Scales More Important Than Farm Computers

NEW HOLLAND - Farm computers are great, but the scales are more important and should come first. It's not hard to understand when you think about it for a minute. It's hard to have a good handle on hog or cattle performance if you can't weigh regularly. You can probably only estimate hog weights to within 10 pounds if you're moving hogs out regularly. If you haven't shipped a load in half a year, the estimate is usually off.

Scales on a grinder-mixer are even more important than for livestock on the hoof, notes Keith Weinlader of New Holland. He says surveys show most livestock rations are badly off target for protein unless both the grain and the supplement are weighed into the mill. The analysis goes off either way, even if you carefully measure the protein by the bucket or by the bag because of grain weight variations.

The real cash advantage of the scale on the mill comes from the dollar saving of buying supplement in bulk instead of bags, adds Weinlader, who is product manager for grinder-mixers at New Holland. This, and the ration accuracy you can get with a scale is the reason the scale is usually a more profitable investment than a computer in most operations. The computer is a big step ahead when you're ready for it.

Computers are the farm revolution of the 1980's. It was rubber tires for tractors in the 30's, 3-point hookups and self-propelled equipment in the 40's and 50's, and herbicides and reduced tillage in the 60's. Now it's computers.

Corn belt farmers are leading in on-farm computers, says Weinlader. Dairy producers already have most of the advantages without owning their own

problems.

management from sire selection, to production testing and records, to ration formulation is handled for dairymen by co-ops and the extension service, as well as by private companies.

Grain and livestock producers don't have the same services available as readily, so more of them are adding their own farm computers. The potential is definitely there, especially for swine producers. Computers can help you manage more efficiently. But you need very good input information to get good results. You might feed garbage to a hog and produce pork, but you'll only get 'garbage," from your computer if the input information is "gar-Weinlader emphasizes. bage," You just have to have good records.

Computer swine ration analysis can manage the total cost, weight, energy level, fat, fiber and protein balance, protein quality and mineral balance to give you accurate rations. But then you need precise control of the amounts of the ingredients called for when you put it into practice. Guessing means you usually miss your targets by a mile.

Fortunately, it's easy to maintain the controls you need for computer management now that grinder-mixers come equipped with a digital read-out electronic scale. Very accurate recording is simplified by the scale.

Other swine computer management items include business analysis for feeder pigs, so you can calculate your own break-even prices, operation costs, profit return and gross income, based on projected market

Selling decisions and sow productivity recording are ad-

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ditional management tasks the computer can help you handle. But in each case, it's essential to have the best input information when

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you develop the programs you'll use. Fortunately, we have an easy route to the information now that we need it. But the grinder-mixer

scale should come before the computer. Otherwise you'd be hitching the cart before the horse, says Weinlader.



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96	4280	240 (1/4'')	13'- 7''	'250 to 310
96	4723	.240 (1/4")	16'- 0"	'310 to 370
96	6075	.240 (1/4")	21'- 4"	'420 to 510
96	7425	.240 (1/4")	26'- 8''	'550 to 650
120	7700	.240 (1/4")	20'- 3"	'650
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