

Early Weaning Boasts Health, Cost Benefits

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effective for this SEW system, according to Clark.

The pigs did well, consumed the medicated feed provided to them readily, and simply "ate and grew," said Clark. Teams carefully monitored the pigs for various diseases, particularly strep suis, and treated as found.

The pigs soon grew into what Clark affectionately referred to as "fat butterballs," and feed uptake, conversion, and weight was carefully monitored.

Up until they were transferred to the finishing house at 45 pounds (56 days old), SEW performance data was monitored. Mortality stood at less than 2 percent. Average daily gain (ADG) was posted at .85 pounds per day. Feed efficiency stood at 1.41.

There were some mild health problems with the pigs, including dehydration (water was added to the feed pellets), some strep suis, some staph hyicus, and some non-specific bacterial pneumonia (a consistent cough which comes and goes). Because of the slatted floors, there were some incidences of mild foot and leg problems which were readily treated. Overall, mortality was kept low and careful and consistent monitoring checked most disease threats.

(As an example of SEW efficiency, Clark noted that a similar system looked at 2,290 pigs from commercial herds that went to finish. Mortality was 1 percent, ADG



Using a network can allow smaller swine finishing businesses to enjoy the same price and profit benefits that large producers enjoy, according to Tom Congelton, marketing manager of the Central Kentucky Hog Marketing Association in Springfield, Ky.

was 1.88, days to 230 pounds was 162, and days to 250 pounds was 173.)

To make use of SEW effectively, producers may have to concentrate vaccination and antibiotic programs on sows. Research proves that more diseases are transmitted to the pigs from the sows the longer the pigs are kept with the sows.

Studies compared the effects of modified early weaning (MEW) using all treatments with SEW using no treatments. Using MEW, it takes 60 days to rear a 62.5-pound pig. With SEW and no treatments, in 60 days, the pigs weighed 60.5 pounds.

What is surprising, according to the veterinarian, is that many of the pigs in the SEW program came from herds that had PRRS, APP, PRV, and other diseases. But early weaning and segregation alone allowed those pigs to experience a two-pound-per-day gain and less days to 70 pounds.

A continuous flow program, as contrasted to the all-in, all-out SEW system, took many more days (220) than the SEW program (140 days) to 230 pounds.

Researchers now know why, in the old days, pigs were generally healthier — because they were weaned early and allowed to go into the fields, thus segregating the pigs from the older, disease-carrying animals.

For an effective SEW program to work, feed costs and labor will increase. But the days to 250 pounds and medical costs will decrease if proper cleanup and biosecurity is observed. If using the same site, people management is important — work on the new pigs first, then the breeding herd, then the finishing pigs last, and make sure the new pigs are kept free of bacteria and viruses from the older animals.



In the junior public speaking contest, winner of the junior division was Lacy Milles, 8, Coudersport, left. Winner of the senior division was Chrissy Michalk, 16, Sellersville, center. At right is Horace Wanner, McNess representative, award sponsor.



Bethany Alana Eikin, 19, daughter of Sam and Paula Eikin, Marion Center, was appointed pork industry representative at the Expo. A sophomore in ag engineering at Penn State, Bethany helps on her father's 500-sow farrow-to-feeder operation. Bethany has been involved with the Marion Center 4-H.

The SEW nursery should have open flooring, an adequate fence-line feeder, three square foot of space per pig, and airflow equalling two cubic feet/minute. Temperature should be 84 degrees at pig entry and 72 degrees at exit to the finishing house.

The studies concluded that using SEW, benefits included increased litters per sow per year, increased pigs crated per year, days to 250 pounds lowered by 50



Managing employees is often an "inexact science" and it is often difficult to determine the motivations as to why certain ones stay or leave, according to Gary G. Maas, executive vice president, AGRicareers, Inc., Massena, Iowa.

days, and feed efficiency lowered by 0.5 pounds. SEW decreases the medication costs and overall death loss — which could mean greater profit for producers.

Using SEW, producers could experience up to a \$12-per-hog decrease in rearing costs if using more than 1,200 sows. Producers with 300 sows could see a \$6-per-hog decrease in costs. (Simply using all-in, all-out methods, producers with 150 to 1,200 sows more can see a decrease cost per pig ranging from

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Indiana FFA team members, which placed second, include, from left, Cathy Fyock; Lisa Zack; John Fyock, coach; Jessica Abel; and Adrienne Eikin. Absent from photo is team member Richard Stumpf.



Cumberland County FFA team, which placed third, is comprised of, from left, Angela Hoffman; Bruce Lemmon, coach; Michelle Cornman; Curt Lehman; and Heather Lehman.



Weaning pigs early and segregating them "is all you need to do" to provide an increase in litters per sow and number of pigs crated per year, according to Dr. L. Kirk Clark, professor, Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences, School of Veterinary Medicine, Purdue University.