

# Livestock Notes

## Sow Performance: Sloped Pens vs. Farrowing Crates

Interest in sloped or "hill-side" pens has been growing. Pen dimensions of the hill-side pen are normally 6x7 feet with a creep area measuring about 18 inches x 7 feet. The area for the sow (which is sloped about 1 inch/foot) is 4½ x7 feet and allows for greater mobility in the pen.

Researchers at Texas Tech University recently published results from a comparison of flat and sloped ("hill-side") farrowing pens, and flat and sloped farrowing crates.

The results of the study showed that all housing systems were similar for sow feed intake, sow weight loss during lactation and number of stillborn pigs. The number of pigs born live was higher (about 1 pig) in sloped crates and sloped pens.

Crushing losses were high for sloped crates and flat pens. They were low but similar for flat crates and sloped pens. Survival rate was

best for sloped pens and flat crates. Pig weaning weight was best for sloped pens and sloped crates.

Few differences in sow activity were observed. Sloped surfaces caused sows to lie on their bellies for greater periods of time. But the number of times the sows stood up, and the total amount of time standing was similar for all groups.

Based on this and other studies, the "hill-side" pen offers a viable alternative to the farrowing crate with no impairment in production. It may also diffuse some of the arguments of the animal rights movement.

## All-In All-Out Improves Finishing Hog Performance

Many producers practice the all-in all-out concept in the farrowing house and nursery. Based on recent research at Purdue University we're learning that maintaining finishing pigs in separate groups improves health and weight gain in the grower-finisher

barn as well.

Three studies were conducted to compare all-in all-out and continuous flow methods of handling growing finishing pigs. The first study showed hogs in the all-in all-out system had a faster growth rate (1.70 pound/day vs. 1.56 pound/day), they had fewer lungs affected with pneumonia (63 percent vs. 69 percent) as well as less lung area affected by pneumonia (2.8 percent vs. 6.2 percent).

The second trial demonstrated that the all-in all-out group of pigs took a total of 45 fewer days to reach market weight and had reduced variation in days to market weight. The third and fourth trials supported results in the first two, again showing reduced days for all-in all-out to reach market weight (30 days) and had fewer chronic lung problems.

These trials indicated that under conditions of both poor health and good health, the all-in all-out concept in the finishing barn allows pigs to grow faster and reach market weight with fewer chronic respiratory problems.

## Hog and Pig Inventory

There were 970,000 hogs and pigs on Pennsylvania farms on September 1, 1990. This was 5 percent below last year's figure. The market hog inventory was

down 6 percent at 863,000 head while the breeding herd inventory was up 20 percent at 107,000.

Pennsylvania hog producers indicated they intended to farrow 43,000 sows during the September-November period, a 2 percent increase above the same period last year. Their intentions for the December-February period were to farrow 42,000 sows, also 2 percent above last year's figure.

Across the nation, the inventory of all hogs and pigs was estimated at 56.3 million head on September 1, 2 percent below a year ago. The breeding hog inventory was only down slightly at 6.86 million head while the market hog numbers were down 3 percent at 49.4 million head.

Similar to Pennsylvania, the rest of the nation's hog farmers intend to increase their farrowings by 2 percent over the next six months. Those figures, coupled with good grain harvests will tend to be bullish on hog profits. The profit picture continues to look good into the early part of 1991, with prices probably staying in the low \$50s. But, with so much uncertainty in the economy and the Middle East, predictions of any kind are risky.

## Gestation Feeding Level Doesn't Affect Reproduction

Researchers at South Dakota State University fed large White x Landrace gilts either 4 or 6 pounds of feed during gestation. Gilts on the higher feeding level gained more weight during gestation, but lost more weight during lactation. Sows on the 4 pounds per day diet during gestation consumed 48 pounds more feed during lactation.

Feeding level during gestation had no effect on the number of pigs born alive, number weaned, litter weight at weaning or days to return to heat. Based on the conditions of this study, there is no advantage to feeding gilts more than 4 pounds of feed during gestation.

## Feeder Pig Grades Do Not Predict Carcass Grades

A study at the University of Missouri indicates that the USDA Feeder Pig Grade Standards do not accurately predict USDA grades for market hogs. In the study, pigs weighing 60 pounds were split into two groups and were selected according to USDA standards for feeder pigs, or according to frame size (large, medium or small). Pigs were slaughtered at 220, 250 or 280 pounds. As the tables below show, neither system provided a good method for predicting USDA grades for market hogs.

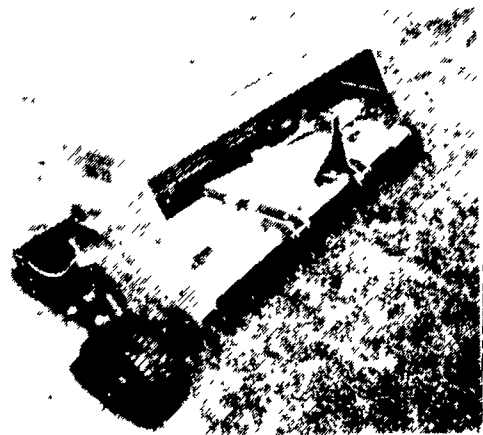
Feeder pigs grading USDA #1 were leaner and had larger loin eye areas than those grading #2 or #3. When graded according to frame size, large framed pigs had less fat than the medium and small

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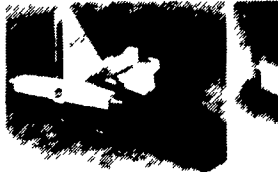
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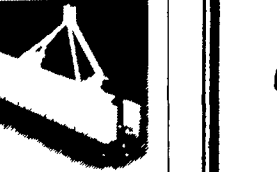
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