



Can Simple Nursery Diets Save You Money?

Maximizing weight out of the nursery was something that has been ingrained in the pork industry for years. The common view was that we should not compromise growth performance in the nursery in order to optimize performance through to market weight. However recent studies have shown that pigs may have the ability to fully or partially exhibit compensatory growth following a period of (nutrition induced) reductions in growth rates. If compensatory growth occurs – this may provide an opportunity for producers to reduce nursery feed cost without sacrificing (weaning to finish) growth performance, and maximizing profitability.

While showing potential to reduce feed costs, this relationship between nursery and growth finishing performance is still subject to considerable controversy. A project funded through the Canadian Swine Research and Development Cluster and lead by Dr. Kees de Lange (University of Guelph) sought to investigate the impact of simple vs. complex nursery diets, and high vs. low usage of in-feed antibiotics on growth performance up to market weight and carcass quality at slaughter. A secondary component of the project also examined the impact of health status, immune function and performance potential to predict the impact of external stressors on growth performance for all phases.

Impact of Robustness

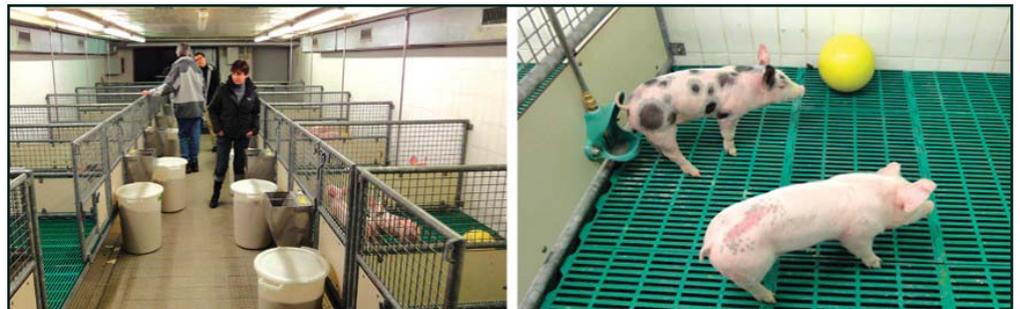
When the same pigs experienced a disease challenge, pigs fed complex diets and those containing antibiotics, resulted in increased growth performance in finishing compared to pigs fed simple diets in the nursery. Further examination of robustness of the weaned pig is still required.

Benefit to the Producer

Preliminary results indicate that nursery pigs fed complex diets or diets with antibiotics outperformed pigs fed simple diets (contained no blood plasma). However by the time each group reached market weight, there were no differences in growth performance or carcass quality. This lack of difference at market indicates that nursery feed costs may be reduced without impacting the bottom line of the operation.

While the idea of compensatory growth may be still debated in some circles, through this work it is apparent that, in certain situations (high health, low disease challenge) producers may be able to effectively reduce feed cost without impacting further performance – maximizing their returns over feed costs.

In certain situations producers have the ability to reduce nursery feed costs, by more than \$2.00/pig, without impacting grower-finisher pig performance or carcass quality.



Towards Integrated Nutritional Management of Growing-Finishing Pigs

<http://www.prairieswine.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Towards-intergrated-nutritional-management-of-growing-finishing-pigs.pdf>

Breakthroughs in Canadian Swine Nutrition.

<http://www.prairieswine.com/breakthroughs-in-canadian-swine-nutrition-2/>

Strategic use of feed ingredients and feed additives

<http://www.prairieswine.com/strategic-use-of-feed-ingredients-and-feed-additives-to-stimulate-gut-health-and-development-in-young-pigs/>

