

## TIPS FOR SWINE MANAGEMENT

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Management is the key to success in the swine business. Successful producers practice good management by considering and placing the correct emphasis on the important areas of swine production, including breeding and selection, feeding, housing and equipment, herd health and marketing. In actual practice, many compromises may be necessary, but poor or improper management is responsible for a high percentage of the failures of swine enterprises.

No species of farm animal is as adaptable to different management schemes as the pig. Therefore, there are many ways to raise pigs profitably and many different management systems. The most successful producers continually study and evaluate new information and management practices to glean management ideas that will enable them to increase production efficiency.

### The Boars

Boars, which contribute one half of the genetic base of every herd, should receive more attention than they do on many farms. Their reproductive efficiency and length of service is greatly dependent on management. Good boar management includes the following:

- Purchase boars at least 60 days prior to use.
- Isolate purchased boars from the herd and observe closely for disease and health problems. During the isolation period, blood test for brucellosis and leptospirosis.
- Fertility check newly purchased boars 30 days before the breeding season by mating the boar to 4-6 healthy gilts scheduled for slaughter. If

more than one of these gilts returns to heat within 25 days after mating, the fertility of the boar is questionable. If the boar is questionable, a semen evaluation should be performed.

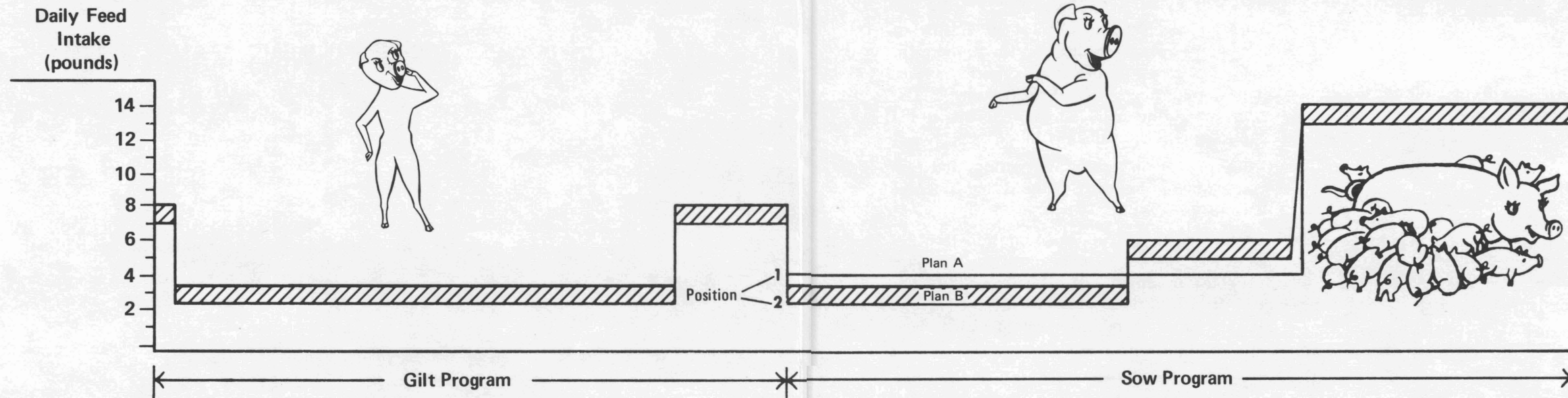
- Young boars should be hand-mated or carefully watched in pen mating to assure that their first 2-3 services are successful. It may be necessary to provide assistance to young boars so that they develop needed confidence to become aggressive, successful breeders.
- The number of sows that the boar can successfully breed depends upon boar age, natural vigor, length of breeding season and the distribution of services. Mature boars (boars 18 months or older) can be used 3 times per day for short periods of time. Younger boars should be used less.
- Feed service-age boars 3 to 4 pounds per day of a 16 percent ration fortified with vitamins and minerals during non-breeding seasons. The amount should be increased to 6-8 pounds some 10 to 12 days prior to, and maintained at this feeding level throughout, the breeding season. The feed allowance during the breeding season should be enough to maintain condition. Overfeeding should be avoided. Overfat boars become sluggish and inactive.
- Maintain a healthy environment for boars by providing an adequate exercise area and comfortable quarters. Vaccinate boars for erysipelas and leptospirosis every six months if these diseases are prevalent in the area.

**Precaution:** Fever and hot weather can temporarily elevate the testicular temperature sufficiently to interfere with the production of normal sperm. Every attempt should be made to keep the boars cool prior to and during the breeding season.

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## FEEDING SCHEME

Period	Selection and Development	Flushing & Breeding	Gestation and Farrowing	Lactation and Weaning
No. of Days (Range)	90-120	7-12	113-118	35-56



### The Gilts

An efficient, productive sow herd begins with the selection and subsequent development of replacement gilts. Therefore, producers should, for

#### Selection and Development

- Select sound replacement gilts that have no physical defects that will interfere with their production; *i.e.*, sound feet and legs with adequate bone, 12 or more evenly spaced, non-inverted teats. Selections should be made when gilts weigh 180-240 pounds. Producers should select 10-15 percent more gilts than needed since this percentage of gilts usually fail to breed due to physical or hormonal abnormalities.
- In starting a herd or if new purchases are necessary, obtain them from as few herds as possible for herd health purposes. Isolate newly purchased gilts for 30 days, blood test for brucellosis and leptospirosis and observe for signs of disease.
- Follow a planned crossbreeding program. Cross-bred females farrow and wean more pigs.
- Feed replacement gilts 2½-3½ pounds per head per day of a well-balanced 14-16 percent ration. Gilts having access to excellent pasture require considerably less feed than those in dry lots. **Do**

not overfeed replacement gilts. Thin gilts tend to be more productive than fat ones.

- Vaccinate gilts for leptospirosis if the disease is prevalent and worm the gilts, using either piperazine or dichlorvos.

#### Flushing and Breeding

- Increase the feeding level to 7-8 pounds per head per day, 10-14 days prior to breeding. This practice, known as flushing, increases ovulation rates and subsequent litter size if gilts are thin (there is no response to flushing gilts that have been fed 5-6 pounds per day for 30 days prior to breeding).
- Breed replacement gilts on the third heat period to take advantage of increased ovulation rates over the first and second heat periods.
- Keep replacement gilts cool prior to and during the breeding period.
- Breed gilts twice, 12-24 hours between services, if hand-mating is practiced. Experienced producers can utilize hand-mating to increase the number of pigs farrowed per litter over pasture or lot mating.
- Reduce the feeding level to 2½-3½ pounds per head per day immediately following breeding.

### The Sows

Efficient management practices are basically the same for replacement gilts and sows after breeding. All management of replacement gilts prior to breeding can be for naught unless a high level of management is maintained through the gestation, farrowing, lactation and weaning periods.

#### Gestation and Farrowing

- Provide an adequate physical environment for bred females, especially during the first 20-25 days after breeding. Stress during this period results in increased embryonic mortality which could significantly decrease litter size. It is essential that a cooling system, *i.e.*, foggers, sprinklers, etc., be provided bred sows and gilts during the warm season months.
- Feed bred gilts and sows 2½-3½ pounds of 12-14 percent protein ration per head per day for 75-80 days after breeding.\* Those having access to good pasture could be fed less; however, an increased feeding level is needed during extremely cold periods. **Do not overfeed.**
- Increase feeding level from 2½-3½ pounds to 5-6 pounds per head per day during the last 35-40 days.\* This results in increased pig weight at birth.

\*An alternate feeding program for sows can be followed by feeding 4 pounds per head per day throughout the gestation period (Plan A) or self feeding sows for 6-8 hours every third day.

- Vaccinate bred gilts and sows for erysipelas 20-30 days prior to farrowing if erysipelas is a problem in the area.
- Thoroughly wash animals and place clean bred gilts and sows in a clean farrowing house 3-6 days prior to farrowing.

#### Lactation and Weaning

- Gradually increase the feeding level after farrowing, reaching the maximum level when the pigs are 7-12 days of age. Sows nursing 8 or more pigs can be self-fed (daily feed intake will average about 15 pounds). If lactating females are hand fed, they should receive the equivalent of 2-3 pounds plus 1 pound for each nursing pig (sows nursing 8 pigs would receive 10-11 pounds of feed per day).
- Wean pigs when they are 35-56 days of age, depending on management level and facilities, and reduce feed for sows to 4 pounds per head per day.
- Vaccinate sows for leptospirosis the day the pigs are weaned.
- Breed sows on first heat which is generally 3-5 days after the previous litter is weaned.
- Return sows to Position 1 or 2 on the Feeding Scheme.



## The Pigs

Given an adequate opportunity, a pig weighing 3 pounds at birth will increase in body mass by 70 times before 6 months of age. Pigs that are stressed by improper conditions (disease, environment, etc.) usually do not recover sufficiently to achieve their genetic ability to grow.

### *Birth to Weaning*

- To keep the newborn pigs from chilling, dry them off and make sure they nurse.
- Treat the navel and navel stub with tincture of iodine to prevent infection.
- Shortly after the pigs are farrowed, their needle teeth should be clipped. This prevents injury to the sows' teats and to other pigs, if they fight.
- Ear-notch pigs for identification purposes.
- If several sows farrow within a 24-hour period, the litters may be evened up by removing pigs from sows with larger litters and placing them with sows with smaller litters.
- Provide a dry, warm environment for the newborn. Baby pigs are cold-sensitive and need temperatures of 90-95 degrees for the first 4-5 days. After this initial period, temperatures can be lowered to 80-85 degrees.

**Precautions:** Keep heat lamp 18 inches above pigs.

- Prevent nutritional baby pig anemia by providing a source of supplemental iron for pigs on or before the third day of age. Supplemental iron may be injected intramuscularly, added to the baby pigs' drinking water or fed in the form of iron sulfate. Many forms of iron that are adequate are available commercially. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations.
- Make available to the pigs an 18 percent protein pig starter when they attempt to eat with the sow. This can be anytime between 7-21 days of age. Put in feeders only the amount of feed that will be consumed in a 2-3 day period, so that fresh feed will always be available.
- Castrate male pigs before 2 weeks of age.
- Wean pigs at 35-56 days of age. Weaning at earlier ages requires a higher degree of management skill.

### *Weaning to Market*

- To prevent unnecessary stress, leave pigs in the facility that they have previously occupied for 2-3 days after weaning.
- Leave pigs on 18 percent protein pig starter until they weigh approximately 40 pounds.
- Worm pigs at 50-60 days of age, provided they have been reared in contact with roundworm eggs (pigs raised under any conditions other than slotted floors should be wormed). Use either piperazine or dichlorvos according to the manufacturer's recommendations.
- Group pigs in uniform weight groups and provide 1 waterer for each 20 head and 1 feeder space for each 4 pigs.
- Self feed a 16 percent protein ration from 40 pounds to market weight unless facilities are available for separating the barrows from the gilts. If such facilities are available, the barrows may be fed a 14 percent protein ration from 120 pounds of weight to market weight.
- If pigs are wormy when wormed at 50-60 days of age, repeat worming practice at 80-90 days of age.
- Provide an adequate cooling system so maximum efficiency may be attained. Fogging systems are ideal under most conditions.
- Select needed replacement gilts before marketing any hogs from each group. This practice assures retention of replacement gilts with superior growing ability.
- Market hogs when they weigh 220-240 pounds.

Producers must continually glean, from all sources, management tips to increase efficiency. Additional information concerning swine production is contained in the following publications available through your county Extension office or by writing the authors of this publication.

#### *MP-953, Keys to Profitable Swine Production*

*L-728, Crossbreeding for Commercial Pork Production*

*L-993, Swine Herd Health*

*L-992, Buying and Handling Feed for Pork Production*

*L-706, External Parasites Attacking Swine in Texas*

*B-922, Selecting Meatier Hogs*

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Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, The Texas A&M University System and the United States Department of Agriculture cooperating. Distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8, 1914, as amended, and June 30, 1914.

10M-4-75, Reprint

AS 6