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Space Allocation Decisions for Barrows and Gilts

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- Follow label instructions when using feed additives.
- Maintain proper treatment records and adequate identification of all treated animals.
- Use drug residue tests when appropriate.
- Implement employee/family awareness of proper drug usage.
- Complete quality assurance checklist annually.

Benefits

The following are benefits for producers of becoming PQA certified.

- An objective professional assessment of their pork production practices (ie. people/pig flow, biosecurity, processing, etc.)
- Examine the production process for possible cost saving areas (ie. vaccine, antibiotic or feed-additive usage).
- Discuss newly available animal health care products with a veterinarian.
- Review and update facility design and repair needs.
- Learn new technology and developments to improve the production system, nutrition program and swine health. For example, producers can gain insight into segregated early weaning, all-in/all-out, the latest dietary lysine recommendations or the most recent reports on Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS).

Producers can certify by a one-on-one consultation with their veterinarian, local extension educator, vocational agricultural teacher or through statewide certification meetings. To maintain Level III status, producers must re-certify every other year. For more information about the Pork Quality Assurance Program, contact the Nebraska Pork Producers Association, Inc., at (402) 472-2563.

¹Angela Baysinger is an Extension Swine Veterinarian, Department of Veterinary Science.

Space Allocation Decisions for Barrows and Gilts

Mike Brumm
Jim Dahlquist¹

Summary and Implications

An experiment was conducted to determine if barrow and gilt performance could be modified by varying pen space allocation for each sex and whether performance of barrows given less space per pig could be enhanced with a more nutrient-dense diet. Barrows given 6 ft² of pen space per pig consumed less feed and grew slower with no effect on lean gain compared to barrows provided 7 ft² of pen space per pig. Increasing diet nutrient density by feeding the diet sequence recommended for gilts to barrows had no effect on performance for barrows at 6 ft² per pig. No differences in performance or carcass measurements were found when space allocation for gilts was increased from 7 to 8 ft² per pig. These results suggest that instead of stocking all-in/all-out (AIAO) managed grow-finish facilities at 7 ft² per pig for both barrows and gilts, growth rate of barrows can be restricted to match that of gilts if barrows are given 6 ft² and gilts 8 ft² of pen space per pig. For producers with barns of 500 head capacity managed AIAO, this manipulation of barrow growth results in increased numbers of barrows and gilts of the same weight at the same time, thus increasing producer marketing options.

Introduction

A frustration for many pork producers utilizing all-in/all-out (AIAO) management in growing-finishing facilities is that barrows generally grow faster than littermate gilts. This faster daily gain results in facilities which may have up to 50% of the pens empty

one to two weeks while waiting for the slower growing gilts to achieve similar market weight. In many smaller facilities, this differential in growth rate results in the inability of producers to market load lots of pigs, resulting in market access restrictions due to transportation costs. The purpose of the following experiment was to see if barrow and gilt performance could be modified by varying the space allocation and if performance of barrows given less space per pig could be enhanced with a more nutrient-dense diet.

Methods

Terminal-cross pigs of high lean gain potential were allotted to various floor space and dietary treatments (Table 1). Treatment 3 was included to determine the effect of feeding a gilt diet (higher in lysine and other essential amino acids beginning at 80 pounds liveweight) to barrows given less floor space.

The experiment was conducted at the University of Nebraska's Northeast Research and Extension Center at Concord from November - March 1996. The facility was a fully slatted, double wide, naturally ventilated barn with fresh water under slat flushing for manure removal. Pen size was 7 ft x 8 ft with the experimental space allocations achieved by varying the number of pigs per pen. In the event of pig removal for poor performance, pen size was adjusted to maintain the desired stocking density. There was one nipple drinker per pen and one two-hole self feeder.

Diets were formulated with corn and soybean meal according the University of Nebraska recommendations for barrows or gilts of high lean gain potential. Diets were switched on the week pens of pigs averaged 80, 130 and 190 pounds. The lysine sequence



Table 1. Dietary and floor space treatments

Treatment	No. of pens	Floor space, ft ² /pig	Sex	Diet provided
1	6	7	Barrow	Barrow
2	6	6	Barrow	Barrow
3	6	6	Barrow	Gilt
4	6	7	Gilt	Gilt
5	6	8	Gilt	Gilt

Table 2. Effect of space allocation on sex-fed growing-finishing pigs

	Barrows			Gilts		Contrasts				
	Space (ft ² /pig):	7	6	6	7	8	1	2	4	1+4
Diet ^a :	B	B	G	G	G	vs	vs	vs	vs	
Treatment:	1	2	3	4	5	2	3	5	2+5	
No. pens	6	6	6	6	6					
Pig weight, lb										
Initial	50.0	50.2	50.1	49.0	49.0					
Final	255.8	253.9	253.3	251.6	254.2					
Average daily gain, lb	1.88	1.79	1.79	1.72	1.78	P<.05	NS ^b	NS	NS	
Average daily feed, lb	5.98	5.80	5.76	5.48	5.52	P<.075	NS	NS	NS	
Feed:gain	3.18	3.23	3.23	3.18	3.10	NS	NS	NS	NS	
Carcass % lean ^c	49.6	49.9	50.0	52.0	51.6	NS	NS	NS	NS	
Lean gain, lb/d ^c	.78	.79	.78	.83	.82	NS	NS	NS	NS	

^aB = diet designed for barrows and G = diet designed for gilts.

^bNot significant.

^cContaining 5% fat.

for the gilt diets was 1.00, .93, .88, and .69%. For the barrow diets, the lysine sequence was 1.00, .88, .73, and .60%.

Individually identified pigs were removed for slaughter on the week they weighed 240 pounds or greater. Carcass lean percentage was estimated using total body electrical conductivity (TOBEC) on the individually identified carcass at SiouxPreme Packing Co, Sioux Center, IA.

Results and Discussion

Reducing space allocation for barrows from 7 to 6 ft² per pig resulted in a reduction in daily feed intake and daily gain, with no effect on feed efficiency, carcass lean or lean gain (Table 2). While not significant, there was a slight increase in daily gain for gilts at 8 ft² vs 7 ft² of pen space per pig.

Providing barrows housed at 6 ft² per pig a diet sequence designed for the lower feed intake of gilts did not improve daily gain, feed conversion efficiency, carcass lean or lean gain compared to barrows fed the recommended diet sequence.

In this experiment, providing barrows 6 ft² and gilts 8 ft² of pen space per pig resulted in similar rates of gain from purchase to slaughter. However, carcasses from barrows still had a lower percent lean than those from gilts and increasing dietary nutrient density to crowded barrows by feeding diets intended for gilts did not improve their performance.

Conclusion

These results suggest performance of barrows in AIAO managed grow-finish facilities can be altered such that their daily gain is similar to gilts if barrows are provided 6 ft² and gilts 8 ft² of pen space per pig. There is no effect on either performance or carcass measurements if barrows, which are restricted to 6 ft² of pen space per pig and have lower daily feed intake than those given 7 ft² of pen space per pig, are given a diet sequence higher in lysine and other amino acids beginning at 80 pounds liveweight.

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