

Swine Management News

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Hog farming is a dynamic business. Ups and downs in the market prices for market hogs, feed grains and supplements make swine production a risky business to say the least. However, there are several things that you can do to improve your chances of remaining in the business for a long time to come.

If any one thing is lacking on most hog farms, it's records. Keeping adequate records of the production and economic factors on your farm can play an important role in keeping your operation profitable — that is, provided you are willing to make any changes that your records might deem necessary.

It would be great if every hog producer would keep adequate records; however we all know that this is probably not going to hap-

pen. For one thing, there is no need in keeping records if you aren't willing to make changes in your management, purchasing or feeding programs. The whole point to keeping records is to make appropriate changes that can make your operation more profitable.

From a production standpoint, records on the number of pigs weaned per litter and per sow per year can serve as a good comparison for how you are doing compared to the national average. In addition, keeping these numbers will allow you to make culling decisions based on individual sow productivity.

Other production types of records that you may want to keep include feed efficiencies, weight gains to weaning and weight gains to market. Numbers such as these can provide you with information for culling decisions, for comparisons to national averages, and to provide additional information for

choosing herd sires. Poor feed efficiencies might also indicate that you are having problems with wasted feed due to leaking feeders.

These are just a few production criteria that should be included in a record keeping system. Another area that requires record keeping is the economic area. We all realize that it costs money to raise a pig to feeder or market weight. These costs can be classified as variable and fixed costs. An example of the variable and fixed costs for finishing a market hog follows.

Variable costs = * initial cost of the feeder pig, * cost of all feed for the pig, * cost of all medications for the pig, * cost of upkeep on housing for the pig, * cost of electricity for the pig, * cost of waste handling for the pig, * cost of hauling the pig to market, * cost of marketing the pig, * cost of labor in raising the pig, * any additional costs associated with the pig (ie. interest on borrowed

money for feed).

Total Production Costs - 3

Fixed costs = * land charge, * depreciation on building and equipment, * interest on building and equipment, * interest on money borrowed to purchase the pig.

If you total up the variable and fixed costs in this example, and added them together, you would come up with the Total Production Costs (TPC). This figure will constantly change in an operation as various costs change.

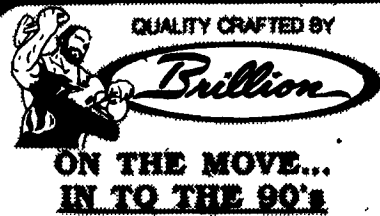
The key point to keeping the TPC is to have an idea of where your operation is regarding profitability. If you know what your TPC is and you know the current market price of market hogs you can determine the potential profit of your operation. For example if your TPC is \$100 for a 240-pound hog, the cost of producing that hog to 240 pounds would equal 41.66 cents per pound (\$100 divided by 240 pounds). If the current market

price of 240-pound hogs is 45 cents per pound, you stand to make 3.34 cents per pound or a little over \$8.00 per hog marketed at 240 pounds.

Remember that it will not only be useful for you to have these records for determining how much money you stand to make or lose, but also to go back and see where you can improve your profitability.

By keeping adequate records you might determine that your feed costs are too high, that you're spending too much on electricity, or that you can only afford to spend \$25 for your 40-pound feeder pigs. Once you know that a problem exists, it's a lot easier to correct that problem. And you won't know where to look if you don't keep adequate records.

You just might find out that you're doing a better or worse job than you thought. But regardless of the outcome, the ball will be in your court to make the necessary changes for improvement.

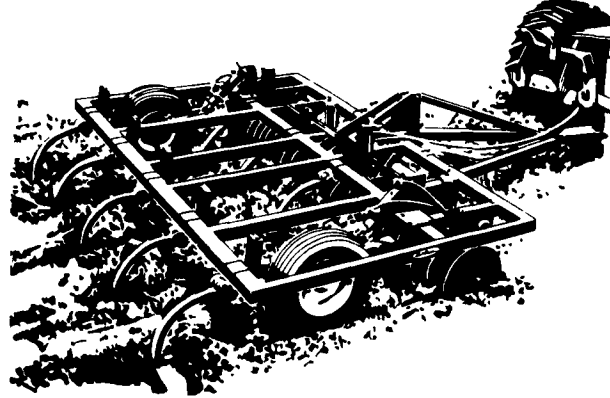


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