

Sells hogs on time

NEWARK, Del. — Marketing is critical to profitable hog production, just as it is in other agricultural enterprises. Imagine missing the harvest date by one week on a field of peas or sweet corn. Salvage price wouldn't cover the production costs.

"Yet many times we end up with a salvage price on hogs because we let them pass their prime and sell them too heavy," says University of Delaware Extension livestock specialist Richard Fowler.

There are several reasons why it's important to sell on time—

especially now, he notes.

Take, for example, two market hogs, one with a slaughter weight of 247 pounds and the other with a 210-pound market weight. The feed conversion ratio is 4:1 for the 247-pound pig. (Hogs become less efficient in converting feed to grain as they become heavier.) The conversion rate is 3.2 for the 210-pound pig. Both animals gain 1.6 pounds a day.

If both start as feeder pigs weighing 45 pounds, the heavier one requires 126 days to reach 247 pounds, while the lighter one takes only 103 days to get up to 210

pounds. Feed costs 8.5 cents or \$.085 a pound (\$170 a ton). At this price, the total feed cost for the heavy and light pigs is \$68.68 and \$44.86, respectively.

The market price is \$45 per hundred for both. The 247-pound animal sells for \$111.15. The 210-pounder brings \$94.50. The return after feed costs is \$42.47 (\$111.15 minus \$68.68) for the heavy hog, and \$49.62 (\$94.50 minus \$44.86) for the light one.

There's \$7.15 more profit in the light hog. And that's not all, says Fowler. Look at the effect the shorter number of days to market

has on the number of pounds of pork you can sell in a year.

Let's assume you have a 400-head capacity finishing unit. There are 23 fewer days involved if you sell a pig at 210 pounds rather than 247. This means that instead of filling your feeding floor 2.9 times a year if you feed to 247 pounds, you can fill it 3.5 times a year by selling at the lighter weight.

This six-tenths of a fill means 7,400 more pounds of pork sold in a year. At a market price of \$45 per hundredweight, that's an additional \$3,336 in gross income.

Here are some other points to consider about lighter market

weights. Pork production can be cut 15 percent without changing breeding herd numbers. Grade and yield selling favor lighter weight carcasses.

A 247-pound pig has a carcass weight of about 175 pounds for a 71-percent yield, compared to a 210-pound animal which will yield between 73 and 75 percent. The yield bonus for many grade-yield marketing programs starts at 73.5 percent.

In addition, the hog finisher who markets at lighter weights has a better cash flow. And, as already show, can produce pork at the lowest cost per pound.



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