



Pork Prose

by
Kenneth B. Kephart

Penn State Extension Swine Specialist

Farrowing Crate Designs

Fifty years ago farrowing crates were unheard of. We farrowed sows in conventional pens, or outside on pasture. As outdoor farrowing lost popularity in favor of "confinement" systems, producers continued to look for ideas to minimize labor and save pigs. One of those ideas, the farrowing crate, forever changed the concept of farrowing house management. CONVENTIONAL CRATES As most producers know, the early farrowing crates were wooden or steel stalls, usually 2 feet X 7 feet, bolted to the floor. Caring for the sow and pigs was easier in crates. But more importantly, crates reduced crushing losses -- which are a constant challenge in conventional pens.

The next major change came when producers bolted the crate to a slotted surface and raised all the hardware a foot or two off the floor. With this modification, a lot of nice things happened. First because of the slotted surface, pigs stayed drier and cleaner. That makes it harder for diarrhea problems to get a foothold. And because the pigs lie a foot above the floor, they're also a foot above the drafts.

At about the same time we were making the switch to raised crates, many producers began to blend some of the "European" ideas into the crates -- like bending bottom

rails of the crate away from the sow. Rails with a "bow" give the sow a little more area when she's lying down and give the pigs a lot more space to nurse, especially when mom weighs 500 pounds. A slight modification of the bowed rail is a row of "fingers" that also project out from the sow.

Another supposedly European design uses farrowing crates narrower than the standard 24 inches. The goal of using a narrow (20 inch) crate is to keep the sow from "coming down like a ton of bricks" when she lies down, which in turn should reduce crushing losses.

Still another modification of the farrowing crate is to shorten it by 12 inches to an overall length of 6 feet. Other than space savings, I'm not sure what the intended advantage is of short crates.

Stanley Curtis at the University of Illinois recently completed an evaluation of various designs of farrowing crates. Here's what he found:

1. Wide crates increased stillborns (.2/litter) over narrow crates.
2. Wide crates tended to increase crushing.
3. Long crates increased stillborns by .2 per litter.
4. In the straight crate, productivity is affected by height of the lower bar. In this study, the 10-inch height seemed the best.
5. Pig survival rate was not affected by crate design.

Knee Lesions-a	Bottom Rail		21-Day Pig Wt.
	Day 7	Day 14	
Fingered	1.6	1.9	14.1
Bowed	1.6	2.1	13.4
Straight 8" Hgt.	1.8	2.2	13.2
Straight 10" Hgt.	1.4	1.7	13.9

a0= no lesions, 3=severe lesions.

TURN-AROUND CRATES

In a separate study, Curtis and his co-workers looked at a completely different design -- a turn-around crate. At one end, the crate widens to 44 or 48 inches and at the other end, it tapers to a point. The center section is either 22 or 24 inches wide. So sows can turn with a minimum of effort.

Curtis offered feed in one of four ways:

- * Feed and water at the wide end.
- * Feed and water at the narrow end.
- * Feed at the wide end, water at the narrow end.
- * Water at the wide end, feed at the narrow end.

What did they learn? Given the chance, gilts turn around a lot -- almost 12 times a day on the average. Gilts in this study turned just as often when feed and water were both on the same end. So the study proves that pigs like to turn. Unfortunately, performance was not measured.

HILL-SIDE PENS

For those that think the farrow-

ing crate is here to stay, be advised that many producers are finding some good things with the "hill-side" pen. The hill-side pen, overall, is 6 X 6 or 6 X 7. That sounds normal enough, except that it slopes 8 to 12 inches from one end to the other. On the lower end, an 18 inch creep area extends across the entire width of the pen.

As the theory goes, newborn pigs will slide into the creep, dry off, and return to sow to nurse when they have a little more vigor, and are in less danger from crushing. So far, the theory seems to be holding water. Studies at VPI and Texas Tech both indicate that sow productivity is at least as good as conventional crates. Compared to flat pens, crushing losses are less with the hillside pen. Sows lie with their head up or down, but the udder almost always faces the creep area. The bottom line is that if you're not crazy about farrowing crates, the hillside pen would be preferred over a conventional pen.

Some tips on construction. Use a totally slotted floor. If you choose woven wire, or plastic coated woven wire, mount the wire

(Turn to Page D4)

MANHATTAN, KS. — Officers and directors for the American-International Junior Charolais Association (AIJCA) were elected at the group's 19th Junior National Leadership Conference held June 20-24 at Kansas State University.

Todd Williams of Girard, Kan., will be the 1988-89 president with Howard Hecht of Paynesville, Minn., serving as vice president. Rounding out the national junior executive committee are Sharla Adams of Madisonville, Texas, as secretary and Clifford Mitchell of Koshkonong, Mo., as treasurer.

Juniors elected or appointed to the 10-member board of directors were Wylon "Bub" Miller of Dallas, Texas; Andrea Clemons of Sparta, Tenn.; Meghan Casey of Fort Worth, Texas; Brian Cwach of Yankton, S.D.; Jamie Eggleston



These are the new officers for the American International Junior Charolais Association. They were elected at the groups 19th Junior National Leadership Conference.

of Wessington, S.D.; Mark Hecht of Paynesville, Minn.; David Nasner of Washington, Pa.; Joyce Downey of Hope, Ind.; Paul Miller of Spring Grove, Pa.; and Quatro Brooks of Alvarado, Texas.

The four officers, along with the board of directors, will be responsible for planning and carrying out the activities of the 700-member youth organization.

Pennsylvania Angus Breeders Show Results

CENTRE HALL (Centre) — Indian Creek Farm of Stahlstown, Pa., walked away with the Clifford Allen Teets Memorial Award at the Pennsylvania Angus Breeders Show, which was held here on July 7 through 9. Indian Creek Farm showed the grand champion bull, Manhattan of Indian Creek, a 4-5-87 bull sired by Broadway out of R.J. Julie 1975. This bull also was named the junior champion bull.

Indian Creek Farm was top in the get-of-sire class as well with offspring out of Broadway.

The premier breeder award went to GH2 Angus Associates of York. The farm showed the junior heifer calf champion, GH2 Camilla Bell 3278, a 3-27-88 daughter of Ror Rolls Royce and South Branch Camilla Bell 322. The senior heifer calf champion also was exhibited by GH2 Angus. Ms Elba Saleen of GH2 is a 9-9-87 daughter of Genetics Madison Avenue and Brost Elba 518.

Windac Starbright, 4-2-87 daughter of SCR Lone Star, was the show's grand champion heifer. Out of Windac Pride 9422, she was shown by Fox Hill Angus of Kennett Square.

The reserve grand champion heifer was JLC Primrose Personality 129, exhibited by Jennifer L. Calderazzo of York. The 1-29-87 heifer, which was sired by Cobble Pond New Yorker, also was named Junior Show champion heifer and

bred & owned junior champion heifer.

The grand champion steer was MB New York, a 3-16-87 son out of Cobble Pond New Yorker and Proud Lassie 3164. The steer was shown by Bill Dean of Mercer. Rains Power Driver, a 6-7-87 son of Brost Power Drive, was named reserve grand champion steer. Exhibited by Bryan Dean of Mercer, the steer was out of La Clariss PRM 6.

BV Boo Boos Cruz 510, shown by Robin Shive of Seven Valleys, was the champion bred & owned steer. Sired by Premier Independence KN, the steer's dam is Rally Elba 35. The reserve champion bred & owned steer was RVA Klondike, a 3-2-87 son of Genetics Yukon Jack and Rally Beatrice 5641. The steer is owned by Allison Angle of Layton, N.J.

Robin Shive exhibited the Junior Show reserve champion heifer, Fox Hill Lady Evelyn 7025. The 4-15-87 daughter of Cobble Pond New Yorker is out of Lady Evelyn 3001 of GU.

The Junior Show's reserve champion bred & owned heifer was Windcrest Lady Margo 701, exhibited by Wilhemina Cash of Centre Hall. A 2-1-87 daughter of R&J Knockout 544, the heifer is out of Barbies GAI.

Bipperts Dirty Harry, a 2-23-87 son of Harrison, was named the reserve grand champion bull and reserve grand champion junior bull

of the show. Owned by W. Bippert and G. Krueger of Coatesville, the bull is out of Kruegers Big Blackbird.

The senior champion bull was T&J Rifle 609, owned by T&J Farms and Tom Bross Jr. of Dover. The 5-19-86 son of Har Bang 1774 is out of SBF Rosebud 257. T&J Farms with Tom Bross IV showed the bull calf champion, T&J Gobbler 724, a Broadway son out of R&J Nicole 2005. T&J Farms with JDH exhibited the senior champion heifer, a 9-30-86 daughter of Wrangler. Byrnley Black Queen is out of Byrnley Blackcap. In addition, T&J Farms won the junior get-of-sire class.

The reserve senior champion bull was HF Jolt 623, a 7-1-86 son of Waldock Shocker and HF Duchess 451. The bull was exhibited by Huntingdon of Alexandria and Dawn Acres of W. Friendship, Md.

Rains Star Buck L5417, a 5-22-87 son of SCR Lone Star, was named the intermediate champion bull. The bull is out of Rains Miss Karma 174 and owned by Dale Rains. Rains also showed the reserve champion intermediate heifer. Rain Skylight Gal HGA 318 is a 6-18-87 daughter of Fairfield Hi Guy and Rains Skylight A318.

The reserve bull calf champion was Genetics Broadway 1097. A 11-29-87 son of Broadway and Premier Evinces 050X, the bull is owned by Genetics Unlimited of Coatesville. Genetics Unlimited also showed the reserve champion senior heifer calf, Scaara's Valara of GU. A 9-10-87 daughter of Premier Valectorian, the heifer is out of Kruegers Scaara

The reserve champion senior heifer was M. Camilla Bell 9186 of GH2, owned by Michael Strayer of Dillsburg. A 9-18-86 daughter of Waldeck Shocker, the heifer is out of South Branch Camilla Bell 332.

Hilltop Holly, owned by Hilltop Farms of Boydes, Md., was the champion intermediate heifer. A 6-1-87 daughter of Ror Royalty, the heifer is out of Cobble Pond Holly.

The reserve champion junior heifer calf is SBF Lucys Treasure, a 1-11-88 daughter of Cobble Pond New Yorker. Out of Lucys Playmate 54R of C&K, the heifer is owned by Shallow Brook of Stillwater, N.J.

The show's junior showmanship class winner was Jason Stem with Jennifer Calderazzo coming in second. Robin Shive won the senior division with Lori Cash in second place.

Pennsylvania Hog, Pig Inventory Up 8%

HARRISBURG — Inventory of all hog and pigs in the United States on June 1 is estimated at 56.2 million head, according to the Pennsylvania Agricultural Statistics Service.

The inventory is 8 percent above a year ago and 15 percent above June 1, 1986. It represents the highest June 1 inventory since 1983, PASS reported.

Breeding inventory at 7.53 million head is 7 percent above 1987 and 17 percent more than two years ago. Market hog inventory, at 48.7 million head, is 8 percent above a year ago and 15 percent higher than two years ago.

The December 1987-May 1988 national pig crop was 46.6 million head, up 8 percent from last year and 15 percent above two years ago. Sows farrowed during the six-month period at 6.0 million were 8 percent more than the previous year and 14 percent more than two years ago.

U.S. hog producers intend to farrow 6.2 million sows during June-November, an increase of 7 percent from the same period in 1987 and 14 percent more than two years ago.

Berks County To Hold Hog Show, Sale

LEESPORT (Berks) — The Berks County FFA Chapters announce their annual Market Hog Show and Sale to be held at the Leesport Auction on Wednesday, August 3rd. The swine show will include fitting and showmanship classes and type classes. The show will begin at 9:00 a.m. and the sale of the FFA members' hogs will begin at approximately 6:00 p.m.

About 60 head of market swine will be consigned to this sale. The show will include the selection of a grand champion and reserve champion market hog.