



## Bethany Swine Health Services

# COMPETITIVE PORK PRODUCTION

*Edited by Carrie Pollard, M.S.*

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## Back to Basics

After the Year-End Production Meeting, we tend to get a flurry of questions on how a producer could improve. More often than not, the answer simply involves getting “Back to Basics”. Pigs need water, feed, space to grow, and air. Are pigs getting water, feed, space to grow, and air; when, where and how they need it to perform at their potential?

### Resource Review

First, do a “resource review”.

Basic Guidelines:

- 2” of feeder space/pig
- ≤ 20 pigs/waterer
- 2.8 ft<sup>2</sup>/pig in Nursery
- 7.5 ft<sup>2</sup>/pig in Finisher

### Airflow Recommendations (cfm/pig)

	<u>Nursery</u>	<u>Finishing</u>
Minimum	2-3	7-10
Maximum	35-45	120

If you are not providing pigs with these basic needs, they will be unable to perform to their potential. At times, it is a forced decision, due to pig flow restraints, to crowd pigs or shorten days in the nursery. In this case, it would be beneficial to benchmark yourself to other similar systems to compare. Don’t just leave your response at: “My pigs don’t perform well because they are crowded.” You need to understand what you can do to alleviate these issues. In some cases, adding additional resources (feed, water) may help alleviate some of the performance drag caused by crowding. Or, you may need to adjust your performance numbers to standardize for days.

### Feed & Water

First and foremost, pigs need access to feed and water all the time. This is much easier said than done. I would estimate that there are sites that see feed outages two to three times a week. Feed bridging in the bin, equipment malfunctions, and empty bins can all contribute to pigs without feed. Additionally, waterers that do not have proper flow will limit feed intake.

Second, do all the pigs have access to the feeder? Besides the 2” of feeder space per pig recommendation, there are new additional recommendations on feeder space width and depth in order for the modern finishing pig to comfortably stand and eat. Solid dividers are preferred to encourage pigs to eat at a perpendicular angle to the feeder. In addition, these feeding spaces should be at least 14” wide and have a front-to-back depth of at least 10”. Nursery feeders should have 7-8” wide feeding spaces, with a front-to-back depth of 6” or more.



Third, are pigs getting the proper nutrition at each growth stage? Specifically, are budgets tracked and

monitored? Who is reviewing them, and what is done about poor budgeting?

Fourth, review the nutritional program. This involves nutritionists and veterinarians to review the diet formulations, as well as what medications should be used, at what rates, and for how long, in which diets.

### **Space & Ventilation**

If pigs are crowded, you reduce their potential for maximum growth. However, you can do many things to reduce the impact of crowding on pig performance.

- Add extra feed or water space as needed to reduce the impact of crowding.
- Utilize alleyways at the end of a phase. The average 1000 head finishing barn has almost 480 ft<sup>2</sup> of alleyway space. That's enough space for 64 more pigs!
- Remove pigs sooner. Pigs are not actually space-limited until the end of a growth phase. So, if space is limiting, plan to move at least some pigs out of the nursery early. Marketing first cut pigs at lighter weights can alleviate finisher crowding.

Proper ventilation rates are very important for pig health and performance. Proper ventilation involves having not only the correct amount of cfm available, but that they are staged correctly, and that the air is distributed correctly.

- Do you have enough fans to provide the maximum cfm?
- Do you have enough inlets (attic and curtain) to allow air in to feed those fans?
- Do you have enough attic intakes to allow air in to feed the inlets?
- Are your stages appropriately set?
  - o A minimum of 2° bandwidth to avoid overlap and temperature swings
  - o Avoid large cfm changes to avoid chilling, especially small pigs

### **Summer Ventilation Preparation**

Small things can make a big difference. Nowhere is that more true than with ventilation.

As you prepare for summer temperatures, several items should be on your To Do list:

Clean shutters

- A dirty shutter can reduce fan output by 40%

Maintain fans

- Repair broken cones. Cones can increase fan output by 15%.

Curtain settings

- Overactive curtains overshoot temperature goals and lead to chilled pigs.

Static pressure

- High static pressure is a sign of improper ventilation caused by too little inlet space.



### **Summary**

You need to know how much feed, water, space, and air your pigs have. Are you limiting their performance or could you change flows or resources in order to maximize performance and profit? A resource review sheet is available for you to use on your sites if you haven't already done so. See your consultant for details. Knowing what you have to work with and where you are limited is the first step towards evaluating your operation and making decisions that can help you stay in the black.

### **Welcome**

Will Fombelle from the University of Illinois will be the BSHS Summer Intern. We look forward to welcoming Will in the coming weeks.



*“Tough times never last, but tough people do.”*

*-Robert Schuller*