

Buy A Proven Boar, Not A 'Pig In A Poke'

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NEWARK, Del. — For most pork producers, buying a new herd boar is an exciting experience. Generally expectations are high that the new boar will be the one in a lifetime that really improves your herd. But buying a boar without knowing his potential can result in losses to your operation. Realizing that many boars are bought sight unseen, I felt it was about time to rehash some pointers on selecting a new boar.

Profitable commercial swine production depends on several key factors:

- » Producing large litters of pigs;
- » Achieving fast gains (especially in high investment operations);
- » Producing a product that's in demand by consumers (lean meat); and
- » Producing this product as efficiently as possible.

Consider all these factors when buying a new boar. Also take into account the boar's temperament, soundness (both structural and underline), and his conformation.

Performance tests are one good source of herd boars. Daily gain, feed efficiency and backfat are three of the main traits that economically affect your operation. And performance-tested boars have the numbers to look at in regards to these traits. Performance tests also evaluate boars for soundness and underline, and usually provide background information on the animals.

Making improvements in your operation is essential for profitable production, and record keeping is a must if you want to improve. The only sure way to make improvements is to select animals that are superior to your present herd average.

For example, if your herd feed efficiency currently averages 3.5 pounds of feed per pound of gain, buying a boar with a 3.5:1 feed/gain ratio won't result in improvement.

Select the most feed efficient boar available in your price range, if efficiency is a major concern in your herd, and make sure the one you buy is better than your herd average for the selected trait. Since performance-tested boars have the data available for making these comparisons, this is where their value shines through.

Knowing the performance of a given boar and the average performance of the animals in your herd will ensure positive results if you select a boar that's superior to this herd average.

How much improvement can you expect from a boar? This depends on two factors--the heritability of the trait selected for and the degree of difference between that trait in the boar and the females he will be bred to. Generally speaking, heritabilities for reproductive traits and feed efficiency are medium; and conformation traits (backfat thickness, loin eye area) are high. The higher the heritability, the more potential for genetic change.

If you don't keep records on the performance of your pigs, the following criteria may be of some help. Select boars with:

- » Average daily gain of 2.0 pounds/day or better.
- » Backfat (adjusted to 230 pounds) of 1.0 inch or less.
- » Feed/gain ratio of 2.75 or less.
- » Age to 230 pounds of 155 days or less.
- » Litter size of 10 or more pigs farrowed and 8 or more weaned.
- » Underline of 12 or more well-spaced, fully developed teats.

CARLISLE—Ivo V. Otto, Jr. has announced his candidacy for the directorship of Agway District 18. He is one of two candidates recently selected by the district nominating committee. Otto is a Cumberland County dairy farmer.

"I am seeking a place on the Agway Board of Directors because well-run supply cooperatives help hold down farmer costs," Otto said. "Also, my experience with Atlantic Dairy Cooperative in the areas of finance, long-range planning and cooperative operations would help as an Agway director."

He began farming in partnership with two brothers in 1949 with 420 acres and a milking herd of 52. The partnership expanded the operation to a high of 1200 acres and 270 milking cows. Today, with one brother deceased, he and his brother Ralph operate a 900-acre farm with 200 milking cows.

Otto's Agway leadership includes a directorship with Eastern States Farmers Exchange, one Agway predecessor cooperative, as well as participation on the Carlisle store committee, Agway council and petroleum committee.

With Atlantic Dairy Cooperative (formerly Inter-State Milk Producers), Otto is a 26-year member and a 19-year director representing northern York, Cumberland and Perry Counties. He is vice chairman of the finance and audit

» Feet and legs medium to large-boned, free-moving, with adequate cushions on front and rear legs, and equal toe size.

Where can you find performance-tested boars? Many states conduct boar tests. Check with your extension swine or livestock specialist to find out the nearest source of performance-tested boars. They're worth the investment.

Otto Seeks Agway Board Seat

committee, chairman of the executive committee and a charter member of the planning committee, organized in 1979.

From 1977-1982 he served as president of Holly Milk Cooperative. Today, Holly is a wholly-owned subsidiary of ADC. He is also past treasurer of QC, Inc., ADC's wholly-owned independent quality control laboratory.

Recognizing that it is important to do more than simply produce quality milk, for 11 years Otto has been involved in dairy marketing

and promotion as a director of the Middle Atlantic Milk Marketing Agency; he currently serves as secretary.

He has also been a director on the Philadelphia Dairy Council for seven years and an eight-year delegate to the United Dairy Industries Association.

Agway District 18 encompasses Adams, Cumberland, Franklin, Huntingdon, Juniata, Mifflin, Perry and York Counties in Pennsylvania and the northern tier counties in Maryland.

Teaser Rams

(Continued from Page E2)

regress prematurely; in which case, the ewe will have a second ovulation within six to eight days after the teaser ram was introduced to the ewes. This ovulation is also accompanied with a "silent heat." The CL that forms as a result of this second ovulation regresses normally and the ewe will have a normal behavioral estrus within 16 to 18 days, at which time the ewe can be bred. In other words, in the case of a prematurely regressing CL, the first behavioral estrus will occur 22 to 24 days after the teaser ram is introduced to the ewes.

Therefore, there will be two peaks in behavioral estrus following the use of a teaser ram: the first will take place 18 to 19 days after the ram was introduced, in the case of the normal regressing CL, and the second will take place 23 to 24 days after introduction. This results in the ewes being synchronized over a six to seven day period.

It is important to note that ewes

must be completely isolated from rams for about two months before introduction of the teaser rams to receive stimulation from the ram's pheromones. It is also suggested that rams be kept a fair distance (approximately 1/2 mile) away from the ewes to prevent the ewes from picking up the scent of the ram's pheromones during this period.

Intact or vasectomized rams can be used to stimulate ewes; however, if an intact ram is used, any ewe that had a behavioral estrus during teaser period could be bred. If any ewes are bred, the lambing season will start earlier than anticipated and, therefore, the lambing will not be as synchronized as it would be if vasectomized rams were used.

Another added effect noted in some studies has been the increased twinning rate. This has not been true in all cases so we cannot attribute this solely to the teaser ram, but it still is a nice plus.

Coming Events:

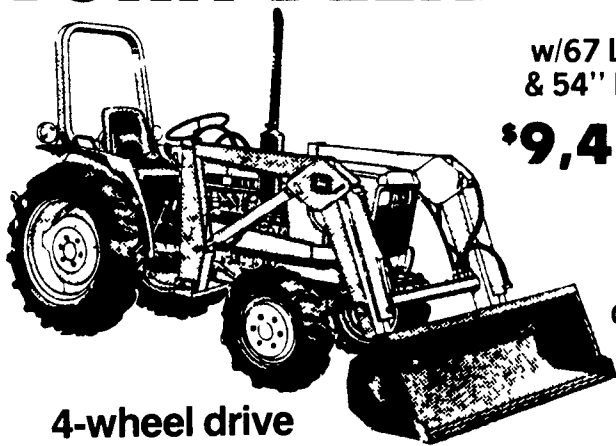
August 1 - 1:00 p.m. Performance Ram Sale, Ag Arena, Meat Animal Evaluation Center, Penn State University

August 18-20 - Ag Progress Days, Rock Springs Research Farm, Penn State University

October 1-5 - Keystone International Livestock Show, Farm Show Complex, Harrisburg, PA

October 31-November 22 - Australian/New Zealand Tour. For more information call MTS Travel (800)233-0157.

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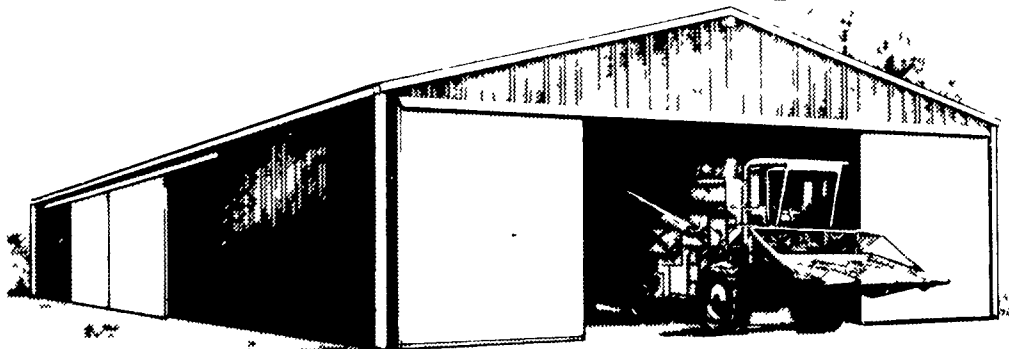
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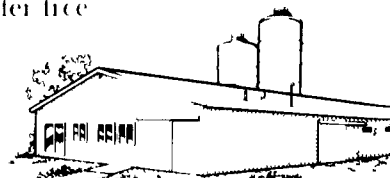
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