

# Early weaning - does it pay with pigs?

NEWARK, De. — What does it take to produce 20 pigs per sow per year? One could make a long list of suggestions, but early weaning would certainly be near the top. Successful early weaning.

"Unfortunately, many producers who seek maximum sow productivity practice early weaning that's not so successful," says University of Delaware extension livestock specialist Dr. Ken Kephart.

"Let's say that your pigs weigh 12 pounds at 21 days. That's a reasonable weight for a three-week-old pig," he says. "And, ignoring all else, it justifies sending the sow to the breeding barn and the pigs to the nursery."

But now the fun begins. If things go just right, you hope that the following events will happen over the next 14 days.

- Each pig will consume about 8.5 pounds of feed.

- Each pig should gain 6 or 7 pounds, so at five weeks it will weigh 18 to 19 pounds.

- Less than one week after weaning, 90 to 95 percent of the sows will be bred and carry a normal litter.

And you're on your way to a production level of more than 20 pigs per sow per year.

"But what if things don't go just right?" Kephart asks. "Is there any reason they shouldn't, when you choose to wean at three weeks?"

Well, you've just put a 21-day-old pig into a totally new situation. He's used to a liquid diet, but now he's on solids. He's used to seven or eight pen mates, but now he has at least 15 - most of which he's never seen before. He has an immune system that's not up to speed.

Yesterday Morning was picking up the slack, but now he's on his own.

Anything else? "Chances are," the specialist continues, "he has to sleep in a draft, which means climbing on (or under) the pile with the rest of the guys. Or just as bad, the temperature is right, but the air is overloaded with moisture, ammonia and pit gases."

So what really happens with most early weaning efforts?

For two days the pig doesn't eat anything. On the third day he finds the feeder. And on the fourth, he starts to scour.

After the first week, he's lost 3 pounds. "By now, even with the help of antibiotics, he has a low-grade pneumonia," Kephart says. "But at least the diarrhea is getting tolerable. And he finally starts to gain weight. After 14 days he's found the 3 pounds he lost the first week after weaning."

So he's back up to 12 pounds. But the feed he's eaten is going to cost you about a buck and a quarter - times the number of pigs that came out of the farrowing house with him two weeks ago.

"In the process," Kephart says, "you've lost two weeks of production. And you'll never get them back."

What about the sows in the breeding barn? Most of them have been bred, but there may be a few that won't be ready to carry a litter - probably the same few that had to be pushed out of the crate at 2.5 weeks. Let's say this puts your conception rate 10 percent lower than it should be. That's another production loss you'll never recover.

When is the best time to wean? As early as possible without

sacrificing production, says Kephart. For most producers that's 4.5 to 5.5 weeks. Though three-week weaning will work, it doesn't come easy.

To succeed, he says, you need a good nursery - one with small pens - one that you're willing to maintain at 85 to 90 degrees F, with good air quality.

You'll need a good ration, too. "Just what that means is always subject to debate," the specialist says. "Many rations will work, but research has shown that you'll get the best results with one that contains 1.0 to 1.1 percent lysine and 20 to 25 percent milk products, such as whey."

You'll also need to observe. Watch for diarrhea. Look for rough hair coats. "Watch the pigs to see that they're behaving with the same vigor and vitality they had in the farrowing crate. And be sure they're comfortable," he advises.

You'll need some scales. Weigh the pigs at weaning, then again two weeks later. They should have gained almost half a pound a day. By nine weeks of age most pigs should be pushing 45 to 50 pounds. If they're not, delaying weaning



Producers weaning pigs at less than 4.5 weeks, need to take a hard look at what's really happening, advises Ken Kephart, University of Delaware extension livestock specialist.

just a week or two could have made the difference.

So, if you're among the producers weaning pigs at less than 4.5 weeks, take a hard look at what's really happening, Kephart advises. "Be sure the pigs gain

weight after they're weaned. Check sow records to see that the first service conception rate is at least 85 percent. And don't be afraid to leave the pigs on their mother a bit longer. She's one of the best managers you've got."

## New York cattlemen honored

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Two officers, Robert Good of Perry and George Moore of Geneva, were given special recognition at New York Beef Cattlemen's Association annual meeting Feb. 4 at the Sheraton Inn here.

Good who retires March 1 as executive secretary was given the Service Award and Moore who was Association president 1980-82 was given the Presidential Award.

Good is a retired music teacher and school principal having served 30 years with the Perry Central School system. A graduate of the Eastman School of Music with a master's degree from the University of Rochester, he came to Perry from his home in Hazelton, Pa. after three years service with the U.S. Army in the European Theater during World War II.

He acquired a farm and a Guernsey dairy herd when he married his wife Helen and moved to her Home Acres Farm. The dairy has been replaced with beef cattle and the Goods now have a

herd of about 20 brood cows, young stock, and bulls. Good assumed the executive secretary position when it was created seven years ago.

He is active in the Perry Rotary Club and last year was given the Paul Harris award in recognition of his contributions to the service organization. He served as organist and choir director of the United Presbyterian Church in Perry and is currently treasurer of the Perry Center United Church of Christ. He also has a large number of private music pupils.

The Service Award was presented in recognition of his work and dedication to the New York Beef Cattlemen's Association which in the last years has doubled its membership, expanded its marketing emphasis, and developed many new projects including an intensive promotional program.

Moore has been a member of the New York Beef Cattlemen's Association for 15 years and has served on the executive Beef Council for six years. He has

served on many committees and has worked at the Association's Empire Farm Days Beef Barbecue for many years.

A retired agronomist with the United States Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service, he has operated a feedlot and beef freezer trade for many years.

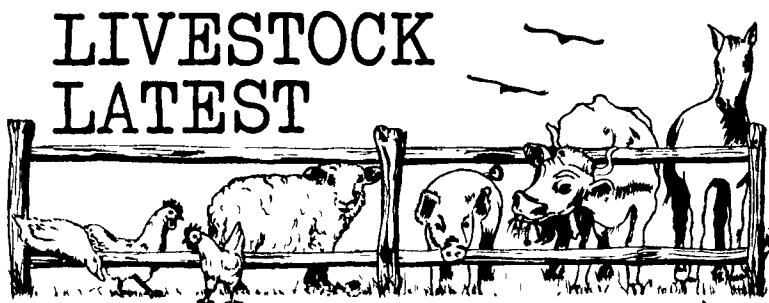
He is a member of the Hector Corporation Grazing Association, Soil Conservation Service Association, Cooperative Extension, and Farm Bureau and is currently serving as Town Justice.

The Presidential Award made by retiring president William Cisco of Lindley is a new honor initiated for the 1984 meeting.

During the business meeting of the New York Beef Cattlemen's Association Allen Peterson of Jamestown was elected president of the organization. Peterson has a registered herd of Polled Herefords and also operates a feedlot. He has been an active member of the New York Beef Cattlemen's Association for six years and is also a member of the Chautauqua County Fair Board and 4-H Beef Committee as well as a member of Farm Bureau, the New York Hereford Association and the Empire Polled Hereford Association.

A two-day Trade Show with about 20 exhibits by agribusiness including machinery dealers, seed and feed companies, a biochemical company, farm publication, and other was a highlight of the annual meeting.

Commissioner of Agriculture Joseph Gerace was the featured speaker at the afternoon session



## State breeders capture Charolais honors

KANSAS CITY, MO. — Charolais breeders from across the United States, Canada, France and Australia were on hand for the 15th National Charolais show at the National Western Stock Show in Denver, Colo. Jan. 19. Gordon Shubert, The Plains, Va., and Dr. Randall Grooms, Overton, Texas served as judges of this prestigious Charolais event.

Among the exhibitors competing for awards were four Pennsylvania breeders who earned various class placings. These were the Spring Meadows Ranch, of Manheim; Royal Charolais Company, of Greensburg; JC Enterprises, of Ringgold; and Clutter Charolais, of Prosperity.

The highest achievement for Spring Meadows Ranch was the reserve junior champion female title. SMR Crystal 802 Polled, a November 1982 daughter of Riverwood Elevation 44, won the honor. The heifer was exhibited by Keystone Cattle Service, Lebanon.

Other placings for Spring Meadows Ranch included: Winter heifer calves, 1st on SMR Crystal 802 Polled; Senior heifer calves, 2nd on SMR Miss Lee 842; and Late spring bull calves, 5th on SMR Accomplishment 9703.

Royal Charolais Company owned the reserve calf champion

bull, RCC Royal Trendsetter, a March 1983 son of RCC Royal Constructor I. Royal Charolais is also part owner of the reserve junior champion bull, Silver Creek High-Rise. The July 1982 son of CCC Elevations Knockout 945, was jointly shown by Silver Creek Farms, Triple H Charolais, Sauk Rapids, Minn., Effertz Key Ranch, Velva, N.D., John Giles Charolais, Morganton, N.C. and Royal Charolais.

Royal Charolais Company captured the following placings: Early spring heifer calves, 2nd on RCC Royal Heiress 4189, and 5th on RCC Royal Heiress 4183; Winter heifer calves, 3rd on RCC Royal Heiress 4149; and Two females, bred and owned by exhibitor, 5th.

Also, Early spring bull calves, 1st on RCC Royal Trendsetter; Senior yearling bulls, 2nd on Spains Show Me Polled; Pair of calves, 1st.; Junior get-of-sire, 2nd on the get of ACF Apocalypse 40; and Group of five head, 4th.

Two other Pennsylvania winners were an early spring heifer calf owned by JC Enterprises and a 2-year-old bull under part-ownership of Clutter Charolais. The heifer, JC Silhouette D053, took third, while the bull, WC Drillmaster 1048 took second.

## Livestock association opens membership

LANCASTER — The time is at hand to enroll new members in the Pennsylvania Livestock Association. This state-wide organization has been in operation for the past 20 years and local officials are interested in getting new members.

The purpose of the Association is to represent the overall livestock industry in matters such as education, promotion, research, and legislation. The association maintains that unified effort from all phases of the livestock industry can develop more support for its needs than individuals or smaller groups.

The membership is open to any livestock individual, corporation, partnership, or business interested in the production, marketing, processing, or other services related to the livestock industry. Annual dues are \$15 per year for individuals, \$25 for associations, and \$35 for Agri-Business concerns.

Membership blanks are available from Peter H. Krall, Box 149, Catasauqua, Pa. (membership

chairman) or from M.M. Smith, 508 South President Ave., Lancaster, Pa.

All livestock interests and concerns are urged to join this Pennsylvania Livestock Association.

## Pa. Poultry Federation sets annual banquet

HARRISBURG — The Pennsylvania Poultry Federation has scheduled its annual fund-raising banquet for Thursday night, April 5 at the Hershey Motor Lodge and Convention Center, Hershey.

Despite the problems that the Pennsylvania poultry industry is having, Federation officials are hoping that attendance at this year's banquet will approach the record levels which were set at 1983's banquet. They also hope that this year's event can double as a "victory celebration" over the avian influenza epidemic which has plagued poultrymen here since last April.

Because of its past success, the entertainment format of a comedian and a country/western recording artist will be kept intact for this year. The names of this year's entertainers will be announced in coming weeks.

Tickets for the banquet are \$100 each and can be ordered by calling the Pennsylvania Poultry Federation office at (717) 652-7530