

Dr. Chris Rademacher, Iowa State University, and Dr. Steve Pollmann, DSP Consulting, discuss changes in the industry, evaluating cost sensitives, and post-wean mortality.



Change

Dr. Steve Pollmann and Dr. Chris Rademacher have been around the swine industry for some time and have seen their share of change. Dr. Pollmann emphasizes the significant consolidation of the industry as well as significant improvements in technology and production practices. The swine industry has had to evolve production practices to meet consumer requirements and environmental stewardship. Dr. Rademacher has seen significant change in the way producers evaluate current practices and make decisions. Overall, the swine industry utilizes a quantify and verify approach to evaluating practices in the field.

Making decisions

Evaluating cost sensitives can assist in making management decisions. To properly evaluate cost sensitives the operation must take the entire financial picture of the business into consideration. Sensitivity is the measure of what it takes to make a change in the economics of the business. These sensitivities can also be used to evaluate animal-based intervention or treatment strategies. It is important to first consider if a treatment strategy will cost more than the financial benefit it will have for your business. What would a 1% change in mortality mean for your company? Translating changes in mortality to actual dollars and cents can bring clarity to operational decisions.

Causes of mortality

Sow farm source has a significant effect on grow-finish mortality. Source is the single greatest contributor to survivability. Dr. Daniel Linhares and graduate student Edison Magalhaes, Iowa State University, conducted a study to evaluate causes of post-weaning mortality. Again, the primary cause of mortality in their research was sow farm source. Dr. Pollmann also described one company where 15% of all sow farms made up 28% of grow-finish mortality. Of those 15%, 1 or 2 were the primary contributors.

Post-weaning mortality

It is helpful to break grow-finish production in to three phases. Mortality occurring during the third phase of grow-finish is the costliest since you have significant feed and resources invested at that point. Therefore, it is important to catch and treat pigs early so untreated pigs are not making it to later phases of production and then dying. Recognizing which phase of grow-finish is causing the most issues and leading to the highest mortality rates is helpful in order to target strategies for improvement. This can also assist veterinarians in pinpointing areas of your production cycle where special attention should be paid. As the industry and technologies continue to evolve, there is tremendous opportunity for quicker decision-making using data and real time indicators. Keeping an open mind and searching for continuous improvement opportunities is crucial for success.

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