

## **Pork CRC Initiatives by Pork CRC CEO Dr Roger Campbell**

**October 2017**

### **SunPork's fresh food people have market intelligence**

I have been on the road attending and presenting at SunPork's Biennial Conference on the Gold Coast and at a couple of producer meetings run by ECOPHARM in NZ. All meetings were informative.

#### **Sharp edge**

At the SunPork conference, I thought the most interesting presentation was from their fresh food people and those responsible for getting value from/for the carcass. They showed quite clearly that the importation of retorted ribs from or via NZ essentially stopped the sales of Australian ribs overnight and took some \$47 value out of the carcass. Now, that's a lot when each carcass contains only three kg of ribs, but the effect was real and dramatic.

They also showed that those wholesaling the carcass or the main cuts -- legs, middles (belly, ribs and loin), shoulder and trimmings -- felt the pain (read as losses) months before the farmgate price was affected. A tough business it seems and they are certainly the people to talk to on the state of the market.

#### **Feeding sows**

We heard from Dr Marcio Goncalves, PIC director of global nutrition, on recent advances in sow feeding.

I think we have covered previously much of what he said. This time, his main messages were:

Optimal weaning age: 23-24 days (better piglet health and performance and better reproduction).

#### **Gestating sows**

Marcio recommends 2.0 kg/d for gilts and 2.3 kg/d for sows and 0.6% digestible lysine is more than adequate for gilts and sows. However, he hedged his bets a little, suggesting 2.5 kg/d to day 28 and flat feeding after that. I would agree with the latter but not sure we can get away with such low feeding levels during pregnancy.

Marcio is definitely not an advocate of bump feeding in late gestation.

No effect of changing lysine or other amino acids over gestation as sow partitions nutrients to the developing foetuses in late gestation and can probably do it better than we can.

Bottom line – keep it simple and as low cost as possible.

#### **Lactating sows**

As we know, it is about maximising sow feed intake and maintaining body condition and he recommended ad libitum feeding from day of parturition to increase sow feed intake and weaning weight. He supported the use of the sow caliper to better/best monitor and manage sow body condition.

#### **Wean oestrus**

He recommended high feeding level and to check calibration of feed system, as it was common to find systems under delivering against the desired or intended amount.

He showed some excellent sow performance results from large herds in the USA. Again, I have sent you this material before, but weaning at 24 days into groups and using ESFs and flat feeding (2.0 -2.3 kg/d for gilts and sows respectively) through gestation are achieving 95% farrowing rate, 14.7 born alive and weaning 13.3 per litter and in excess of 30 per sow per year.

Very impressive I must say, so doing something right and we really need to get to 12 weaned per litter and around 26 weaned/sow/year. Some producers are close but to advance the industry overall, we need a couple of research and/or management breakthroughs, but I'm sure the targets are achievable.

### **NZ meetings**

The ECOPHARM meetings were run by Dr Bruce Welch and Dr David Lawton, the two major pig veterinarians in NZ.

Meetings were held in Christchurch and Palmerston North. It was freezing in Christchurch and wet in Palmerston North

Conferences were very well attended by producers and a number of technology companies. They covered benchmarking, presentations on managing pigs and pork production from Dr David Chennells, a British pig veterinarian, an update on Pork CRC outcomes and a very interesting and informative presentation on rodent control.

### **NZ performance**

We learned about 40% of sows are managed outdoors but the majority of pigs are finished indoors.

Despite having high feed costs, (\$405-\$450 AUD/tonne) cost of production in Australian dollars was not that far off our's at around \$2.70 /kg carcass weight.

They produce an even lighter carcass than we do, but you will see in Table 1, which gives the KPIs for indoor and outdoor herds, that they achieve generally good reproduction and certainly better than us on average.

**Table 1: Benchmarking reproductive performance for average and top 25% indoor NZ herds and the average for NZ outdoor herds**

<b>KPI</b>	<b>Indoor -Average</b>	<b>Indoor- Top 25%</b>	<b>Outdoor (Av)</b>
Total born	14.4	14.9	13.8
Born alive	13.1	13.6	12.8
Weaned/litter	11.5	12.1	10.4
Pre weaning mortality (%)	11.9	11.2	18.3
Farrowing rate (%)	83	87	72.5
Pigs weaned/mated sow/y	26.2	28.7	23

Born alive in NZ has increased by two piglets over the past eight years. But remember they do use genetics from Europe and the USA, so are seeing the advantages of genomics used now by most international genetic companies.

### **Kiwi lessons**

There are lessons to be learned from the NZ industry. Their born alive and weaned per sow are the targets we need to achieve. We have a couple of herds in our benchmarking project with born alive just above 13 and weaning 10.8 to 11.2 piglets/litter, so some are getting close to where we need to be. This year the best three Australian herds weaned 25.3 pigs per mated female per year. All this suggests we have the genetics and knowhow to get to 26 pigs weaned/sow year. We just need to get everyone at this level and will likely have to make further improvements through means other than the importation of genes.

### **Rodent control**

Peter Visser from Key Industries gave a quite fascinating talk on rodent control and showed data of how rats were controlled across three piggeries in a large research trial.

Peter seemed to know everything about rodents and discussed coordinated approaches to their control. He made it sound very doable, but requires a concerted and dedicated approach. If we have not discussed rodent control with him, maybe we should.

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