

## Season 1, Episode 11: Overall Sow Longevity

Dr. Mark Wilson, Zinpro Corporation, and Wayne Cast, PIC, discuss sow lameness and how to improve sow longevity.



### ***The key to sow longevity and lameness***

Minimizing body condition loss in lactation plays a significant role in longevity, especially in gilts after farrowing their first litter. It is important to examine key factors causing gilts and first parity sow loss such as nutrition and inflammatory issues like lameness and ulcers. Inflammation in feet, if not corrected and properly treated, may not heal due to lack of blood flow. Some causes of lameness are incorrect structure, uneven toes, flooring and injury. Lameness compounds the problem of weight loss and wean to estrus interval and is an unspoken issue that can be very costly to production. A third of sow death loss is due to lameness and downers. Teach employees to observe every sow as they walk through the barn. Pay attention to sows that are slow eaters or quick to lie down. If caught early, lameness may be fixable. Taking proper care of your gilts will result in future benefit for your sows.

### ***Sow condition and minimizing losses***

Proper sow condition is paramount as fat sows eat less in lactation and lose more weight. Sow condition has been a topic of discussion in the industry for some time. It has been shown that overfeeding gilts reduced feed intake during lactation. If sows are consuming less, the diet can be altered to make it more nutrient dense. Getting the sow in good condition prior to farrowing is key to minimizing condition loss. Non-productive days can cost you around \$3 per sow/day. North Carolina State has developed a caliper to determine body condition in sows. It is more accurate and faster than visual scoring and is well accepted in Iowa. Observe sows as you move them between breeding and farrowing and watch if there are problem spots. You'll set sows up for success by fixing those hazards and obstacles that could lead to an injury. Typically, foot and leg injuries are the start of lameness problems.

### ***Risks with gilts***

A gilt is around \$175 -300 to replace, but can pay themselves off as long as they make it to their third parity. Second through fourth parity sow piglets will bring the most revenue. Generally, the first litter will not perform as strongly in the finisher. Each turn, the goal is to only bring in replacements gilts when necessary. When choosing replacements, for your breeding herd, you want them sturdy and structurally sound. Earlier puberty has been correlated to a higher likelihood of making it to third parity and beyond. Do not overcrowd gilts or wait until the last minute to breed, as this will not provide a proper opportunity for boar exposure. It is also important to closely observe gilts, their first time in the farrowing house, making sure they know how to use feeders.

### ***Research looking at sow longevity***

There is research looking at altering temperatures and farrowing crate design to make the sow and piglets most comfortable, which can result in increased feed intake. Research is also being done on corn grind size, showing a positive correlation to longevity with finer ground corn. Other work is focused on objective measures of ideal sow structure and perineal scores. Organic minerals are being evaluated to reduce inflammatory response in horns and hooves, as inflammation can take nutrients away from growth, reproduction and milk production.

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