



SUSTAINABLE SWINE PRODUCTION

Beginning this summer, Penn State Cooperative Extension embarks on a program to assist pork producers in the production of a residue-free product without risking the environment or the profitability of their operations. The program is entitled Sustainable Swine Production and includes four components in which you can participate:

- Improving Percent Lean
- Implementation of Pork Quality Assurance
- Dietary Modification to Reduce Nutrient Excretion
- Environmental Quality Assurance

Producers who successfully enroll in any of the components benefit from improved productivity and potentially enhance the quality of their product. Each producer will receive a certificate of accommodation for participating in the program and, if they agree, will be recognized publicly.

Penn State Extension Swine Specialist Ken Kephart and your local extension agent are prepared to work with you on all components of the Sustainable Swine Production Program.

In Lancaster County, Mark Tracy, extension summer assistant, and myself, will be contacting producers to explain the program. Mark, a junior in animal biosci-

ence at Penn State, recently attended the World Pork Expo in Des Moines, Iowa and received extensive training in the Pork Quality Assurance Program. He has also visited Hatfield Quality Meats to become familiar with their weight and grade payment program and visited hog farms with concerns regarding odor reduction.

To participate in the program, contact your Penn State Cooperative Extension Office by Dr. Ken Kephart at Penn State University, (814) 863-3671.

Effective Fencing Tips

For effective animal control, wire spacing is more important than fence height. More animals go through and under fences than over them. Proper wire spacing makes your fences more effective.

Regardless of how many wires your fence has, always position one wire at the shoulder height of the animal to be controlled. This is the "nose wire" that your animals see and touch when they approach the fence. Other fence wires should be spaced according to the type of animal: 10 inches-12 inches apart for cattle and horses, and 6 inches-8 inches apart for sheep and goats. The bottom wires should be closer together than the top wires.

Fences taller than 48 inches aren't really necessary. In many countries, livestock fences are sel-

dom more than 42 inches tall. Electric fences can be even lower — 36 inches for cattle and horses, and 30 inches for sheep and goats. Shorter fences also allow closer wire spacing.

When utilizing electric fencing, you can't have too many ground rods. Sometimes one will work, but three is better. When an animal touches the fence, the electricity must travel through the animal into the soil, then through the soil to a ground rod. The current then travels from the ground rod to the fence charger, where the circuit is completed. Only then does the animal feel the shock.

Therefore, the more ground rods, the more electricity gets back to the fence charger. That's why the best ground system consists of three galvanized ground rods, at least six feet deep, spaced 10 feet apart. For best results, install your ground rods where soil moisture is constant. Always use clamps to attach the ground wire to the ground rods. Remember, your electric fence is only as good as its ground system.

Hog Price Patterns

Pork producers know that hog prices have historically fluctuated in cycles, from the long periods which span three to five years, to the short periods which vary season to season. In recent years, many producers have suspected that the price swings have been less dramatic and perhaps less predictable.

Dr. Ken Kephart, Penn State Extension swine specialist, reports the following facts from a University of Nebraska study of monthly hog prices at Omaha from 1975-1994:

- The average price for the 20-year period was \$47.17/cwt.
- Lowest prices, on average, have occurred in April (\$44.72) and November (\$43.85).
- Highest prices were in June (\$49.61), July (\$50.98), and

August (\$50.50).

• Average price for a particular month could be predicted most reliably for June, July, and August. Price predictions were least reliable for October and February. This is because the price varied a lot in these latter two months.

Additionally since 1975, market prices peaked every three to four years:

- 1975 — \$49.35
- 1978 — \$49.41
- 1982 — \$56.16
- 1986 & 1987 — \$52.34, \$52.37 respectively
- 1990 — \$55.67
- 1993 — \$46.33

Note that the last high price we experienced was in 1993. At \$46.33, that was the lowest peak of any recorded in the previous 18 years.

Safety Considerations

PTO shafts, perhaps the best known farm hazard, continue to maim and kill. Advances in shields and housing have reduced the danger on new equipment, yet thousands of old, modified, and unguarded shafts are used every day.

There is no reason to ever go near a powered PTO shaft. Remember these PTO safety points:

- Keep all shields in place
- Avoid loose, baggy clothing, drawstrings, and long hair
- Don't go near engaged PTO shafts.

Electrocutions rank among the hazards that claim farm lives every year. The more obvious incidents include making repairs on electrical equipment without disconnecting the circuit. But unexpected contact with power lines claims victims, too. Raised truck beds, grain augers, and raised tractor loaders can contact power lines with fatal results.

Lightning, too, is a hazard for anyone outdoors during threatening weather. Electrical safety tips on the farm include:

- Keep all farm wiring in good condition
- Disconnect circuits before attempting repairs
- Don't attempt electrical work beyond your abilities
- Avoid contacting power lines

with equipment such as grain augers, raised truck beds, or tractor loaders.

SHOWMANSHIP TIPS FOR YOUR LOCAL FAIR

Mark Tracy

Summer Extension Assistant
Summer is here and along with it has come lemonade, swimming pools, and of course the local fair.

With the advent of the local fair, livestock exhibitors will be hastily ensuring that their projects are prepared for exhibition in the show ring.

Seasoned veterans will have become immune, or at least tolerant, of the nervousness that rookies and youngsters will feel as they step into the show ring under the careful scrutiny of the judge as they show their project and demonstrate their showmanship skills. Parents will try to instill the necessary training for showmanship, but nonetheless here are a few tips that all must know or occasionally be reminded of:

- The animal should be free from external and internal parasites and fed at the proper rate so it will demonstrate the proper weight for its age.

- The project should be thoroughly washed and groomed, as well as trained, for the judge looks for signs of care, attention, training, and preparation.

- Enter the show ring promptly, and be sure to look your best. This means no hats, and have your shirt tucked in.

- Always have the proper tools and equipment with you. Steers require a show halter, show stick, and pocket dressing comb, while hogs need a cane, a whip, and a small brush.

- Animals should be under control at all times.

- Know where the judge is at all times.

- Always be courteous to the judge, and do as he, or she asks.

- Never do anything that would distract from another exhibitor's animal.

- Parents should remember not to do any sideline coaching. The only way your children will learn is from experience.

- Most important of all is to remember that winning isn't everything. What's important is that you had fun!

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