

Working Towards 30 P/S/Y: Piglet Considerations

The goal of achieving 30 piglets weaned per sow per year is a far greater challenge than genetic selection for increased litter size alone. Critical economic factors that may influence the financial potential of this goal include:

- Birth weight of each piglet
- Litter morbidity and mortality
- Litter growth rate
- Return to estrus and breed back percentage

Consistency through Performance is Key

Piglets are not commodities. A commodity is defined as fungible; that is, equivalent no matter who produces it. Piglets are not fungible and there are differences that affect their overall utility and cost for producing pork. Birth weight is the most accurate indicator of the piglet's performance potential. This perspective is critical when considering the industry-wide goal of 30+ pigs per sow per year¹.

Birth Weight's Effects

Birth weight of piglets is a key driver for pig survival and performance. The greatest time to influence the birth weight of piglets is during the sow's gestation period. Maternal nutrition has a major influence on fetal growth²:

- Piglets spend about 50% of their lifetime in, and with, the sow
- Each extra piglet born decreases the average birth weight of piglets in that litter by 1.4-2.1 ounces per piglet

Average birth weight has been proven to vary significantly based on litter size, e.g., small litters (<9 pigs) to large litters (17>) have shown an average of almost 1 pound difference in average birth weight³. This is important because:

- More than 2 times higher pre-weaned mortality was seen in pigs that averaged 2.1 pounds at birth vs. 3.1 pounds
- 2.8 pounds lower weaning weight was seen in pigs that averaged 1.6 to 2 pounds at birth, versus those averaging 2.6 to 3 pounds
- These same lighter piglets had 0.4% higher nursery mortality

The economic impact of lower birth weights has been calculated to be more than \$19 margin per pig over feed cost⁴.

¹ Willis, Gawain; Ph.D. and Nutrition Business Leader for Land O'Lakes Purina Feed; Presentation. "Challenges to Full Value Pig™ Performance Derived From Improved Sow Productivity"; June 2011.

² Foxcroft and Town, 2004. Adv. Pork Production. 15:269-279

Knol and Mathur, 2009. Proceedings Optimizing Sow Breeding Management and Litter Outcomes.

³ LongView Animal Nutrition Center; 6 year records; 2,456 litters measured.

⁴ LongView Animal Nutrition Center; 6 year records; 6,823 pigs measured.

For further information, please see your local feed sales representative at a Land O'Lakes Feed Co-op or Purina Dealer. Visit us on-line at www.LOLFeed.com, www.PurinaMills.com

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