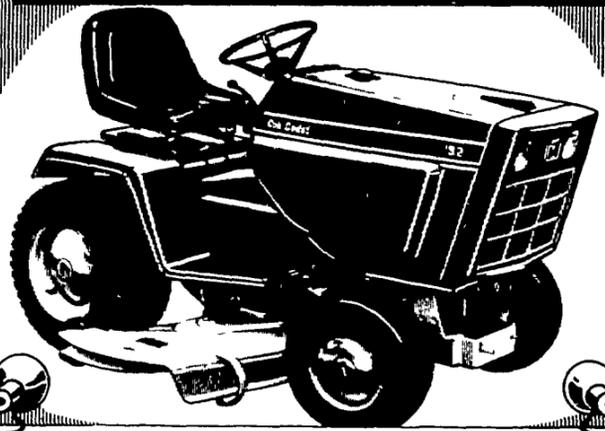
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