

Plot results can improve hybrid selection

DEKALB, Ill. — You've walked your fields and viewed hybrid demonstration plots. Now, you are preparing to harvest your crop.

Before you're done, you'll begin receiving reports of hybrid performance from seed companies and others. How do you improve your farming profits by basing seed purchases on demonstration plot results?

Demonstration plots are generally fairly large with a single

machine-planted, machine-harvested strip representing each hybrid. They usually are not replicated. The first thing to remember about the results is that each reflects the influence of the high number of variables:

Was the field uniformly tilled? Was even application of plowdown fertilizers, nitrogen and pesticides achieved? Was weed control equally good across the entire plot area?

Was a check hybrid used? Are harvest populations equivalent and is plant spacing similar for all hybrids? Are hybrids of the same maturity being compared?

Was the combine adjusted to do a better job of harvesting one hybrid than another?

This list could go on and on. However, the point is that a single

demonstration plot is not reliable enough to give you the information needed to make hybrid buying decisions. Even a single research plot with replications, randomization and statistical tests for validity should not be the only basis for hybrid selection.

Seek records for a two-year period (or longer) from several locations that represent farming practices, soil types, and climate similar to your farm.

When reviewing such data, consider how hybrids compared head-to-head in each plot for each year as well as the multi-year average for yield and moisture. The average yield for two hybrids may not differ much, but one may have outyielded the other 15 or

more times out of 20. Thus, you may be choosing between a consistent performer and a "boom or bust" hybrid that's occasionally outstanding, but often disappointing.

In selecting hybrids, search for top performers in two and preferably, three maturities. Try listing hybrids from lowest to highest grain moisture. Then look for the best performers in each different maturity group.

Plots require a lot of effort to plant, harvest and publish results. Interpreting the results also requires considerable effort if they are to be meaningful. Many multi-million dollar decisions are based in part on demonstration plot results.

What causes nipple necrosis?

YORK — Nipple necrosis, the scabby formation sometimes seen on the nipples of newborn pigs, was recently investigated by researchers at Washington State University. The study was conducted to determine if the incidence of nipple necrosis was affected by alfalfa in the diet and floor type.

Beginning on day 80 of gestation, special diets were fed containing either 0 or 50 percent alfalfa. Sows farrowed in crates containing one

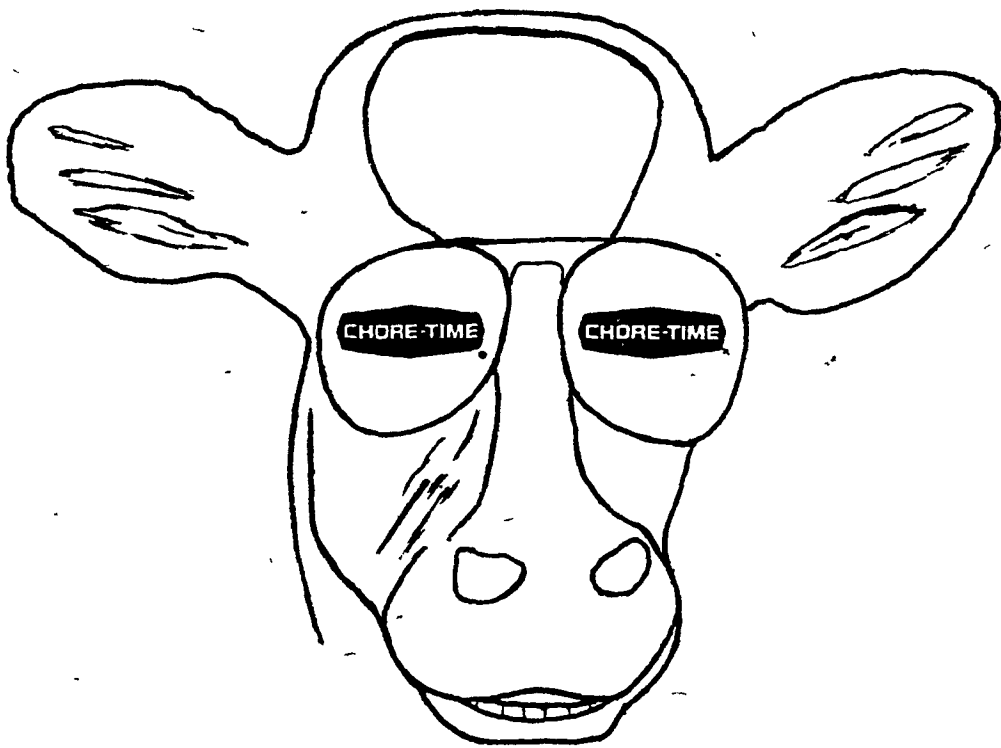
of three floor types: concrete slats, flattened expanded metal with wooden center sections, or steel slats with wooden center sections.

There were about 8 percent more pigs having necrotic nipples among those from sows fed no alfalfa. Also, concrete slats led to necrotic nipples in 20.7 percent of the pigs (about 10 percent more than with the expanded metal floor).

The scientists also found that pigs with swollen or necrotic

nipples generally had higher levels of circulating estrogen. This corresponded to higher levels of estrogen in the blood of sows receiving no alfalfa.

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