

Pork CRC Initiatives November 2016

A Triple C: Course China and Caliper

We are getting close to the end of the year, which means the annual Roseworthy Pig Course ('The Science and Practice of Pig Production') is not far off.

In 2017 the course will run at Roseworthy in SA from January 30 to February 10. The course has been career changing for many and covers the basics and the latest developments in pork production, from reproduction to marketing, with visits to mills and abattoirs and much more. If you want to understand the industry and learn the latest from the best then register now.

Pork CRC covers travel and other costs for the first 20 production based personnel to register for the course, so discuss it with those you need to in your organisation and lodge your registration.

Details are on our website (www.porkcrc.com.au) or can be obtained from Rebecca Smith at Pork CRC, email rebecca.smith@porkcrc.com.au or course co-ordinator Dr William van Wettere at School of Animal and Veterinary Sciences, The University of Adelaide, email william.vanwettere@adelaide.edu.au.

China challenge

I spent five days in China in mid-October at a very large technical meeting attended by 600 people, including nutritionists, production and technical staff from pork businesses and company owners.

I didn't hear much on the technical or research side we didn't already know, but I learned a little about the Chinese pork industry.

The industry is very profitable at the moment, with average cost of production around \$3.70 AUD/kg carcass weight and average price at \$5.10 AUD/kg carcass weight. Average carcass weight is around 79 kg, but everything is sold and priced on live weight. The larger companies have a lower cost of production than the average and some have made billions in the past 12 months.

There is tremendous expansion and consolidation occurring across the industry, with the government closing down smaller producers and moving pigs away from the people.

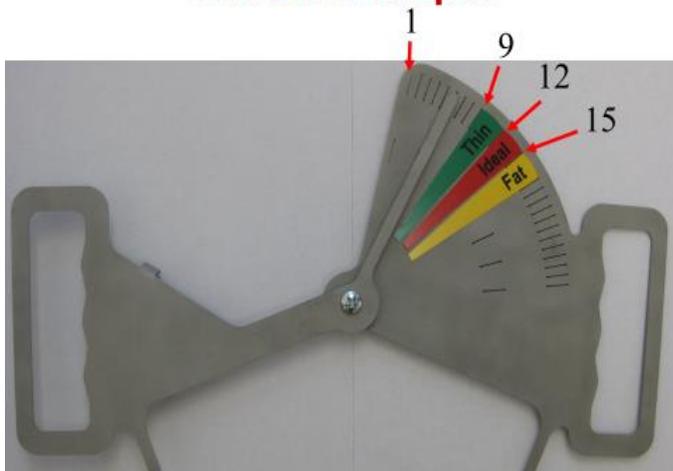
The government is also introducing a lot more regulations to reduce the water and air pollution associated with pork production.

Where it all ends up remains unknown, but it will be different and it is likely China will import 5-10% of its needs. This equates to 32-65 million pigs annually and is likely to initially cause disruption to global pork markets and, ultimately, longer term supply contracts.

To give you a feel for the size of China's industry and how it is changing, the biggest production company in China has permits for and is in the process of expanding its production by 20 million pigs.

Sow caliper

The sow caliper



I told you last month that a sow body condition caliper caught my interest when in Canada in September, hence below is an outline of what I heard and how I think you might make use of it.

Hearing an interesting presentation on the use of a caliper developed by Dr Mark Knauer, Assistant Professor and Extension Swine Specialist at North Carolina State University, to objectively measure body composition of sows certainly sparked my interest. Use of the caliper on commercial herds has considerably reduced feed cost in gestation and it appears that reproduction is optimised over a narrow caliper range. This is shown in **Figure 1** in which pre weaning mortality should read pre weaning survival. Talking to the inventor, there seems no doubt that sows classified as fat have smaller litters and wean fewer pigs. We have always known this, but the caliper makes it easier to assess and control body condition than visual body condition scoring. All the figures included in my column have been taken from reports by Mark Knauer.

The difference in caliper score for two farms owned by the same company are shown in **Figure 2**. The change in caliper score over time is shown in **Figure 3**, along with the feed changes and cost savings.

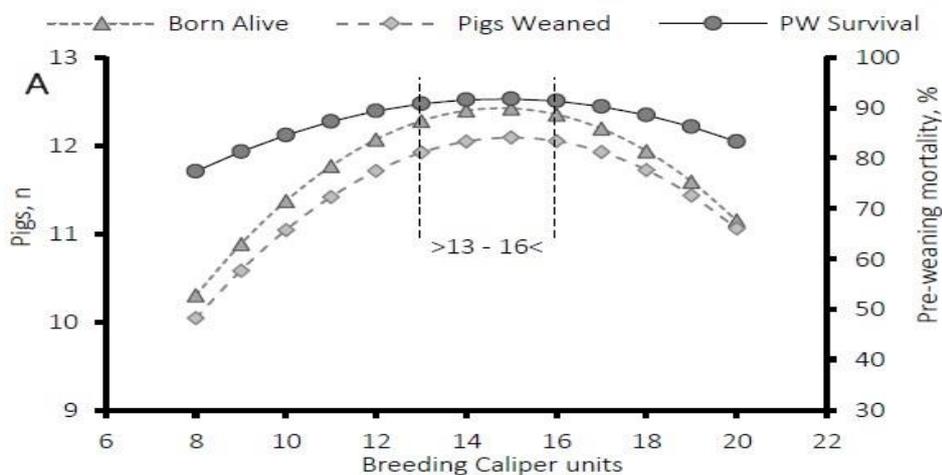


Figure 1 Caliper score and reproductive parameters

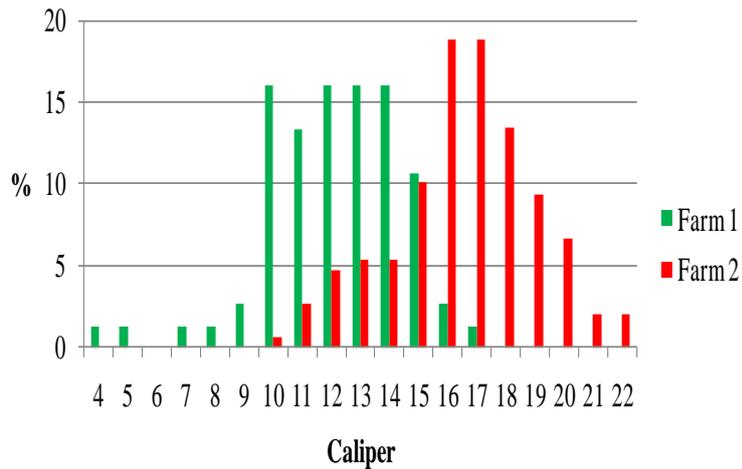


Figure 2 Caliper scores for two farms with same genetics and feeds

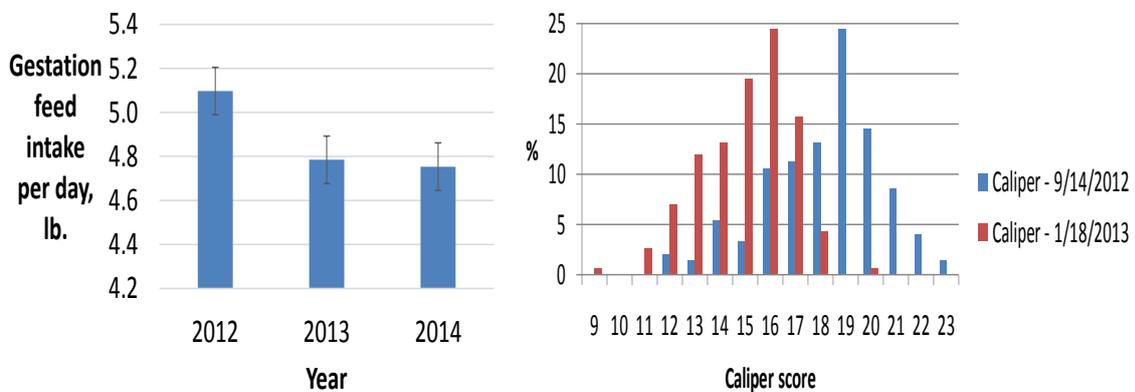


Figure 3 Change in feed intake in gestation for an 18,000 sow unit and in caliper score over a four month period. Feed savings associated with the change was \$285,000 USD and the 'ideal' caliper score is 13 - 16.

The caliper is easy to use and there is a YouTube video available on how to use it <https://youtu.be/YgxQEIzkjbQ>. The caliper score seems independent of parity and has generated a lot of interest and use in the US.

Sows are assessed at mating and every 5-6 weeks as needed and their feed intake adjusted accordingly.

I have a standard operating plan on use of the caliper and feeding levels developed by Hanor Farms and I'm happy to send you a copy, but Australian producers will need to work out intakes for our conditions and probably start by relating caliper score to visual body condition score. Nevertheless, there is something in this and you should give it a go.

The caliper costs \$200 USD and can be ordered direct from Mark, email mtknauer@gmail.com

www.porkcrc.com.au