

PIPESTONE

System



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REVIEWING OUR 2009 RESULTS SYSTEM STUDIES TARGETED YOUR MAJOR CONCERNS

BY JOEL NEREM, DVM



It should come as no surprise that many of our 2009 Pipestone System research trials were PRRS-virus related.

Probably the biggest project measured the effectiveness of PRRS filters in large sow farms. Dr. Scott Dee of the University of Minnesota Swine Disease Eradication Center coordinated the three trials. We helped him compare the rate of PRRS outbreaks in commercial farms with filtration systems versus farms that aren't filtered.

Three Pipestone System filtered barns were included in the study as were several non-filtered barns, for comparison. In all, this ongoing trial monitors about a dozen barns—twice as many non-filtered as filtered to ensure accuracy.

As far I can tell, the outbreak rate in non-filtered barns is tremendously higher than in filtered. Expect Dr. Dee to offer updates on his preliminary results, possibly during his presentations at the Pork Congress events in Minnesota and Iowa.

OUTCOME OF PRRS VACCINE TRIALS

In 2009 we tested the PRRS vaccine ATP on sow farms in the face of virus activity. From that trial, we learned two doses 30 days apart are most effective. This regimen proved valuable in stabilizing PRRS activity on sow farms, when used as part of a closed-herd program.

We followed that study with another PRRS project administering the same vaccine (ATP) to piglets in the farrowing house. The research took place on PRRS-positive farms prior to weaning.

Again, we found the ATP vaccine helpful in improving performance

once those vaccinated pigs were moved to PRRS-challenged nurseries.

In yet another PRRS trial on two of our System sow farms, we tested a commercial killed PRRS vaccine that ultimately didn't show any advantage, because we found no measurable protective immunity in the sows and the same number of abortions and deaths.

A fourth project—an ongoing PRRS time-to-negative study—uses serum and the ATP vaccine, testing two methods of whole-herd exposure in one trial. We're attempting to develop consistent immunity across the herd that may enable us to wean PRRS-negative piglets.

The research is ongoing, and we're far from producing those negative pigs. Watch www.pipestonesystem.com for news of this study as we know more.

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There is plenty to learn. Erin McCoy displays stacks of raw data collected at the new PVC I research barn.



SWINE LINE

REVIEWING OUR 2009 RESULTS

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HOW WE'RE STUDYING CIRCOVIRUS

In 2009 we wanted to compare the efficacy of three commercial PCV2 vaccines. One of those trials is complete, and we're waiting for the data to be compiled, so we can share it with you.

In one circo trial, we didn't have a true challenge, so we're repeating that test now. In both circo studies, we're aiming to compare the three commercial circovirus products in a field situation, looking at dosage and vaccination timing. We want to reveal the best product and the best time to give it.

We're assisting in a circovirus investigation directed by Dr. Mike Murtaugh at the University of Minnesota. His work isn't so much a trial as a look at circovirus on sow farms. Currently, his research is still preliminary. Again, you'll want to visit our Web site where we'll post the results of his work as it flows back to us.

TACKLING OTHER WHAT-IFS

You could call it the held-back pig trial. We've been wondering if there's a better way to deal with piglets that are underweight at weaning. (I'm talking about those pigs that can't be shipped from sow farm unless they weigh either eight or nine pounds as stipulated in the System contract with the shareholder.)

Assuming an underweight pig is in good health, we're asking what happens if we hold them back at the sow farm. In our test, we're experimenting with feeding those pigs to an acceptable weight to send to a shareholder. Then we follow and document their progress to market.

Does it pay to wean a full-value pig even if it takes five or ten days more? Is it worth the time? What percent of held-back

pigs become full-value market hogs at slaughter weight?

This study continues, but once we weigh some of the last groups in early January, we'll have data to share.

NEW RESEARCH BARN ALLOWS FIRST-HAND OBSERVATION

From now on, the Pipestone System and the Pipestone Veterinary Clinic clients and shareholders will get research data firsthand. A new swine research barn near Pipestone facilitates custom-designed studies.

Now we have direct access to answers for questions our swine producers ask. We chose this road because we think it's important to run trials with our own Pipestone System pigs.

The barn, named PVC Research I, has room for 2,400 head of pigs in a wean-to-finish production setting. Dan Hanson is onsite managing the pigs in our various studies.

PVC will work with research partners PIC and Boehringer-Ingelheim pharmaceuticals to design studies conducted in the new barn. A research committee will meet twice yearly to set our research objectives and determine what trials we want to run.

Once trials are complete, the research committee will share its findings. We intend to pass on this information so our clients and shareholders can use it to make better management decisions and be more profitable.

A current trial in our barn will track results from two genetic lines. That study just started. We're also providing an environment to run trials leading to a U.S. license for a major pharmaceutical product. You'll hear about those results in the newsletter and on the Web, as we know more.

Right now, you can go to www.pipestonesystem.com to read about a practical little study our two summer interns completed in 2009. Find out which swine marketing product has the most staying power for the cost. ■

PVC Research I Barn manager Dan Hanson uses the state-of-the-art Feed Logic system to deliver measured feed to individual feeders. This gives us the ability to make precise comparisons.



SHAREHOLDERS NOW HAVE THEIR OWN EASY BUTTON

Take a virtual journey with Sharon Jacobson of Pipestone System as your tour guide. Open our Web site www.pipestonesystem.com and follow your next group of pigs from mom's side to your nursery-finisher.

Online reports are easy to view, but, more importantly, soon this will be the only way to view your reports. Sharon hopes every shareholder will get accustomed to the on-line system before the changeover.

"Once a shareholder is on the Web site home page, the Shareholder Login is easily visible in the upper right," Sharon says. "Click there and enter your username and password."

(Don't have your username and password? Call Pipestone Vet Clinic or email Sharon at sjacobson@pipevet.com.)

"Once you're logged in, you'll see the name of your sow farm," Sharon continues. "If you have shares in more than one farm, you'll be able to use the Select Farm drop-down in the upper right."

Below your sow-farm name, you'll see two familiar schedules—now in digital form. There's the weaning plan for your sow barn and the traffic schedule right below it.

The weaning schedule projects approximately eight weeks out, Sharon explains.

Look for your name and note the planned ship date for your pigs.

If you're wondering about the HCR checkbox on the far right, that tells the Pipestone System office staff whether they should be generating health papers for that group of pigs prior to movement.

CONSULT THE SCHEDULE

Barn managers update the wean schedule as actual weaning occurs. Once your barn's manager notes a change, your name and your pigs reappear on the traffic schedule.

If you're planning today's workload, the traffic schedule is your easy point of reference. But let's suppose you don't have pigs arriving today, so you have time to review performance reports for your sow barn.

"Back at the top of the Web page, right next to Schedules you'll see Documents," Sharon says, continuing the tour. "Click there and you'll be shown a little file folder with this title: Pipestone System Documents. Tap the plus sign (+) with your cursor and you'll see Farms. Now tap the plus sign again and you'll be able to click on your farm."

Once you click the plus sign next to your



Sharon Jacobson

farm's name, you'll reveal folders labeled by quarter. Click those folders and you will find documents related to your farm—quarterly financial reports, production reports, and a record of the most recent visit from one of our veterinarians. Just click the little red PDF symbol to open a document.

"I'll also post meeting information packets in Documents for a particular quarter," Sharon adds.

Anytime she adds information for your sow farm, Sharon will send an email alerting you to visit the Web site. Once she stops mailing paper reports, that will be your only source for schedules and reports.

But don't worry. Once you get used to tapping information online you'll discover it's easy! ■

JUGGLING IS EASIER WITH EXTRA HANDS

A Pipestone System shareholder may be the ultimate multi-tasker—daily dividing time between pig finishing and crop production while monitoring employees, the markets, and new layers of compliance. Dr. Cameron Schmitt thinks handing off some responsibilities makes sense.

"We know producers already have a lot on their minds, and pork traceability will add to that workload," Dr. Schmitt explains. "Here at Pipestone Clinic of Iowa, we're beta-testing a new service that will allow our professionals to assume some of the burden. We looked at a list of what you could call 'worries' and determined how our staff could regularly show up onsite to offer help."

The new program—Progressive Pork Solutions—will be fully explained at the upcoming Pig Care Conference in

March. At that gathering, Dr. Schmitt will describe his successes applying these hands-on tactics in 30,000 pig spaces.

In March, all the details will be announced for this new service.

HERE'S WHAT'S INCLUDED

"When a shareholder signs on for this fee-based program, the net result will be more consultation—more of our professional knowledge applied when there is no crisis," Dr. Schmitt says.

Frankly, when Pipestone veterinarians visit many of their clients, it's the result of a 911-type call. If shareholders choose to use this new program, professional staff will be more engaged in their operations to help move their management processes forward.

Services in the package include employee training and scheduled walk-throughs to ensure sound practices. Veterinarians will develop ventilation, feeder, and pen-management recommendations and set-up plans for procedures such as vaccination and feed-medication timing.

The complete service will impact not only what happens in the barns but what goes on in the farm office. Thanks to this program, producers will have ready help with PQA Plus™ assessments and year-end financial reporting and access to marketing contracts, if desired.

Dr. Schmitt looks forward to completing his tests and then explaining all the ways Progressive Pork Solutions will offer producers an extra hand. ■



FARM-STORED CORN CONDITION: NO CRISIS, BUT WORTH A LITTLE CAUTION

Dr. Bob Thaler, professor of swine extension and nutrition at SDSU, says, “While some areas have high mold levels, Western Corn Belt producers can be cautiously optimistic about their stored grain.”

Yes, hail damage in some Upper Midwest fields degraded the crop and allowed pathogens to grab a foothold. For the most part though, producers can protect livestock with a good application of caution. Do the usual smart thing—check your bins from time to time, especially if corn went in wetter than usual.

If your grain does test poorly, Dr. Thaler suggests that some products will help while others will not. “To some extent where (moldy) corn is not intended for livestock, clay binders will be effective against aflatoxin,” he explains. “Just don’t add clay binders for mycotoxin. Clay binders are worthless against it.”

Dr. Thaler says, “There are some products that help with damaged grain. Producers sure can try those so long as they don’t expect to be 100% successful. Before including any additive, be sure to talk with your with feed consultants or veterinarian,” he cautions.

STRATEGIC FEEDING IS MORE EFFECTIVE

Look at strategic feeding, Thaler recommends. “If you still have some of last year’s crop, feed it to your breeding herd and in the nursery. If you have corn you’re a little concerned about, feed that to grow/finish hogs.”

Or, you might want to consider an alternative feedstuff this year. “Some of your readers will have access to barley—an excellent alternative. There will be no problem with mycotoxins in small grains, and you can put barley in swine diets to get the total level of mycotoxins below problem level.”

Dr. Thaler hasn’t heard of any actual moldy corn problems in the area he travels. “But in Missouri and Ohio the levels can be ugly—as much as 2/20 parts per million. In some states it’s hard to find clean grain!”



DR. BOB THALER

If your corn was thoroughly dried going into the bin, you’re not likely to have big quality challenges, according to Bob Thaler. Test the grain as you use it, though, to ensure you didn’t overlook a mold flare-up. “Harvest season sampling is valuable,” he concludes. “But you can easily miss the one hot spot in a field.” ■

