

Feed Efficiency--It's Not All Genetics

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Most pork producers are aware that saving feed saves money. Saving feed becomes more urgent when feed prices are high relative to other production costs.

Feed efficiency and profit are closely related. If a hog uses four pounds of feed for each one pound of liveweight gain, it should eat 720 pounds to grow from a 40-pound feeder pig to a 220-pound market hog. If it uses only 3.4 pounds of feed per pound of liveweight gain, it needs only 612 pounds, a difference of 108 pounds of feed.

If feed is \$150 per ton, the second hog has a feed cost of \$8.10 less than the first. If a producer markets 2000 pigs per year, this would be a difference in feed cost, and possibly a profit of \$16,200.

Data from Illinois Farm Business Farm Management Association records indicate that for sow and litter, farrow-to-finish enterprises, feed efficiency on all farms was 4.10, 4.17, 4.20 and 4.16 for the years 1976, 1977, 1978 and 1979, respectively.

Why has the amount of feed required to produce a pound of liveweight gain not improved over the years?

Genetic programs which will result in improved feed utilization can lower feed costs. However, feed efficiency is not all genetics. Many management factors affect feed utilization and contribute to a lack of expected feed efficiency. These include:

1. Self-feeder adjustment
2. Balanced diets
3. Reproduction and health
4. Environment
5. Ration preparation
6. Feed additives
7. Feeder and floor space
8. Market weight

These factors were discussed more extensively in the formal presentation.