

## Central Test Station Report

Keith Leavitt, Chairman  
Rodger Johnson, Secretary

Keith Leavitt opened meeting with challenge to committee.  
Topics identified for discussion were:

1. Revised guidelines for uniform swine improvement programs. Rodger Johnson was appointed to proof the section on central test stations.
2. Central test station indexes. Questions addressed were:
  - a. Is present index the right one?
  - b. All stations are not using the index. What can this committee do to increase use of the index by all stations?

### Discussion

It was pointed out by the manager of the Ames station, that consignors to that station were not ready to accept ratios. They had difficulty identifying a contemporary group for definition of a sale group. In general, they preferred absolute values for performance traits. They were also not ready to discard the Iowa index for the NSIF index.

Considerable discussion followed on the value of use of ratios

### Recommendations:

- a. Value of ratios was reiterated. It was emphasized that it is very difficult to compare performance from one contemporary group to another.
- b. Decided that no change in index is warranted at present. NSIF index is properly constructed and relative economic value of traits appears to be about correct.
- c. Suggested that test station managers work with their clientele to adopt NSIF guidelines.
- d. Suggested that ratios for backfat and feed efficiency be adjusted so that high ratios indicate better performance. This can be done by:

$$\text{Ratio for BF} = 200 - \left( \frac{\text{BF}}{\text{BF}} \right) \times 100.$$

3. Present problems faced by test stations are that they cannot fill stations and cannot get boars sold. Reasons for this were discussed. Among them are:
  - a. Economics of recent years
  - b. Difficulty that breeders have with breeding performance of tested boars. Many complaints that boars from test stations have a high attrition rate for various reasons. This leads to unhappy customers and buyers don't repeat. Reasons are:
    1. Mishandling of boars when brought to commercial farm.
    2. Insufficient follow-up and customer service.

- c. Industry trend is to less emphasis on testing. Many breeders have no performance testing or central test program but are successful in selling breeding stock. Why?
- d. Recommendations from this committee:
1. Need all-out educational effort emphasizing the importance of selection program based on performance records.
  2. Need more cooperation from breed association secretaries, University Extension people, etc.
  3. Provide better customer service and more information to buyers on how to handle tested boars.
  4. Promotional ideas:
    - NSIF booth at Pork Congress
    - Promotions at State Pork Producers' meetings
    - Discounts to first time buyers
    - Video cassettes for use by county agent and classroom instruction
  5. More quality and sophistication in advertising and promotional materials.
  6. Must convince the seedstock industry of the need for a well-defined selection program based on performance records. This must include on-the-farm testing. Central test records are a supplement, not a replacement, for on-the-farm program.
  7. Might consider testing without sales. Breeders would take boars home and dispose of as desired. Could eliminate some of the complaints with breeding problems of tested boars. Puts responsibility for promotion on breeder, not on test station.
  8. Must always keep objective of test stations first. That is to educate and to provide breeders a mechanism for genetic improvement. Sales are secondary.
  9. Breeders must use test stations as a source of information, not as a sales center.
4. Is there a need for frame score?  
General conclusion is no. Rather than encourage emphasis on indicator traits, must base selection on the trait.
5. Should final weight of test be changed?  
Not enough information to make a wise decision. Don't want to recommend heavy weights unless we are sure that this is correct. Don't want to select for late maturity. No changes suggested.
6. Should testicle size be measured?  
Thought to be an important trait but not enough known to recommend inclusion in a selection program.
7. What new literature needs to be developed?
- a. Need better use of existing literature
  - b. Need basic information for distribution to seedstock

and commercial breeders on genetics of swine. Should know:

1. How genetic gain is made
2. Basics of performance testing
3. Genetics of swine

#### ON-FARM TESTING COMMITTEE REPORT

Glenn Conatser, Chairman  
Bill Ahlschwede, Secretary

1. Whole-herd testing--the value of testing for genetic improvement purposes is greatly enhanced by testing all of the individuals in the herd.
2. On-Farm test records should be processed as close to the farm as possible. To be of use to the breeder for selecting purposes, the records should be processed and returned to the breeder quickly.
3. Performance test data should be collected by trained individuals. The usefulness of the data depends upon its accuracy. Most breeders have the ability to take the needed measurements. With some initial training, many breeders may collect their own performance testing data. Professional technicians will continue to be needed. Many breeders will choose to hire these technical assistants to ensure that the testing job gets done completely and on schedule. These technicians could provide the initial training and then supervise breeders doing their own testing. Organized programs with technical assistance can help ensure the timeliness and completeness of the testing and processing of records.
4. The entire group of pigs must be evaluated before boars are sold out of the group. On-farm test records could possibly be taken at lighter weights than suggested in the guidelines.
5. There are costs involved with on-farm testing. There is some concern of the cost of technical assistance and processing.
6. Central test stations can play an expanded role in the on-farm testing program. Test station personnel have the training and skills in performance testing techniques. The need to integrate on-farm and central test programs is apparent. Therefore, central test station personnel may want to consider getting involved in on-farm testing.