

Livestock Notes

Flushing Increases Litter Size In Gilts

Many producers increase the energy content of the ration prior to breeding (flushing) in hopes of increasing litter size. Does flushing really work?

A recent Kansas State University study examined the effect of flushing on ovulation rate and lit-

ter size in gilts. Thirty-nine gilts were flushed with 3.4 pounds of ground milo in addition to a 4-pound basal diet for two weeks prior to breeding. Forty-two more gilts were fed just the 4-pound basal diet. All gilts were bred on the first heat after the start of the trial and then classified as to whether they were bred on the first or subsequent heats.

Flushed gilts bred on the first heat ovulated more eggs (14.4 vs 13.3) and farrowed larger litters (9.4 vs. 8.3) than gilts that weren't flushed. Flushing had no significant effect on ovulation rates or litter size in gilts bred on their second or subsequent heats, although ovulation rates tended to be higher.

It appears that flushing may increase litter size in gilts on most farms, especially if gilts are bred at first heat.

No Long-Term Effects Of Feed And Water Restriction At Feeder-Pig Sales

A joint study of feeder pigs by

the University of Nebraska and the University of Missouri found no effect of 1) injecting long-acting tetracycline upon arrival at the feeder pig market; 2) feed and water restriction at the market; 3) restricted floor feeding during the first week after arriving at the farm.

In the study, researchers commingled nearly 300 pigs at a commercial feeder pig auction. While at the sale barn, half the pigs received 2 to 3 cc of LA-200. In addition, pigs received feed and water, water only, or neither. Pigs were then transported 500 miles (travel time approximately 20 hours) to the research facilities. Once the pigs arrived at the research farm, half of them were floor-fed twice a day, the others had access to a self-feeder.

Results:

- Pigs receiving feed and water at the sale barn were roughly two pounds heavier for the first 16 days after arriving at the research barn. But feed and water, or water only at the sale barn, provided no long term benefits in growth rate or feed conversion.

- LA-200 injections at the sale barn had no effects on performance, death loss, or the number of pigs treated during the grow-out period.

- Floor feeding decreased weight gains during the first 9 days at the research barn. But it had no overall effect on any performance trait.

Conclusions:

- Water for pigs is probably not needed at feeder pigs auctions unless the temperature is over 75 degrees, or pigs remain at the auction for more than 12 hours.

- Feed is apparently not necessary at feeder pigs auctions unless pigs remain there for more than 12 hours.

- Injecting pigs with LA-200 upon arrival at feeder pigs auctions seems to be of little value.

- Restricting feed to newly arrived feeder pigs, which is often done to decrease problems with diarrhea, has no long-term detrimental effects on performance.

Designing On-Farm Trials

Many pork producers have conducted on-farm trials to compare different rations, feed additives, or management practices. Unfortunately, the data from these trials is often useless because the trial was poorly designed. S.M. Neal from Ohio State recently listed some important considerations for setting up on-farm trials.

- Carefully select and isolate the feed product or management practice to be compared. Make sure all variables are accounted for except the variables being tested. For example, in comparing two feed additives for growing pigs, the protein, fat, fiber, and lysine content of the rations should be similar.

- Limit the number of products or management practices in the comparison.

- The environment must be constant for all treatments (i.e. same room or barn, same feeders, same flooring, etc.).

- Assign treatments to pens within a room at random.

- Minimize genetic differences. Each pen should have the same number of pigs from each litter. Pigs should be of the same breed, line or cross for all treatments.

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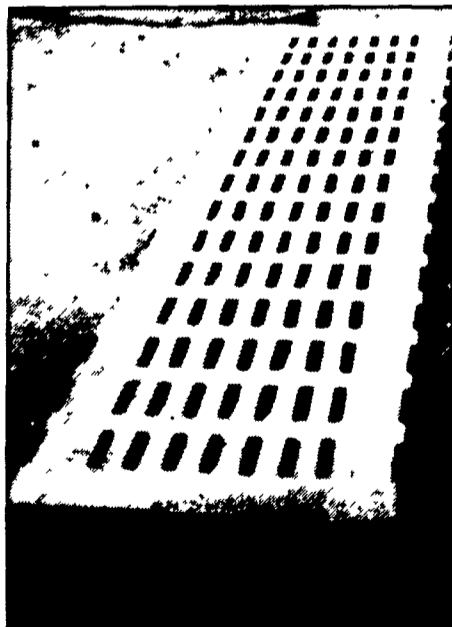
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