

Dr. Christine Mainquist-Whigham, director of health at Pillen Family Farms and DNA Genetics, and **Dr. Carlos Roudergue**, director of technical services at Country View Family Farms share how they are working to improve livability across all phases of production through research and specialized jobs.

Background

Ongoing research and specialized jobs are pushing to improve mortality across all production phases. Dr. Christine Mainquist-Whigham discusses multiple research projects conducted at Pillen Family Farms to reduce mortality while Dr. Carlos Roudergue discusses implementing a sow care specialist at Country View Family Farms and the impact it has had on the company and individuals.

Reducing Mortality at Pillen Family Farms

Multiple research projects have been conducted and analyzed at Pillen Family Farms, mostly focused on reducing nursery mortality. Results show that moving nursery pigs from their original pen into sick pens, then back to original pen, decreased overall health and mortality compared to keeping them in sick pens or their original pens. Another study showed that using detergent when washing had a 1.15% improved in mortality. Creep and mat feeding were also evaluated and showed improvements in weaning weights, post-weaning feed intake, average daily gain post-weaning, and, in compromised pigs, weight until market.

Sow Care Specialist

In 2023, Country View Family Farms introduced the position of Sow Care Specialist to their system. This role was created to address the growing complexity of modern swine production, driven by the adoption of new technologies. Sow care specialists are highly trained and focus on the sow's fundamental basics: health, care, well-being, and identifying bully sows during the first co-mingling period. At Country View Family Farms, sow care specialists are often promoted to other positions, such as managers, due to the high level of training, responsibilities, and work ethic required in the role.

Takeaways

There is not one solution to improving pig livability. Oftentimes, it consists of setting realistic expectations for mortality improvement and continuously doing the right things in operations over time. For small operations, research results from large operations should be carefully reviewed and adapted to ensure the solution translates across effectively to the small operation.

To face complexity, specialization is key. For Country View Family Farms, this included training designated personnel person specifically for the sow care specialist role. These workers have become experts on the farm and have helped Country View improve connections between workers and the pigs and adapt to new technologies at the production level.

To listen to this full podcast please visit: <https://globalagnetwork.com/pigx/podcast/season-6-episode-12-veterinarians-perspectives-on-managing-swine-herd-health-across-all-phases>

