



Season 1, Episode 8: 10 Steps to Reduce Wean-to-Finish Mortality

Dr. Chris Sievers and Dr. Ryan Strobel, Swine Vet Center, discuss the first five steps in their ten-step plan to reduce wean to finish mortality.

Benchmarking

Swine operations should be collecting daily data on their production systems. Records should be collected on mortality, average daily gain, and feed conversion. It is difficult to measure improvement without consistent records to compare back to. Utilizing data management software, like Meta Farms, allows you to see trends over time. For example, nursery mortality across all records in Meta Farms during 2017 was 3.08%, where as in 2020 it increased to 3.60%. Yearly goals for improvement should be set, and there is a benefit to comparing your operation against others in a database.

Starting out on the right foot

You only get one chance to start a new group of pigs off right. Whenever possible, practice all in all out. Cleaning of facilities prior to arrival of new pigs is critical. Cleaning should include degreasing, washing, inspecting, drying, disinfecting, drying again and then leaving downtime between turns. Work with your veterinarian or local representative on selecting a disinfectant specific to the challenges you are facing within your operation. Make sure all water bowls are properly cleaned. Seventy five percent of a weaned pig's weight is water. Therefore, initial water intake is important for pig health and can also stimulate feed intake. Provide heat using lamps and mats, creating a consistent temperature zone. Inspect the outside of your buildings, make sure there are no weeds, snow, or dust built up around fans.

Flow plan

Understand if the pigs you are receiving are known for having a specific disease or challenge such as Strep. or E. coli. Having a well-coordinated flow plan includes optimizing age and weight of piglets at weaning. Do you receive your pigs from a single source or are they coming from multiple sites and how far do they travel to get to you? A thorough biosecurity plan should be in place to reduce risks when moving pigs in and out of your facilities.

Vaccination program

There is not a one size fits all vaccination program. Work closely with your veterinarian to provide your pigs with the best protection. Communication between veterinarians, managers and barn staff is key to executing a vaccination program. Ensure everyone involved is trained on vaccine storage and proper mixing, knows the vaccine schedule and signs off once it has been completed.

Barn layout

Barn layout is important to consider, sick and small pens should be placed towards the middle of the barn. Every operation should have a critical sick pen, sort pen, and graduation or general population pen. Having a graduation pen ensures you are not over treating animals healthy enough to return to the general population. There is room for improvement within every system, an open mind to change can be rewarding for your pigs and your business.

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