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Hoop-housed pigs tend to use feed less efficiently, but average daily gain is as good or greater than confinement pigs, especially if the pigs are healthy. The hog environment will have lower levels of manure gases. Behavior research has shown fewer stereotypical stress behaviors in hoop pigs. The deep bedding and increased floor space per pig are thought to contribute to this.

In a wean-to-finish production system, producers are weaning two- to three- week old pigs directly into a modified grower-finisher barn. This bypasses the nursery building stage. The considerable efficiency in eliminating one set of pig handling, trucking, and facility washdown is driving this management conversion.

Reduction of pig stress with one less move and sorting has led to more uniform performance. Obviously, modifying or building a proper finishing building to accommodate this management system can be a significant drawback.

The finishing barn essentially functions the same as a nursery for the first few weeks after pig placement. This includes minimization of drafts, care in floor slot opening,

narrow spaced bars on partitions, and access to more supplemental heat.

Experts suggest that detailed attention to the heating system and flooring are critical to success of raising pigs in these buildings. The building size will appear underpopulated, on a square foot per pig basis, at the beginning of the cycle.

Cost estimates for wean-to-finish buildings are higher per pig space compared to a traditional finishing barn. Overall production gains appear to be slight, if at all, when compared to comparable nursery and finishing setups.

Swine producers are considering lower cost structures along with alternative management systems in new building styles for raising pigs. If this introductory article has raised your curiosity, additional information is available in Hoop Structures for Grow-Finish Swine and Managing Market Pigs in Hoop Housing.

Swine Nursery Facilities Handbook has introductory information on the wean-to-finish system but most current information is found in trade articles (copies available from this article's author).

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