



Season 1, Episode 9: 10 Steps to Reduce Wean-to-Finish Mortality Part 2

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

Nutrition

Nutrition plays a key role in the success of any operation. Pigs are fed to their specific age, weight and genetic requirements. Weaning and the transition from milk to solid feed is a significant stress. Creep feeding at the sow farm and gruel feeding in the nursery can help ease some stress on the piglets. Mat feeding four times a day and ensuring access to fresh feed and water is important. Hard starting piglets, or those not getting up to eat each feeding, should be moved to pens where they can receive individual attention. Focusing on consistent feed intake, from the start, can help improve gastrointestinal function and overall pig health.

Supervisor roles and training

The ideal employee should possess people as well as animal husbandry skills. Companies can use their top performing facilities as a show place to demonstrate how they would like all operations maintained. Supervisors must lead by example, lending a hand and explaining the importance of everyday tasks. As a supervisor there will be conflict that arises, it is best to handle these situations up front and in a professional manner. Supervisors should receive training on managing people, as well as facilities, and should have contacts for the nutritionist and veterinarian.

Grow-finish biosecurity

Biosecurity is a buzz word in the swine industry. Movement of people is the number one risk to biosecurity. Caretakers moving from one site to another should always begin with the healthiest site first. Often times, maintenance work is contracted out and those individuals need to be made aware of biosecurity policies. Anyone entering needs to wash their hands, change boots and wear clean coveralls. Always disinfect tools, phones and other devices before entering the premises. Frequent refresher training on biosecurity protocols is also encouraged.

Individual pig care

Observing every pig every day is very important. Treating a sick animal early can lead to improved outcomes. Putting more time up front in to identifying and treating sick animals will pay off in the end and require less labor to pull and remove deceased pigs. Utilize feeding time as an opportunity to observe pig behavior and flag pigs needing additional attention.

Ventilation

Ventilation can seem complicated, but starting with the basics can help. Go to the pig first, are your pigs piling? If so, temperatures may need to be increased or you may have a draft in your barn. Pigs wallowing in manure may be overheated. Evaluate ventilation at different points throughout the day, to ensure you are getting the full picture. Aim for less than 70% humidity and at least 600 feet per minute air speed. Good air exchange rate encourages mixing of air and removal of gases. Pay attention to seasonal changes, as well as health status of your pigs, and make ventilation adjustments accordingly.

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