

Finishing weights rise; mortality drops

By TOM STEIN*

THE MetaFarms Production Index for the first quarter of 2014 was reported based on closeout performance for nursery, finishing and wean-to-finish groups and was compared with the same period a year ago.

The data come from pork producers using the MetaFarms software system and represent more than 500 pork production companies located in both the U.S. and Canada. The data have been scrubbed and made anonymous to protect the confidentiality of the software users.

The data represent more than 1,000 nursery closeouts, more than 1,800 finishing closeouts and more than 325 wean-to-finish closeouts.

Looking at nursery performance (Table), an increase in mortality was expected due to porcine epidemic diarrhea virus (PEDV) activity. Mortality did increase — but not by much. If PEDV was causing follow-on losses in nurseries, there should have been a bigger jump in mortality rate.

There don't seem to be any negative performance effects in this set of nursery closeouts due to PEDV. In fact, average daily gain (ADG) was up nearly 5% and average daily feed intake (ADFI) up more than 4%, while the feed conversion ratio (FCR) did not change. These changes led to a 4% increase in out-weight, with little change in days on feed, meaning that it's almost completely due to better growth rate and feed intake.

The bottom line is that overall nursery performance in the first quarter of 2014 was better than in the year-ago period.

In finishing closeouts, the average out-weight rose from 271 lb. to 280 lb., showing the same thing the U.S. Department of Agriculture has reported, i.e., selling weights are up on a year-over-

year basis.

Finishing pigs were on feed for about 2.5 days longer this quarter, while growth rate and especially feed intake were up. Feed conversion ticked up but likely was related to the higher selling weights as well as the few extra days on feed. Producers are holding finishing pigs a bit longer, allowing them to put on more weight.

However, it's not just more days on feed driving the increase in selling weight. In fact, the weight increase is driven more by the improvements in feed intake and ADG than by days on feed. Hence, finishing performance was better than it was in the first quarter of 2013, and MetaFarms is seeing the same pattern in these data that USDA has reported and

that industry analysts are using in their models.

It's doubly surprising to see the substantial drop in mortality (down 6.1%) for wean-to-finish closeouts. Just like nursery closeouts, mortality was expected to rise due to follow-on PEDV effects. Not only did mortality not go up, but it went down, which is why it's such a surprise.

The same pattern seen in the finishing closeouts held true for wean-to-finish performance: The average out-weight was up almost 3% (271 lb. versus 279 lb.), feed intake was up and days on feed increased as well. In summary, first-quarter wean-to-finish closeout performance was better than a year ago, mainly due to the lower mortality rate and higher feed intake. ■

First-quarter closeout performance

Nursery	2013	2014	% change
Average start weight, lb.	12.8	12.9	—
Mortality, %	3.70	3.75	1.4
Average weight out, lb.	55.2	57.4	4.0
Feed per head, lb.	68.4	72.3	5.7
ADG, lb./day	0.85	0.89	4.7
FCR	1.63	1.64	—
ADFI, lb./day	1.40	1.46	4.3
Average days on feed	48.9	49.5	1.2
Finishing			
Average start weight, lb.	54.2	54.5	—
Mortality, %	4.32	4.31	—
Average weight out, lb.	271.5	280.1	3.2
Feed per head, lb.	616.0	647.0	5.0
ADG, lb./day	1.84	1.87	1.6
FCR	2.87	2.90	1.0
ADFI, lb./day	5.28	5.44	3.0
Average days on feed	116.4	118.7	2.0
Days to first (top out) sale	100.8	102.3	1.5
Wean-to-finish			
Average start weight, lb.	13.5	13.3	-1.5
Mortality, %	5.53	5.19	-6.1
Average weight out, lb.	271.1	278.7	2.8
Feed per head, lb.	675.0	699.0	3.6
ADG, lb./day	1.61	1.62	—
FCR	2.63	2.64	—
ADFI, lb./day	4.23	4.28	1.2
Average days on feed	159.5	163.3	2.4
Days to first (top out) sale	146.0	148.5	1.7

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