

To keep pigs growing, be a week and weight watcher

NEWARK, Del. — Growth depression is likely to occur at certain stages of swine development. But unless producers weigh their pigs frequently, these lags may pass practically unnoticed, says University of Delaware Extension livestock specialist Richard Fowler.

One of the most common slow-up periods occurs right after weaning. Pigs nursing their dams usually grow quite well during their third and fourth weeks.

But the three-week-old pig is at a critical stage of development, Fowler says. This is when the immunity acquired from its mother's colostrum is low. Though the pig is starting to build its own immunity, any stress at this time usually causes slowdown or other problems.

"Avoid doing anything to the pig during this period," advises the specialist. "If your program calls for weaning at three weeks, remove the sow from the farrowing area but keep the litter in the crate for another day or two." Pigs should have access to a temperature of 85 F and should be kept draft free.

When the litter is moved to a clean, dry weaning pen, pigs should continue to receive the same diet fed in the farrowing crate. The ration should contain 18 percent protein and be well fortified with vitamins and minerals. Milk product and sugar will encourage feed consumption.

At four weeks, a pig is more mature physiologically and usually undergoes fewer setbacks when weaned. But a warm, dry environment is still critical.

A water medication is often useful in reducing weaning stress. Allow pigs to drink fresh water for a day to acquaint them with the waterers. Then add the medication. A soluble antibiotic with an electrolyte is beneficial, the specialist says. Three days is usually sufficient for a water medication program.

Deworming and spraying for external parasites can be done 10 days or two weeks for weaning if pigs are doing well. Don't administer both treatments at the same time, however.

To keep them growing well, observe pigs for signs of disease. Coughing and sneezing may indicate a problem. An atrophic rhinitis-infected pig costs \$16 or \$18 more to finish than a healthy one. Cull affected animals and sell them for slaughter.

Coughing often indicates pneumonia. If the problem is bad, determine what kind of pneumonia exists by sacrificing a pig and having it examined by a veterinarian. Then treat according to the diagnosis.

Newly purchased feeder pigs also undergo a lag period. "Know your seller and the program used to produce the animals," Fowler advises.

Pigs should have been vac-

inated for erysipelas and should be free of rhinitis or vaccinated for it. Some rhinitis vaccines contain Pasteurella, an organism involved with one type of pneumonia. The seller should also have treated his pigs once for external and internal

parasites. Find out what products were used and when.

Once the pigs are on your farm, group 20 to 25 animals per pen and provide them with 12 to 24 hours of fresh water followed by medication for three to five days.

Five days of a high-fiber, low-protein diet also helps get them started.

Close observation and prompt treatment of problems will help reduce lag time and keep pigs growing, Fowler says.

PFU reviews dairy proposals with farmers

EDINBORO — Dairyproducers in northwestern Pennsylvania gathered for two informational meetings sponsored by the Pennsylvania Farmers Union, aimed at educating farmers to the proposed base plans pending in Congress.

Over 50 farmers from Butler and Lawrence counties met last Thurs. on the farm of Steve Lesney in Mt. Chestnut to discuss the Dairy Products Stabilization Act, sponsored by Minnesota Congressman James Oberstar. The legislation was drafted from recommendations from the National Farmers Union Dairy Task Force.

Robert Mullins, director of Legislative Services from the Washington office of the National Farmers Union told those attending that the Oberstar plan was the "best plan available because it would address the problem of

overpopulation almost immediately."

"The Oberstar Plan would save the federal treasury almost \$1 billion a year, and still provide farmers with a reasonable profit for the milk they produce," Mullins said. The proposal guarantees farmers a minimum of 75 percent of parity for all milk produced within their production goal, which is designated each year by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture.

The proposal calls for a five percent marketing assessments against any dairy farmer that produces in excess of their production goal. An additional ten percent marketing penalty would be assessed if a dairy farmer produced in excess of his base.

A second meeting was conducted Friday at the Edinboro Borough

Hall, which was sponsored by the Erie-Warren Farmers Union. Mullins revealed that a compromise was in the works between all sponsors of different base plans to come to some form of agreement, so the dairy industry could present a united front.

Farmers Union will continue to sponsor meetings in Pennsylvania to inform dairymen of the proposals in Congress. The family farm organization is planning bus trips to Washington to lobby for support of the base plan proposals, later in the year.

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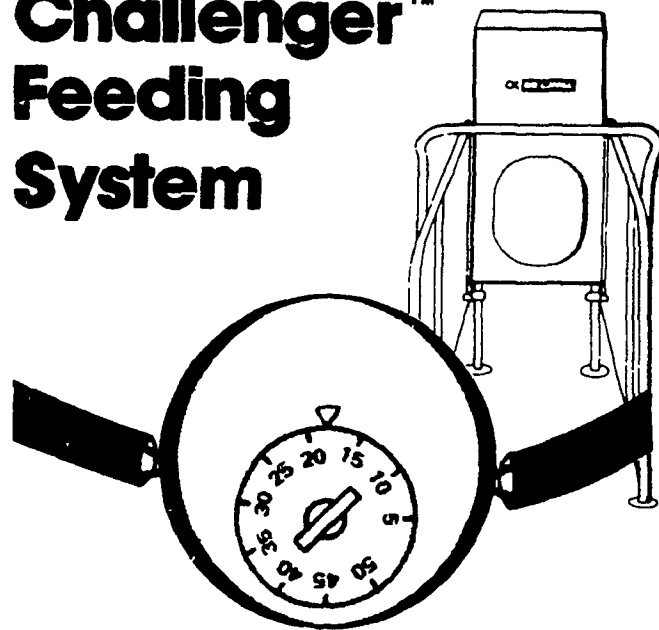
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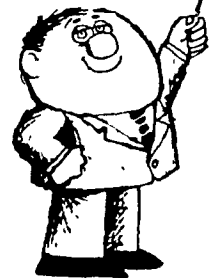
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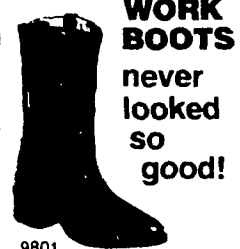
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