

HOG-UPDATE

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Harvest 2009

As the harvest of the 2009 corn crop gets underway, we are noticing **lower corn test weights**. As with any other year, mill calibration should be completed with new crop corn as soon as possible, especially this year we expect adjustment based on lighter bushel weight corn. Also important is to recalibrate all volumetric feed distribution systems - hoppers won't hold as much feed so drops should be recalibrated as well. Feed scoops will be lighter, so recheck those weights as well.

Toxins have been found in corn in US Midwest. Purdue Extension swine specialists mentioned some producers have had 100% feed refusal. We can remember those days a couple years ago in SW Ontario. So far this year, tests have come back zero for vomitoxin and zearalanone, but always test to remain vigilant and extra cautious with DDGS sourced from Midwest US.

The following article serves as a good reminder to us all. Everyone has been belt tightening to become leaner and more efficient, but we must not lose sight of little things that can have significant impacts.

WATCHING EVERY \$

According to J. Carr from Murdoch University in Australia, the average farm wastes about 10% of their feed. Even 5 % feed wastage would amount to about 80 tonnes of feed thrown away – this represents a total loss of \$20,000. Where is all that feed wasted, and how can you prevent it?

Feed Distribution Systems and Storage

Keep the inside and outside of your bins clean. Leaving spilled feed under the bin attracts rodents and vermin to the farm. Avoid feed spillage from the bin to the feeder.



Figure 1. Feed spillage under a feed bin.

Feeder setup

Provide sufficient feeder space for all the pigs to allow them to grow evenly. For the **first week**, weaned pigs require three times more feed space to allow them time to get used to it.

Table 1: Feed space availability in a trough feeder

Weight of pig (Kg)	Trough/hopper length mm/pig	
	Restrict fed	Ad lib fed
5	100	75
10	130	33
15	150	38
35	200	50
60	240	60
90	280	70
120	300	75
sow	400	n/a

Evenly distribute the feed along the feeder to minimize fighting. Place the feeder at a position pigs can reach it, not too high. Avoid placing it in a corner, too close to another obstacle or on a sloped floor. All feeders should be placed so that they can easily be examined for leakage, overflowing feed, or soiling.

Feeders should be covered so they are not exposed to rodents and possibly birds, which can both eat the feed and soil the remaining feed. Further, uncovered feeders contribute up to 30% of the dust in the air.

An adequate, well-placed water supply is critical. Water should be clean with the appropriate flow rate. The drinkers should be not more than 2 meters from the feeder because pigs like to drink shortly after feeding. If the drinkers are too far away, pigs will carry food in their mouth and drop it on the floor and bedding, or down the slats.

Management

Use the right feed at the right time. It is essential that pigs progressively move to the less expensive diets as soon as possible. Keeping them on the expensive early diets for longer than warranted increases costs. Carry out regular feed budget audits to ensure that the farm is feeding appropriate levels of feed. Conversely, if feed prices are high, don't switch to a lower quality and cheaper diet too soon as growth and health could be affected.

Incorrectly prepared feed, ground too coarse will increase waste. Optimal particle size is <800 microns.

Pigs should be fed with the correct diet immediately when they enter the barn. Feeding remaining feed from the last group is not acceptable.

Talk to your feed salesperson if you have any concerns regarding feed budgeting, particle size, or other management.

Feeder management

It is imperative that all feeders are examined regularly, at least between batches. Holes should be fixed immediately to avoid feed wastage.



Figure 2: Any feeder with a hole should be thrown away or immediately repaired.

Feeders should be adjusted every day. **It is not acceptable that feeders over run.** This may result in feed refusal, increased dust contamination of room and increased respiratory problems in the pigs, not to mention increased waste.

Soiled feed

Be sure the feeder is placed properly so the pigs don't use it as a toilet. Be careful to ensure water does not leak into the feeder. Same thing with unsealed bins - wet feed can rapidly become moldy and fly infested. This is not only wasted feed, but could also be dangerous for pigs if eaten.



Figure 3: Excessive water in the feeder can result in feed waste and obstruction to feed intakes.

Birds, mice and rats can consume vast quantities of pig feed. Their feces and urine contribute to the soiling of even more feed. Feeders should be covered to reduce access to vermin.

Feeding routines

Avoid over feeding pigs. Too much feed in the feeder results in unnecessary waste.

Avoid feeding for unnecessary activity

Keep pigs in their thermo-comfort zone. Pigs will eat more if they are cold. On hot days, feed at cooler times of the day. If the pigs are too hot, their consumption and growth will drop. Don't place the drinkers too far from feeders, and keep clean and dry bedding. This will reduce unnecessary walking.

Avoid feeding unnecessary animals

Non-pregnant sows are very expensive. It is essential that all sows are pregnant 6 weeks post-breeding.

In the hospital area, don't keep unmarketable pigs too long. Cull quickly and efficiently. We have noticed slightly higher cull rates usually translate into lower mortality rates and better feed costs.

To feed a pig right up to slaughter can make its day extremely unpleasant by inducing vomiting and travel sickness, wasting feed. Keep pigs off feed for 12 hours before slaughter.

Do not overfinish pigs - sell them according to the slaughterhouse grid to achieve premiums and avoid penalties. Overweight pigs lose you too much money and put more pork on the market.

Source: summarized from J.Carr – Murdoch University, Australia,
"Management Practices to Reduce Expensive Feed Wastage"

HOG UPDATE is published in the interest of helping hog producers become more profitable. We welcome your comments.

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