

Watch For Unproven Claims

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Just like any other business, the hog industry is sometimes a target for products that seem too good to be true.

But you can check these products out, said an extension swine specialist in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

"Most hog farmers are great at spotting bogus products," said Dr. Kenneth Kephart, associate professor of dairy and animal science. "But there are still general recommendations you should follow before buying newly created products, especially when the people selling them make extreme claims."

One way to verify claims is to look for published research on the product. The research should come from studies conducted in a controlled manner by universities or private companies. Be wary of results cited in advertisements, which might give inaccurate or incomplete facts.

Kephart said farmers should try to find producers or feed companies who already use the product — but not people listed in com-

pany literature — and ask how the product has worked for them.

"Even when talking to salespeople," Kephart said, "you sometimes can spot statistics that will identify bogus products. For example, a feed additive on the market is claimed to improve feed conversion during the finisher phase by 30 percent. This degree of improvement is unheard of, if not impossible. Even daily injections of growth hormone — at twice the dosage the FDA is supposedly considering for approval — would improve feed conversion by only 20 percent."

Cost is another important factor to consider when looking at new products, Kephart said. Supposing a company's claims are accurate, are the benefits — no matter how great they might seem at first — actually worth the cost of purchasing the product?

"If the company really believes in its product, it might be willing to let you use the product at its expense," Kephart said. "After an established trial period, if the product is doing what it claims, you can reimburse the company. If the

product isn't, then it's the company's expense, not yours.

"Keep in mind that bogus pro-

ducts are the exception, not the rule," Kephart said. "Most products are safe and reliable — it's

just important to keep an eye out for ones with unproven claims."

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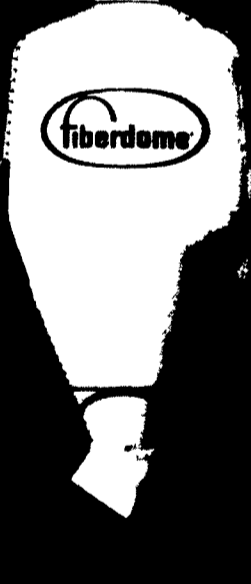

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