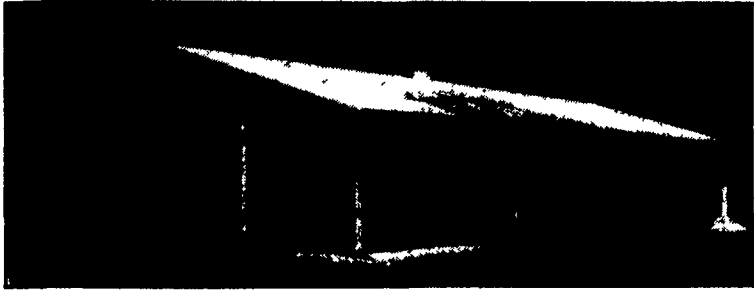


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Livestock Notes

NUTRITIONAL ANESTRUS IN GILTS

Keith A. Bryan

Several scientists have proposed that a critical level of body fat in sows and gilts is needed to maintain normal reproductive function.

Some researchers believe that attainment of a critical level of body fat is required for the onset of puberty in gilts and normal estrous cyclicity. Furthermore, delayed return to estrus of sows postweaning is believed to result from depletion of body fat reserves during lactation. Thus, genotype and nutrition play vital roles in reproduction in swine.

Researchers at the University of Minnesota further examined the relationships among nutrition, body composition, and reproductive cyclicity in gilts that had

experienced at least three or more estrous cycles. The gilts were fed normal or restricted (7.5 percent, 15 percent, 22.5 percent or 30 percent of normal) levels of energy from 276 days of age until they failed to show normal estrous cycles.

Although cycles of all of the gilts on the energy-restricted diets were interrupted, cycles of gilts that were more severely restricted tended to cease sooner. Gilts were slaughtered approximately seven days after failure to show standing heat, and quantity of body protein and fat were then determined. For the energy-restricted gilts, there was a wide range for body protein and body fat at which the gilts became acyclic. Thus, the researchers concluded that estrous activity is not controlled by critical levels of body fat reserves.

In a parallel experiment, the same group of investigators determined that length of the estrous cycle was increased by about one day in severely restricted gilts compared with control gilts, but length of the estrous cycle was not altered significantly as gilts approached anestrus. The results of this study indicate that severe energy restriction can lead to longer estrous cycles and anestrus in gilts, but anestrus occurs over a wide range of body composition. Sources:

D.W. Rozeboom et al., 1993a, *J. Anim. Sci.* 71:426.

D.W. Rozeboom et al., 1993b, *J. Anim. Sci.* 71:436.

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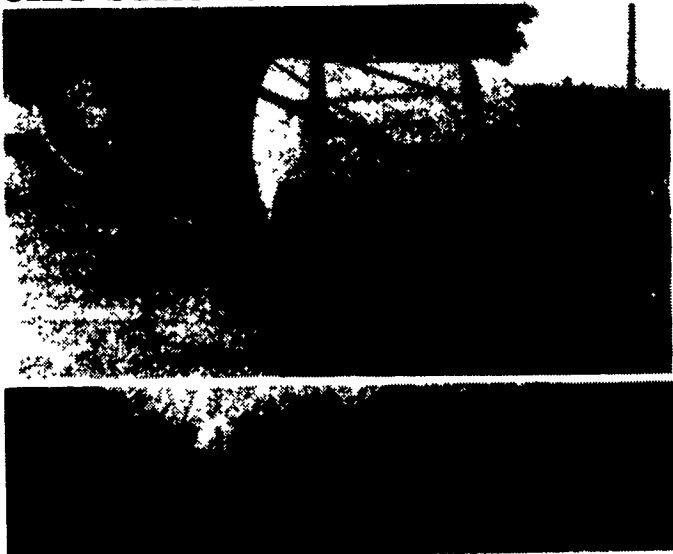
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