

Key Factors

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as well as the payment incentives in the packer's weight and grade program.

But difficult as it is, you must go through the process if you wish to remain competitive.

Minimizing Nutrient Excretion

Our industry is just beginning to consider the amount of nutrients that are excreted by the pigs. In fact, at least 60 percent of any nutrient we feed will end up in the manure. The excretion of two of the major soil nutrients, nitrogen and phosphorus, can be reduced by 15-20 percent through changes in diet formulation

A simple and economical way to minimize nitrogen excretion is to lower the protein content and correct the deficiency by adding crystalline lysine. For example, 100 pounds of soybean meal can be safely removed from a one-ton diet by replacing it with 96.5 pounds of corn and 3.5 pounds of lysine-HCl. Many producers already do this because the corn/lysine mixture is often cheaper than the soybean meal.

Our problem with this substitution is that it lowers the nitrogen in the manure, while the phosphorus remains unchanged making the nitrogen-

phosphorus ratio somewhat worse. Most producers develop their nutrient management plans on the basis of nitrogen. Under normal conditions, applying manure to meet the crop's needs for nitrogen will provide more phosphorus than is required.

A relatively new approach is to use phytase, an enzyme that helps improve phosphorus availability. Much of the phosphorus in plant-based ingredients is not digestible by the pig. To provide adequate phosphorus, we use inorganic supplements.

By adding phytase to the diet, the phosphorus is more readily available, and we can reduce the amount of supplemental phosphorus. This means the total amount of phosphorus excreted in the manure is also reduced. This doesn't completely eliminate the nitrogen:phosphorus imbalance in the manure, but it's an important step in the right direction.

Feed Withdrawal

If possible, withdraw access to feed about 16 hours prior to the expected time of slaughter. This reduces the risk of puncturing the gut during the processing, and it also saves you at least 50 cents per pig.

Water Intake

Many producers are recognizing the benefits of

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