



Winter 1999
Volume 6, Number 1

Program Funding Supports Delivery of Research Results

This publication is supported through the program funding provided by the general pork producer organizations in Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba. A portion of the research check off funds that producers contribute, as part of their universal levy, is directed toward the Centre's program. This research program encompasses the fields of nutrition, engineering and behaviour research. The applied research program has two broad objectives: to reduce the cost of production, and to ensure the

sustainability of pork production. A significant portion of this mandate is to provide several avenues whereby pork producers and their suppliers can easily access and apply the new information, a process commonly called technology transfer.

The Technology Transfer program uses this newsletter as one vehicle for communicating what can be done to address production and environmental concerns of the commercial pork producer. A review of the technology transfer program is underway to assess whether all of the activities meet the current needs of the industry. In our last issue a fax-in form was included to provide a way for your direct input into the program review. The results of this survey plus many on-farm interviews has confirmed that there are indeed many ways to communicate new information to the industry. On the survey, the newsletter approach is regarded as the most popular method

for communicating, followed closely by specialized publications (such as Swine Nutrition Guide and Ventilation Guide) and the Annual Satellite Conference.

At this time of severely reduced prices we turn our attention to looking closely at how individual farms can benefit from the experience of the research program. Using the next two issues we will examine the many ways that a pork producer can minimize losses during the period of depressed prices. Although we cannot eliminate the low markets we can significantly minimize the effect, and when reasonable prices return, as they will, the savings instituted today will contribute significantly to cash surpluses for debt reduction.

Pork production is a systems business. Each decision or action has a domino effect on the overall productivity and profitability of the farm. Whether it is the selection of the breeding stock resulting in greater or fewer piglets

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Management Training Proceeding on Schedule

Lee Whittington, BSc MBA, Mary Peterson, BEd

Our last newsletter introduced Mary Petersen, Coordinator of Training Programs. Course development continues along side a development schedule that will see some 20 courses developed over the first two years of the program.

The first two courses have been completed and delivered at various locations in Saskatchewan and Alberta.

The first course in Human Resource Management, *Being an Effective Manager*, was delivered four times. Three of those deliveries were at Humboldt, SK and the fourth delivery was at Olds College, Olds, AB. Participants in this course assess their own management styles and gain an understanding of the role of the manager. They also learn how to create and manage work groups and improve interpersonal communication to assist with problem solving and conflict management.

Managing Human Resources guides the student to understand the

underlining theories and principles of human resource management. Through case studies, small group activities and individual exercise planning, students gain an understanding of correct hiring procedures, orientation procedures for new staff, continuous performance reviews and the termination process. Course developer Mary Cawley of SIAST delivered the first offering of this course in November.

The Unit Manager Training Program is anticipating developing 20 courses specifically for managers of hog production units. Three additional courses, *Issues in Agricultural Management*, *Stockmanship* and *Operational Environmental Management in the Swine Industry* are currently in the development stage with delivery scheduled from January to April, 1999.

Mary Peterson is currently working closely with an Advisory Committee recently struck in Saskatchewan with a similar group meeting in Alberta in January. The role of the Advisory

Committee is to assist in prioritizing the order of course development, reviewing course outlines for appropriate content and suggesting potential resource people for development of courses. The Advisory Committee consists of a cross section of the hog industry. Small and large producers, a unit manager and a representative from each of government and pork producers association have consented to give their time to this committee.

Participants at the Pork Symposium held in Saskatoon on Nov 12 & 13 were given the opportunity to provide input into prioritizing the order of course development. During the Symposium, The Manager Training Initiative presented one of the topics in the series of Human Resource modules entitled *Removing Communication Roadblocks*. At the workshop 73 participants were given some ideas on improving their communication skills.

"It is extremely important for the industry to have input into the

development of courses," states Mary Petersen, "These courses are developed to improve the skills of managers and with input from the industry, we are able to provide a first rate program."

See page 6 for the next course offering dates and course outlines. Watch our web site for the most recent course offering dates. 

<http://adminsrv.usask.ca/psci>

Mary Petersen (left) is assisted by Frank Hofer while Wil Kingma and Jack Saxton look on during the recent course held at Olds College. ▼



▲ Participating in the course *Being an Effective Manager* held at Olds College in November are (left to right) Jack Saxton, Ken Hope, Mark Heasman and Marvin Oudshoorn.

Dealing With Market Crisis: The Right Time To Fine Tune Your Operation

Lee Whittington, BSc MBA

The Canadian Pork Industry is experiencing unprecedented change, the most dramatic of which is cash market hog prices. There are no easy solutions to the oversupply of market weight hogs in the United States. As Canadian markets take their lead from various US cash hog markets our prices too have spiraled downward into price points not seen for over 35 years. Low prices may be out of the individual's control, but that doesn't mean we can do nothing to stop the losses.

A number of ideas are currently being assembled into a checklist that producers can compare to their current operating practices. Feed costs will continue to be the largest variable cost item and must be reviewed first. Typically there are at least \$2-3 per pig in savings which can be implemented without impairing performance. On some farms even greater savings can be found through a detailed analysis of the feeding program. There are many other areas where costs can be trimmed or productivity improved. A

Low prices may be out of the individual's control, but that doesn't mean we can do nothing to stop the losses.

short list of these is included here and will soon be available in an expanded checklist version.

It is going to take the concerted effort of many resource people to address the needs of each farm. As one producer said to me last week "this is no time to isolate yourself" and he is right. The following list of ideas will give you and your advisers a place to start. It is important to note that when market

prices return to more normal levels the changes made now will continue to provide significant margin improvements. Every \$2 per pig improvement in net income on a typical 200 sow operation translates into over \$8,000 a year to put toward improvements or pay down a mortgage.

The following list has been gleaned from a variety of sources including Prairie Swine Centre's previously published reports.

In the Grow-Finish Barn:

- Determine the ideal selling weight for your packer grid. This requires monitoring feed intake and growth as pigs approach market weight and comparing this to the yield and class history of your pigs at that packing house. See *Centred on Swine*, Volume 5 Number 3 Summer 1998.

- Lowering calcium and phosphorus in the diet of market animals can save from \$.60 to \$2 per pig.
 - Using Canola Meal at 5% in the diet currently saves \$1.60 per pig. Allowing ration balancing programs to utilize this important ingredient to higher levels can realize savings in excess of \$4 per pig.
 - Field peas included in the diet at 20% can save \$1.00 per pig under current markets.
 - Bushel weight of grains is a poor indicator of feeding quality. Some 45 lb barley may have the same DE as 50 lb barley but costs \$0.10 to \$0.20 per bushel less. Savings from using such discounted barley would be \$0.60 to \$1.20 per pig.

- Using wet/dry feeders, particularly in the finishing barn, improves feed intake by 5% and speeds hogs to market.

- Saving 5 days in the grow-finish barn is worth \$0.50 to \$1.50 per pig in housing costs.

In the Breeding Herd:

- Keeping back terminal cross finishing gilts as replacements may not have the effect you were looking for, according to a recent study by Dr. A. Schinckel and Brian Rickert. Estimates of the savings of the terminal cross female are \$2-3 (US) per piglet produced. Long term cost of reduced reproductive performance was estimated at \$3-6 (US) per piglet produced.

- "Breeding efficiency, conception

It is important to note that when market prices return to normal levels the changes made now will continue to provide significant margin improvements

rates and whole herd feed conversion are the most critical numbers to focus on in the breeding herd at this time," according to Steve Dudley, DVM, as reported in *National Hog Farmer*, December 15, 1998.

- "A farm with multiple disease problems, high medication costs and unacceptable growth performance may be forced to depopulate." Source: *The Canadian Swine Forum* Sept-Oct. 1998. With current price forecasts is this the right time to consider this option?

In the Farrowing Barn:

- With the individual piglet value so low, concentrate on piglet quality.

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Impact of Open Pens and Feeders on Pigs

Harold Gonyou, Ph.D. — Research Scientist, Ethology

Open designs for pens and feeders may stimulate pigs to eat, but they won't increase feed intake or weight gain.

Spindled pen walls and open feeders may stimulate grower/finisher pigs to eat at crucial times in their lives, but they won't increase pigs' overall productivity, says Dr. Harold Gonyou, research scientist in ethology at the Prairie Swine Centre Inc. (PSCI).

“There was more synchronized eating . . . where the pigs had contact with each other through the feeders. Head to head contact seemed to be more important to the pigs than just being beside each other.”

His conclusion is based on the results of a recent PSCI study which lasted for two 12-week blocks and involved 200 pigs. Gonyou used four different treatment combinations of pens and feeders to vary the degree of contact available to the pigs in adjoining pens.

In one of the Centre's test rooms, technicians arranged two adjacent rows of 10 pens with five pigs in each pen. Five pairs of the pens had a solid divider between them while spindled walls divided the other five pairs. In addition, five pairs of the pens' single space feeders were modified to allow contact between pigs in paired pens while the rest of the feeders had a solid divider.

Every two weeks, technicians weighed the animals and the feed to determine average daily gain (ADG) and average daily feed intake (ADFI), respectively.

Synchronized Eating

During the study, researchers observed that in the pens where pigs could see their neighbours, they tended

to eat at the same time for longer periods.

"There was more synchronized eating in the pens, especially where the pigs had contact with each other through the feeders. Head to head contact seemed to be more important to the pigs than just being beside each other," says Gonyou.

However, the pigs' eating rate (the amount of grams they ate per minute) was the same whether a neighbouring pig was at his feeder or not. As a result, there were no significant differences among the treatments in terms of the pigs' ADG or ADFI.

"If you just looked at the total amount of time spent feeding, it didn't differ between having a solid feeder or an open feeder. What was different was the amount of time that pigs spent eating together," says Gonyou.

He adds that since the pigs could eat as much as they wanted without stealing from each other, the animals' tendency to eat together couldn't be attributed to competitiveness. Instead, it was the sight of a pig eating which seemed to motivate the other animal to approach the feeder and eat at the same time.

In a past study, Gonyou had noticed that pigs from adjacent pens tended to synchronize their eating when their feeders were placed side by side, compared to pigs in pens where the feeders were in opposite corners. Other researchers had also observed the synchronized eating behaviour in earlier studies.

What no one had previously tested was whether this behaviour increased the pigs' feed consumption.

"It's very difficult to increase pigs' total consumption," points out Gonyou. "However, there was a possibility here so we thought we would try it."

Benefits of Contact

Although the study's results showed that open pens and feeders didn't affect pigs' productivity, there may be other benefits.

"There are two or three times in a pig's life when we have difficulty in maximizing its feeding consumption. One point is during the days after weaning when the young pigs don't eat as much as they should. Part of that is because they have to learn how to eat solid food. But if they can see other pigs eating and can be attracted to the feeder, there's a possibility that it can help," says Gonyou.

Another crucial time is right before pigs are ready for market. "When you market some pigs out of a pen and leave a couple behind, those two pigs will reduce their feed intake. They slow down on eating because of the social upset."

If open penning was used in a barn, the pigs would still be able to have contact with animals in adjacent pens

“There are two or three times in a pig's life when we have difficulty maximizing its feeding consumption . . . There's a possibility that (open penning) can help.”

which may help to maintain their feed consumption. Gonyou suggests that it may also help to reduce incidences of aggression during the trip to market since the pigs would be more accustomed to each other.

"Another advantage is in terms of air flow. If you need to cool down those pigs, you'll get more airflow at floor

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Satellite Conference Gives Down-to-Earth Advice With High Tech

Lee Whittington, BSc MBA

The theme of this year's conference couldn't be more appropriate. 'Productivity and Profitability' are always important but 1999 promises to challenge all of our previous perceptions of profitability. As we seek relief from the markets the only shelter is in what we can do on the farm to survive.


This year's program asks the tough questions and provides realistic answers. Dr. Mike Boehlje, our keynote speaker, leads off asking where does the small to mid-sized farm fit in? Dr. Boehlje is an economist from Purdue University in Illinois and a sought after speaker on the changing pork industry. He was the first choice for addressing such a topic after we heard his presentation at the World Pork Expo in June 1998. Entertaining, challenging and thought provoking

describe Dr. Boehlje's response to the changing structure of the pork industry. We think his refreshing approach to this question is something that all pork producers need to hear.

Getting the job done on the farm is the daily task of Dr. Neil Shantz, swine health practitioner and winner of the Swine Practitioner of the Year award in 1997, Neil brings a wealth of personal experience gained on farms of all sizes and in many parts of the world. Dr. Shantz will be sharing his observations and tips on what successful pork producers are doing during good times and bad to maintain productivity and profitability.

What role does the pig play in the success of the operation? Although the answer to this question seems obvious, how much emphasis do we place on the stockperson's influence


on the day to day well-being of the pig? This is the area of research recently completed by Dr. Madonna Benjamin when she asked how human behaviour affects pig productivity.

John Spencer has worked in farm debt remediation, with Top Producer Clubs, and provided farm management advice in Saskatchewan for over 10 years. John's strengths lie in his extraordinary ability to boost people's self confidence, look for the bright spots and bring people together to achieve a common goal. Recently Mr. Spencer was asked to facilitate the development of associations between top producers in Australia, California and Western Canada. Mr. Spencer will be focusing on how to manage the financial implications of negative margins while maintaining a positive working relationship with lenders and creditors. 

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reared, the diet used which increases or decreases efficiency of gain, or the equipment purchased and its impact on wastage and aggression. . . each will contribute significantly beyond the area of the pen or barn where the original decision is made. That is why we are developing the enclosed list of cost savings described on page 3. This list addresses not only those areas where the Centre's program has made gains for commercial pork producers but other researchers and institutions that have contributed their expertise to improving the 'system' we call pork production.

Page 3 is the start of a checklist being prepared to assist pork producers in finding ways to reduce costs and improve productivity. 

Dealing With Market Crisis: The Right Time To Fine Tune Your Operation

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Runts, poor doers and non-viables represent a cost to maintain with little or no chance of generating a profit in the near market.


- Weaning weight increases of the remaining piglets should be the focus here. This is accomplished by maximizing lactation feed intake. This method is preferred to trying to achieve weight gains on more expensive pre-starters. Feeding three times per day and wetting the feed are accepted methods to increase feed intake. The most critical component is ensuring that feed intake is monitored daily and tracked to make real progress.

- Early identification and treatment of piglet diseases will decrease the number of chronic poor-doers. Again the focus is on the quality pig.

In the Nursery:

- Maintaining proper temperature and humidity is particularly important during the heating period. Are minimum fan settings correct, is water wastage minimized, is the heater operating properly?

- Again the focus is on the quality pig. Eliminate those that are falling behind the group.

- If you have been pushing your system with extra farrowings during previous months this is a good time to get back to all-in all-out management. Leave the slow growing pigs behind as they represent a potential challenge to incoming weaned pigs. 

Upcoming Events

Managing Human Resources

January 12&13, 1999
Harmony House, Watrous, SK
Part of the Management Training Series
Fee: \$280, includes all meals
Contact: Mary Petersen,
Prairie Swine Centre Inc.
Ph: (306) 477-1674

Manitoba Swine Seminar

January 27 & 28, 1999
International Inn, Winnipeg, MB
Contact:
Dr. Laurie Connor (204) 474-2192,
Dr. Gus Wruck (204) 945-7680
Manitoba Swine Seminar,
204-545 University Cres.,
Winnipeg. MB R3T 5S6

Issues in Agricultural Management

February 11-12, 1999
Harmony House, Watrous, SK.
Part of the Management Training Series
Fee: \$280, includes all meals
Contact: Mary Petersen
Prairie Swine Centre Inc.
Ph: (306) 477-1674

Prairie Swine Centre Satellite Conference '99 "Productivity and Profitability" What to do in the face of low markets.

February 24, 1999
Prairie Swine Centre
Available across Canada &
northern United States
Contact: Nicole Ridgedale,
Prairie Swine Centre Inc.
Ph: (306) 373-9922
Fx: (306) 955-2510
E-mail: ridgedale@sask.usask.ca

Managing Environmental Issues

March 1&2, 1999
Location to be announced
Part of the Management Training Series
Fee: \$280, all meals included
Contact: Mary Petersen
Ph: (306) 477-1674

Saskatchewan Pork Expo

March 2-3, 1999, Trade Centre,
Saskatoon Prairieland Exhibition
Saskatoon, SK
Contact: Wendy Hayes,

c/o Pork Central, 3735 Thatcher Ave.,
Saskatoon, SK S7K 2H6
Ph: (306) 933-5078
Fx: (306) 933-7352
E-mail: whayes@agr.gov.sk.ca

Alberta Pork Congress

March 17-19, 1999, Westerner Park,
Red Deer, AB.
Contact: Andrea Fulton
Ph: (403) 244-4487
Fx: (403) 244-2340
E-mail: apc@incentre.net


Being an Effective Manager

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course, the first of three on Human Resource Management, guides the student to becoming an effective personnel manager. Students will assess and understand their own management styles and gain an understanding of the role of a manager. Interpersonal communication will compose a large part of this course with problem solving and conflict management being emphasized. Students will learn how to create and manage work groups within a hog production unit.

Managing Human Resources

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course, the second of three courses on Human Resource Management, guides the student to understand the underlining theories and principles of Human Resource management. Through case studies, small group activities, and individual exercise planning, the students will gain an understanding of correct hiring procedures, orientation procedures for new staff, continuous performance reviews and the termination process.

Operational Environmental Management

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course focuses on the issues presented by operational facilities. Students will obtain a general understanding of operational environmental issues, an overview of applicable regulations, and an insight into the use of some environmental management tools. Students will work on their own site specific environmental procedures manual. 


Impact of Open Pens and Feeders on Pigs

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level with spindled walls than with closed walls."

While solid walls between pens are more common in western Canadian barns, Ontario and U.S. producers often use spindled penning to help increase airflow in their facilities. However, Gonyou points out that one disadvantage of open penning is that diseases will spread more rapidly between pigs kept behind spindled walls compared to closed walls.

Are the potential benefits of open pens and feeders great enough to justify their use in western Canadian barns? Gonyou doesn't believe producers should modify their existing facilities, but in new barns, he says producers should consider at least the use of open feeders in some areas.

"There are some potential advantages in the nursery, particularly if the feeders allow the weanlings to have visual contact, because that can help them become used to solid feed much more quickly." 



Centred on Swine is a quarterly newsletter produced by Prairie Swine Centre Inc. (PSCI).

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Subscription Rates (includes GST):

\$32.00/1 year
\$61.50/2 years

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