

Plain or Barbecue? Chips Cheap, Healthy Alternative Feed for Pigs

WOOSTER, Ohio - Hog producers seeking a cheaper, alternative feed to corn have to look no further than their grocer's shelves.

Two Ohio State University Agricultural Technical Institute (ATI) researchers have found that it doesn't matter if it's barbecue, sour cream and onion, or plain - potato chips are the snack of choice for pigs. And not only is the wholesale price for potato chip scraps cheaper than corn, but the chips provide the pigs with a higher energy diet.

Sha Rahnama and Ronald Borton have found that consistently replacing 12.5 percent of the corn feed with potato chip scraps during the nursery, growing and finishing stages of pigs provided optimum performance in dry matter intake, average daily weight gain and the number of days required for pigs to reach market weight.

The finding is the latest in a series of studies since 1995 that has focused on the effect consuming potato chip scraps has on the performance of pigs. Previous studies showed that up to 25 percent of a pig's diet may include potato chip scraps, but not

with optimum benefits. Pigs consuming a diet of 20-25 percent of potato chips during the growing and finishing stages took longer to reach market weight. Earlier studies also revealed that potato chip scraps had the most positive effect on nursery pigs, speculating that starting pigs on high levels of chips, then decreasing the amount during the growing and finishing phases may improve feed efficiency and decrease the overall number of days on feed.

The purpose of the current research was to determine the effect of varying the level of potato chip scraps during the nursery, growing and finishing stages of the pig, while keeping the control at a continuous potato chip diet of 12.5 percent throughout all three stages of growth. The study involved starting the pigs on a 10 percent diet of chips and increasing that amount throughout the growth stages to 20 percent, as well as feeding nursery pigs high levels of chips and reducing that amount during growth.

Researchers were hoping the results would provide producers with the best balance of potato chips in the diet with the biggest impact on market performance.

"Increasing or decreasing the levels during the various growth stages seemed to have no effect at all over the continuous feeding of the 12.5 percent diet," said Rahnama.

He found that varying the diet during the growth stages had less of an impact on performance than feeding the pigs a continuous 12.5 percent diet of chips. The diet variation reduced overall intake and resulted in a longer time period for the pigs to reach market weight.

"Chips are higher in energy than corn, so the pigs would eat less at the growing and finishing phases, ultimately gaining less weight and taking longer to reach market weight," said Rahnama.

Studying the effects of potato chip consumption in pigs spawned from an ATI class project six years ago, where students were looking for a cheaper substitute for corn as a viable energy source. They came up with potato chips, which have 33 percent fat. By price comparison, potato chip scraps run \$6 to \$7.50 a ton as compared to corn, which is currently running more than \$75 a ton. The researchers mixed the potato chip scraps with the corn and fed the feed to the pigs in a pellet form. But Rahnama said the researchers also directly added the chips to the corn in the feed troughs,

which produced the same results.

"Mixing chips in with the corn feed has shown to have no adverse effects on the pigs and can be a profitable alternative to the current diet," said Rahnama.

So how would a pork chop

taste after a pig has been munching on jalapeno-flavored or vinegar-flavored chips? Part of the study also included a taste panel that sampled pork based on juiciness, tenderness, odor and flavor.

"The panel couldn't tell the difference between pork from pigs that had been fed the potato

chips diet and those that weren't fed with chips," said Rahnama. "In fact, the panel agreed that in one instance, the pork from the chip-fed pig was juicier and tasted better."

The researchers are currently planning on testing their potato chip diet on chickens.

Farmers Union Applauds Organic Standards

AURORA, Colo. — The National Farmers Union (NFU) applauds the announcement by the USDA of the final rule on organic standards.

"We are pleased with the rule that provides guidelines and will help farmers take advantage of the growing market for organic products," said NFU President Leland Swenson. "In addition, consumers both in the U.S. and abroad will have a clear choice in their food-buying decisions."

Most notably, the new standards were revised to say that no food could be called organic if ir-

radiation, sewage sludge, or genetic engineering was used in its production.

"The rule provides a huge opportunity for organic growers, with organic product sales having increased 20 percent each year since 1990," Swenson said.

Agriculture products labeled organic must originate from farms or handling operations certified by a state or private

agency accredited by USDA. Farms and handling operations that sell less than \$5,000 worth per year of organic products are exempt from certifications. Farmers and handlers have 18 months to comply with the national standards.

Consumers will begin to see new organic labeling on products in their grocery stores by the summer of 2001, with full implementation by mid-2002.

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