



Season 6, Episode 1: The Pig Livability Project: Past, Present, and Future

Dr. Joel DeRouchey, Professor and State Extension Leader, Kansas State University, and **Dr. David Rosero**, Assistant Professor, Iowa State University, discuss the Pig Livability Grant, highlighting its origins, impact, future direction, and the upcoming 2025 conference.

Background

The Pig Livability Project was launched in 2018 as a collaborative effort between Kansas State University, Iowa State University, and Purdue University, with funding from the National Pork Board (NPB) and the Foundation for Food and Agricultural Research (FFAR). The project goal is to reduce mortality and improve survivability across all phases of swine production including gilt development, sow longevity, and pig survivability, from birth to market. The project has had a significant impact through research, outreach, and industry engagement. To date, the project has trained 20+ graduate students, has produced more than 30 factsheets and accompanying videos (most available in both English and Spanish), 50+ podcast episodes, and delivered over 120 invited presentations worldwide. In 2021, the team hosted an international conference that attracted more than 450 participants from 175 swine operations and allied industry businesses. These resources, along with ongoing updates, are accessible through the project website, www.piglivability.org.

Outcomes From the First Round of Funding

During its first phase, the project identified key risk factors and knowledge gaps through literature reviews and applied studies. Research focused on sow mortality, pelvic organ prolapse, early piglet care, colostrum intake, post-weaning nutrition, and overall herd management. Outreach was a major priority, with practical tools developed through extension programming and dissemination efforts such as the PigX Podcast. A key achievement was the project's strong collaboration with producers, who contributed approximately \$1.6 million in in-kind support. This partnership helped broaden the project's reach and contributed to securing an additional \$1.5 million in research funding beyond the initial grant.

Second Round of Funding and Evolving Focus

Due to its success and strong industry interest, the Pig Livability Project received renewed funding from the NPB and FFAR. The new phase emphasizes on-farm demonstration of best practices and integration of emerging technologies. While the project continues to focus on sow, pre-weaning, and post-weaning stages, the second round includes expanded efforts in areas such as lameness, sow health, early post-weaning losses, and data science applications. Research teams are organized under four pillars: (1) sow herd livability, (2) pre-weaning survivability, (3) post-weaning management, and (4) extension. With guidance from an industry advisory board, the project aims to deliver practical, science-based solutions to help producers reduce mortality and improve productivity.

Upcoming Conference

The 2025 International Conference on Pig Livability will be held November 5–6 at the Hilton Omaha in Omaha, Nebraska. This two-day event will include keynote speakers, rapid-fire research presentations, and breakout sessions on breeding, pre-weaning, post-weaning, and finishing phases. Topics will include PRRS management, economic impacts of livability improvements, genetic strategies, and on-farm success stories. With participation from researchers, veterinarians, producers, and allied industry professionals, the conference offers valuable insights and actionable takeaways for swine operations of all sizes. For more information regarding the conference, visit <https://piglivability.org/2025-conference>.

To Listen to this full podcast please visit: <https://globalagnetwork.com/pigx/podcast/season-6-episode-1-the-pig-livability-project-past-present-and-future>

