Steps to Higher Litter Average

L.J. Kortan
South Dakota State University

Follow this and additional works at: http://openprairie.sdstate.edu/sd_swine_1966

Recommended Citation

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Animal Science Reports at Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in South Dakota Swine Field Day Proceedings and Research Reports, 1966 by an authorized administrator of Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange. For more information, please contact michael.biondo@sdstate.edu.
Swine producers in the U.S. farrow approximately 13 million sows each year. From these sows, 120 million or more pigs are born. Survey studies show that after one week of age, approximately 20% of these pigs are dead, and within three weeks another 5 to 10% die. The loss of 20 to 25 million newborn pigs during the first few weeks of their life represents a staggering loss of potential profits which the swine industry is forced to bear.

If you are one of the producers that keep losses down to at least half of this average loss, then you no doubt have had satisfactory profits and like the hog business. On the other hand, if your losses equal the national survey studies, you are probably wondering if you should remain in the hog business.

Raising your pig-per-litter average is the best profit opportunity you have in cutting costs and increasing returns in your hog enterprise. Planning for increased pig-per-litter average must, of course, start where you are now. The record on your present program is the best source of information. Analyze this record and determine your strength and weakness. If records are not available, then take an inventory of your present situation.

Include in your inventory: Facilities, equipment, labor and problem areas.

Now develop your plan and then establish realistic goals for the future. A realistic goal should be ten to eleven pigs weaned per litter for a good swine producer. Be prepared before the pigs arrive, and during farrowing be with your sows.

Following is a check list of items that can influence baby pig losses:

**Overfeeding The Breeding Herd**

Research work has definitely proven that sows will overeat during the gestation period causing them to become too fat, which may affect litter size. Hand feeding, feeding stalls or substitution of increased levels of roughage in properly balanced self-fed rations will help correct this problem. Hand feeding four pounds of a properly balanced 14% protein ration the first 2/3 and then increasing the amount to 5 pounds of a 16% protein ration the last 1/3 of the gestation period has been very satisfactory.
Farrowing House Properly Cleaned

Farrowing house must be cleaned. No dirt, manure, bedding, rodents, birds or flies. A high pressure stock sprayer or steam cleaner will help complete the job. Then use one of the recommended disinfectants as outlined under directions found on the container. If possible, clean and disinfect at least two weeks before each farrowing.

Farrowing Stalls

Farrowing stalls assist in restricting the movement of the sow. This normally helps prevent crushing or crippling of newborn pigs. A few sows may not be satisfied when first confined to stalls and might fight or attempt to turn around. Working with sows by handling them when possible during the gestation period and prior to farrowing will often improve their disposition and may reduce such problems.

Wash The Sow

Before the sow goes into farrowing quarters, she should be thoroughly cleaned with warm water and soap. Give special care to the udder sections and feet. Make certain all dirt and filth have been removed.

Keep Pen Clean And Dry

A dry farrowing pen will help eliminate many of the baby pig scouring problems commonly seen in moist surroundings. Bed lightly using untreated wood shavings, ground straw, or fine ground corn cobs (1/4" hammer mill screen).

Be Present At Farrowing

There is absolutely nothing that will replace the herdsman during the period of farrowing. Remove fetal membranes to prevent suffocation, prevent possible chilling, dry pigs off and make sure they get a stomach full of milk.

Milk Injection For Small Pigs

Recent studies on baby pig survival show that milk injection into the stomach of the newborn pig that weighs under 2.5 pounds has beneficial effect.

After birth, the pigs are permitted to stay with the sow and nurse the colostrum milk. Pigs are injected with two doses of 15 cc. per dose on the first day, one dose of 20 cc. on the second day, and one 20 cc. dose on the third day.

A 20 cc. syringe with an attached 1/16 inch diameter rubber hose is used to feed the milk. Pigs are held vertically by their head and their jaws are forced open with fingers and thumb. The rubber hose is directed down the esophagus to the stomach. After the tube is in place, the milk is put into the stomach by pressing the plunger on the syringe.
The milk mixture should contain one quart of milk, one-half pint of half and half (a product made with 1/2 milk and 1/2 cream) and one egg.

Clip Needle Teeth

Sharp needle teeth in baby pigs' mouths cause injury to sow's udder and to other newborn pigs. Use a pig teeth clipper and clip needle teeth. Avoid any injury or open wound to pig's mouth.

Treat Navel Cord

The navel cord is a point where infection may enter. Treat navel cord with a tincture of iodine solution (15%) within 2 to 3 hours of birth. The effectiveness of this practice is questioned if the pig is allowed contact with floors or litter that is damp and dirty before treatment is made.

Quarantine Your Swine Unit

Provide for yourself with a foot-bath containing disinfectant at entrance of buildings. Only the man caring for the pigs should be allowed to enter.

Equalize Litters

If transfer of pigs is made between sows, do it within 24 hours of farrowing if possible. After transfer is made, allow all pigs to sleep and mingle together for an hour or more before placing with the sow.

Control Anemia

Pigs will require supplemental iron if farrowed on concrete or wooden floors. Treat baby pigs with one of the recommended iron shots, paste or pills when 2 to 5 days of age. Pigs are subject to anemia until they are eating enough creep feed to meet their iron requirements, or until they are placed on pasture.

Feeding The Baby Pig

When pigs are two weeks old, they should be consuming a well fortified palatable pig starter. A protein level of 18 to 20% is recommended. Encourage early eating by providing a creep feed at 10 days of age. Creep area should be well lighted and comfortable. Keep feed fresh, supplying a small amount at regular intervals. A fresh clean supply of water should also be provided for baby pigs.