



Season 6, Episode 4: Technology in the Swine Industry

Erin Brenneman and Jeremy Robertson, Brenneman Pork, discuss integrating different technologies to enhance pig care and herd health, while **Dr. Suzanne Leonard**, North Carolina State University, advises simplifying technology adoption and highlights tools to measure their true value.

Background

Technology has become an increasingly important part of swine production, offering opportunities to improve animal care, streamline labor, and make management decisions with greater precision. However, the range of tools available can be overwhelming, and not every technology provides the same value to every operation. Understanding both the opportunities and the limitations is critical for producers considering where to invest.

Adapting Technology on the Farm

Brenneman Pork has been proactive in integrating technology across its system, adapting tools designed for one function and applying them to other areas. A key example is their use of a feed tracking program that was initially created for monitoring deliveries. The company repurposed this system to improve feed mill management and connect information between the mill and barns. This shift has reduced errors, improved accountability, and allowed managers to better align feed orders with animal needs.

The company has also worked on connecting data streams from feed intake, barn environment, and pig health. By linking these sources, Brenneman Pork can see a more complete picture of what is happening inside barns. Rather than waiting weeks to evaluate pig performance, managers can spot issues earlier, intervene more quickly, and reduce potential losses.

Challenges in Implementation

While Brenneman Pork has experienced success with these adaptations, technology adoption is not without challenges. Many systems lack compatibility, which limits their ability to “talk to each other.” This forces managers to work across multiple platforms, which can be time consuming and reduce the usefulness of the data collected. Other systems, such as precision feeding or monitoring equipment, often require a high investment upfront and ongoing maintenance.

Scaling technology across large operations is challenging because systems that work in one barn may not perform the same way in another. Training employees to use and troubleshoot new systems is another factor that can limit adoption. These challenges highlight the importance of evaluating whether a technology will truly fit within an operation before making a major investment.

Guidance for Producers

Dr. Leonard stressed that technology should not be seen as a universal solution. Each farm has unique challenges, resources, and goals, and a technology that is effective in one system may not provide the same return on investment in another. She advises producers to start by carefully assessing their own operations. For example, a farm struggling with feed efficiency might benefit from feed tracking or precision feeding systems, while another focused on pig survivability may find value in real-time monitoring of pig health and environment.

By identifying clear priorities first, producers can avoid spending money on tools that add complexity without solving the problems most important to their operation. Success comes from aligning technology with well-defined goals and ensuring that adoption improves decision making, reduces labor pressure, or supports better pig care.

Listen to this full podcast please visit: <https://globalagnetwork.com/pigx/podcast/season-6-episode-4-technology-in-the-swine-industry>

