

Do Performance Tested Boars Pay Off?

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I feel I should start by telling you a little about our swine enterprise. We are in north central Indiana, near Purdue University. My father raised several hogs and I have raised hogs all of my life. Our current operation was started in 1967, which has grown each year on the profits of the operation. We do practically all of our own construction.

We are strictly commercial producers and do not sell any breeding stock of any kind, however, we do have several calls wanting breeding stock.

At present, we are producing approximately 12,000 hogs a year, in a farrow to finish, total confinement situation. All hogs are raised in enclosed buildings except for our gilts and boars. The growing hogs are reared in a Cargill type of unit. The breeding gilts and gestating sows are maintained in old cattle feedlots.

The gilts are pen bred to boars which are rotated every day. The sows are all hand mated to boars in an environmentally controlled building which is evaporative cooling.

Our annual conception rate has been from 93 to 95 percent for sows and around 86 percent for gilts. During 1979, our average number of pigs weaned for gilts was 8.1 and for sows it was 8.5 pigs per litter. These figures are about average for the past several years.

Our feed conversion has been within the range of 371 to 389 pounds of feed per hundred pounds of gain for several years. Since December 1976, when we had pseudorabies, our feed conversion has been much higher. Last year we were at 414 pounds of feed per hundred gain. Since we have not had a negative test on any hog since 1976, it becomes impossible to give any positive statistics on what tested boars are doing for us in either feed conversion or rate of gain.

In early 1975, pseudorabies became very prevalent in an adjoining country. Because of this disease condition, we started producing all of our own boars. We did not bring any outside breeding stock into our herd for a year and a half before the disease broke in our herd. During that time, we did find that our own crossbred boars could stand up under the stress of heavy breeding much better than our purchased purebred boars.

Since 1977, about 15 to 20 percent of the boars we have been purchasing have been purebreds, and we have mated them to our best sows to produce our own crossbred boars. With this arrangement, I feel we can pay the price for the top tested boars. I can not say

or prove that it pays to follow our program, but I do not worry about the cost of good boars. My son Mike has paid up to \$1,700 for boars. I probably would not have paid quite that amount, but it was probably a good investment. If we can reduce our feed per hundred weight gain by one pound at our level of production at the current \$.08 per pound of feed, it would return \$2,256 net profit on feed alone.

We have had a variation of 90 pounds in feed conversion during the last ten years. At our level of production and current feed cost, this difference is a cost of \$203,040 per year. This difference, in our opinion, has been due to pseudorabies.

Our overhead and labor cost estimate for 1980 will be \$298,775. This figures out to \$24.90 per head for a 12,000 hog production unit. If we market our hogs at 27 weeks, it would cost \$.92 per week per hog. If we had a rate of gain that would put the hog on the market at 25 weeks, the labor and overhead cost would be cut \$1.90 per head. This would add \$22,800 to our net income provided we push extra hogs through our facility, which I am sure our boys would do. They always run the facility at about 110 percent capacity and we give our help good production pay incentives.

When we buy boars with performance test data, we first look at the source and reliability of the person or organization doing the testing. Following this, in priority order, is health, feed conversion, rate of gain and conformation. The best is none too good for our operation.

We do not sell any hogs on the rail. They are all sold to an order buying station four miles from home. We feel that we are being paid well for quality, compared to other types of marketing where there would be additional marketing cost and shrink.

I feel that it is up to us, as individual commercial producers within our industry, to produce the very best hog that we can, whether we get paid for it directly or not. Most packers have a deep interest in the future of the industry, as we producers do, and they are spending a considerable amount of money and time through their trade organizations and the National Livestock and Meat Board to promote our product.

We have to improve our image and desirability of pork as much as possible if we are going to maintain and improve our share of the consumer's protein dollar. Our sons and daughters deserve this from us. The pork industry has been very good to us, and I feel we owe it our very best.