

Sow Performance Index is new culling tool

BLAIR — Long-term productivity of a sow can be influenced by her nutritional level as a baby pig, says Penn State extension swine specialist Matt Parsons.

But, good nutrition alone can't turn a sow with poor genetic potential into a top litter producer. Parsons warned York swine producers at their Monday management meeting.

A sow herd should be culled by one-fourth to one-third yearly, weeding out the sows that farrow and raise small litters with lower weaning weights, he advised. Proper culling only can be done with careful record keeping, the swine specialist emphasized. Identification of every individual through eartags or notching is a must for tracking a sow's performance.

One new culling tool for pork producers is the Sow Performance Index, or SPI. In SPI evaluation, computerization figures an "index" based on the number of pigs born alive, and the sow's milking ability, based on the overall litter weight at 21 days.

Adjustments in the program can be determined using factors that take into consideration variables such as the sow's or gilt's age, and the weaning age of the litter. The resulting index is a production comparison "grade" that ranks a sow against her herd mates. Low

indexed sows show up with the poorest index numbers, and become prime candidates for good management culling.

Other reasons for culling sows include obvious physical problems, bad disposition and poor rebreeding performance which Parsons cited as a highly inheritable trait.

Replacements gilts should be selected from the highest producing families, from mothers with proven milking abilities. Their skeletal system should be correct and sound.

The mammary system is critical to a sow's success, and 12 well-spaced nipples are recommended for a gilt to be moved into the breeding herd. While some gilts may show several more nipples, Parsons warned that, while a sow could raise larger litters on additional nipples, it is likely the additional pigs would be runts.

Nipples should be checked for inversions, or a turning in at the end. Also undesirable are blind nipples, more frequently seen on gilts raised on cement, pin nipples which are smaller than normal size, and poorly spaced nipples, which can result in uneven milk production.

Normalness of the reproductive system can be checked by observing if the vulva area is fully developed, Parsons noted.—J.B.

Sow Tag No.		Ear Notch		Breed of Sow's Sire					
Litter	Date Bred	Boar No. (s)	Date Rebred	Preg. Checked	Date Due	Lepto	Erys. Pelgs	AR Vac	Deworm
1st									
2nd									
3rd									
4th									
5th									
6th									
7th									
8th									
9th									
10th									

SOW LIFETIME RECORD CARD LITTER CARD

Sow Tag No. _____ Ear Notch _____ Par. _____

Dates: _____ No. _____ No. _____
Farrowed _____ Pigs _____ Weaned _____ Pigs _____

Total weaning weight: _____
Comments: _____

Breeding dates: _____ Boar _____
Date due _____ Date Preg. checked _____

Baby Pig Mgt.
Iron _____ Oral antibiotic _____
Disinfect navel _____ Clip teeth _____
Dock tails _____ Ear notch _____
Castrate _____ AR-vac(1) _____ AR-vac(2) _____

Sow Traits: (5 is best)
5 4 3 2 1 Birth weight
5 4 3 2 1 Birth uniformity
5 4 3 2 1 Farrowing ease
5 4 3 2 1 Speed of farrowing
5 4 3 2 1 Mothering ability
5 4 3 2 1 Milking ability
5 4 3 2 1 Temperament
5 4 3 2 1 Cleanliness
5 4 3 2 1 Feet & legs
5 4 3 2 1 Weaning uniformity

Functional teats:
R _____ L _____

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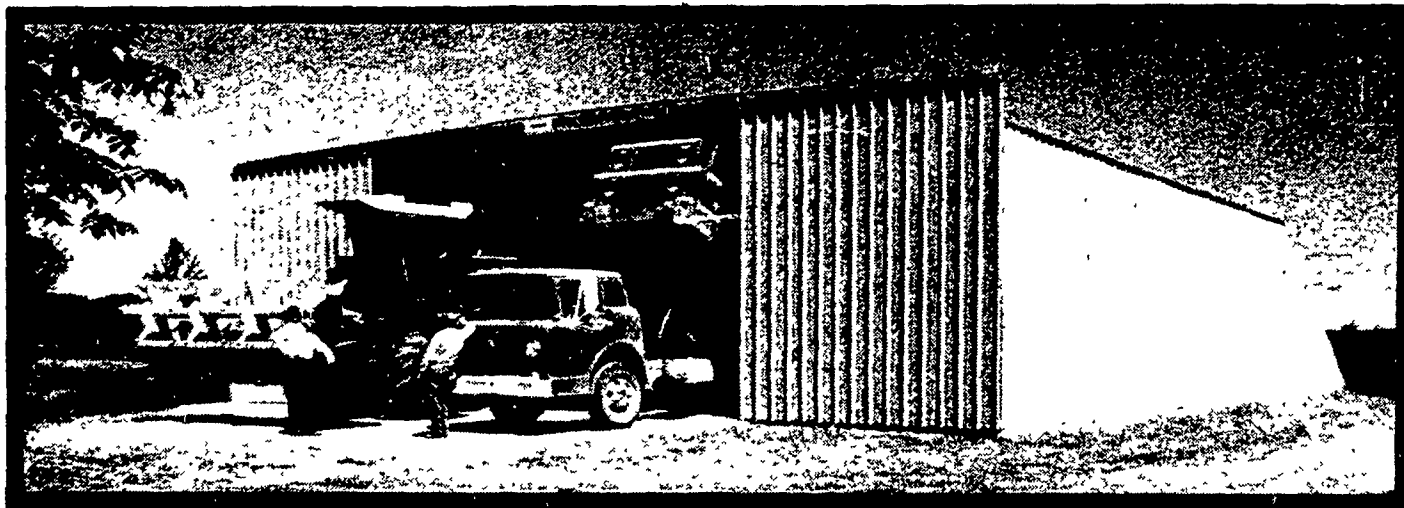
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