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Beam operates his farrow-to-finish farm with wife Marilyn and family, including son Joshua, 3 years old, and three girls — Denise, 7; Joy, 5; and Mindy, 10 months. Beam has help full time from Scott Stoltzfus, his cousin, who is the farrowing and breeding manager.

The Beams finish 4,300 hogs per year and sell on the open market to Hatfield. Beam delivers the hog directly to the packer.

Beam uses York-Landrace maternal genetics and News-ham sires, about 80-90 percent AI, though the farm also uses a couple of boars for heat detection. In litter size, average born live is 11.3 and weaned is 10.1. The Beams use a six-room wean-to-finish site.

After the pigs are born in the farrowing room, they stay with the sow for 15 days. In the farrow room, heat mats with lamps are used and the pigs are introduced to creep feeding after one week of age.

After the sow is removed after 15 days, the pigs stay in the crate an additional two weeks. They are fed a commercial mix, composed of milk products, corn, soy, easy-to-digest feedstuffs, vitamins, and minerals.

Afterward they are moved to the finish house using a hydraulic cart. The finish house has a concrete slat floor.

The new finish house was completed in 1996 and uses negative ventilation. When hot weather sets in, the house becomes tunnel ventilated. That same year, Beam renovated the nursery to a farrowing operation. The house has a 16-18-inch pit fan, and several other fans measuring 24, 36, and 48 inches.

During the hottest time of the summer, with temperatures at or near 100 degrees, the house opens to full tunnel. But not all day long. In the middle of summer, Beam has seen the house open at 10-11 a.m. and return to normal ventilation between 8-9 p.m.

In 1999, despite the high temperatures, Beam said there were no heat-related death losses.

In an ideal system, Beam noted, the hogs will grow faster and consume more feed, increasing their fat percentage. The key, he said, is adjusting feed requirements to the finish plan.

The finish hogs are fed gradually decreasing amounts of protein, depending on the days to finish. Corn feed for all groups goes through a mixer, reducing particle size and improving feed intake and efficiency. Beam uses an 800-850 micron particle size for the corn.

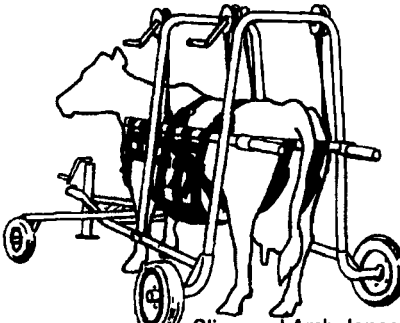
Beam noted that the most critical time is farrowing. "You have to take care of the sow," he said. Sows are given a full regimen of vaccines, including PRRS, leptospirosis, parvovirus, bordetella, e coli, and others. Since adopting that philosophy, Beam noted there haven't been any healthy problems.

Sanitation is also key to general management, something Beam learned when moving from a previous continuous flow operation to his current all-in, all-out system. When emptying the houses, they are pressure-washed and disinfected with a commercial product.


Beam doesn't use an ultrasound or other devices to measure carcass quality at the farm. Instead he relies on information on carcass quality, including percent lean, from

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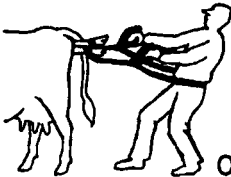
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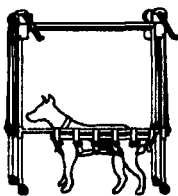
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