



pigbytesnewsletter

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WINTER WARMERS FOR PIGS

Winter is upon us, and time to think about keeping little pigs warm.

Newborn pigs require a draft-free environment, with a temperature of 30-35C. Older suckers need 28-30C. Piglets are born with virtually no body fat, so besides a bit of glycogen stored in their livers, they are totally reliant on Mum's milk for energy. If pigs are chilled, they will rapidly use up any energy reserves they have and will succumb.

To provide an optimal environment for newborn and older suckling piglets:

- Use 2 creep heater lamps – one at the rear of the sow and one over the creep area – for the first 72 hrs. Not only will the extra light keep the pigs warm, but it will attract piglets away from the sow's lying area. Research conducted 20 years ago demonstrated that piglet mortality rate in the first 7 days of life was substantially reduced through the use of more than 1 creep heater.
- Along with warmth, comfort is important. Wooden platforms, conveyer belt matting and indoor-outdoor carpet all provide a comfortable surface for little pigs to lie on.
- Ensure overhead heater lamps are not too hot. Take care that lamps are not hung too low – and use a 175 watt globe (not a 250 watt globe). Take extra care with black surfaces as they absorb the heat – making the surface too hot for piglets to lie on.
- Pigs tell you they're comfortable when they're lying stretched out on the floor, evenly spaced under the heater. For this, make sure the creep area has enough room to accommodate all pigs in the litter.
- Non-insulated buildings and draughty sheds allow heat to escape. The simplest system is to have a cover over the creep area. Some owners don't like these, as it's hard for people to easily observe and access the pigs. This can be partly overcome by making the covers to slide along the length of the farrowing pen over the creep area – or they can be hinged on the side.
- Remember that piglet's needs change as they get older. Automatic creep heater

control units (such as Cosypig) can be set to keep creep temperatures to what pigs need.

- Remember too that sows require a much lower temperature (16-22C) than piglets – so don't keep farrowing rooms too warm (even though the staff may love it in winter!) Keeping sheds closed up all day also reduces air quality, allowing a build up of ammonia and airborne bacteria, predisposing piglets to early infection with respiratory disease. To reduce this risk, open the shed's blinds up 2-3 times daily for 10 minutes to "flush" the stale air out.



Covered creep area as seen in Denmark.

HAVE YOUR SAY

The decision by Tasmania to ban sow stalls by 2017 has resulted in the industry delegates voting at the recent Pan Pacific Pork Expo to urge APL to initiate a period of industry consultation titled "Shaping our Future". At stake is the industry decision on whether to adhere to accepted science and continue the use of sow stalls as a management tool in piggeries.

Industry stake holders are encouraged to visit the APL website to register opinion, to attend one of the meetings being held around the countryside or to contact your nearest delegate to discuss the situation and register your views. There will be a vote at the Annual General Meeting in November.

Rivalea has announced it has made a marketing decision to cease the use of sow stalls by 2014 and the major supermarket chains Coles and



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Woolworths are very interested in purchasing pork from stall free systems.

If the industry as a whole chooses to cease the use of sow stalls the issues of labelling and imports remain. The majority of Australian product supplies the fresh market. Could a change in production system allow the Australian pig producer to reclaim a greater share of the processed pork market?

FIVE TOP TIPS FOR SUCCESS

While travelling recently I noticed an interesting article on John Borghetti – the new CEO of Virgin Blue Group. But the part that caught my eye was John's five top tips for success:

1. Always put the needs of your customer first.
2. Ask your staff to do only the things that you are prepared to do yourself. Understand what you're asking of your staff (*Tim Kingma Gunpork made a similar statement at Pork Expo*).
3. Treat people as you'd like to be treated, but remember that sometimes we all need a little tough love.
4. Think through your actions before reacting to a crisis. Be calm and receptive and keep an eye on the long term.
5. Use the good times in your business as an opportunity to plan for the next challenge.

Source *VirginBlue in flight magazine June 2010*

INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS ON ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION VISIT WAGGA IN AUGUST

Two international experts on AI in pigs Dr Gary Althouse (University of Pennsylvania) and Barend Gadella (University of Utrecht, the Netherlands) will be presenting at a reproduction seminar arranged by Professor Peter Chenoweth and supported by the Pork CRC, Intervet Schering-Plough Animal Health, Charles Sturt University and the Graham Centre.

Dr Gary Althouse will be presenting on "What's in a semen dose", whilst Barend Gadella's topic is "How a sperm cell fertilizes the oocyte: zooming in to sperm surface changes". Local speakers include Ross Cutler ("Fixed time insemination in gilts") and Trish Holyoake ("Fixing broken farrowing rates").

The seminar will be held at the Veterinary Clinical Centre Charles Sturt University Campus (on Agricultural Avenue), Wagga Wagga on **Thursday 26th August**, 2010 starting at 1:15pm. For further details and registration, contact Trish Holyoake at 02 69381993 / 0419231534 or Trish.Harvey.Holyoake@industry.nsw.gov.au

MIKE BRUMM VISITING WAGGA IN NOVEMBER

Mike Brumm of Brumm Swine Consultancy Minnesota USA will be in Wagga Wagga on November 9th, 2010 for a seminar. Mark the date in your diary – more details to come.

PREVIOUS EDITIONS

Previous editions of PigBytes may be found at:

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/aboutus/resources/periodicals/newsletters/pigbytes>

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