

Swine Barn Analysis

Nursery mortality neutral

By TOM STEIN*

THE MetaFarms Production Index for the second quarter of 2014 is based on closeout performance for nursery, finishing and wean-to-finish groups and shows the comparison 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. These data have been scrubbed and made anonymous to protect the confidentiality of the software users.

The nursery data represent more than 1,000 closeouts, the finishing data include more than 1,800 closeouts and the wean-to-finish data include more than 300 closeouts.

Looking at nursery performance, the big story is a 4.5% improvement in average daily gain (ADG) compared with 2013 (Table). That's the main reason the 2014 second quarter shows a 5% heavier pig leaving the nursery (56.7 lb. versus 53.9 lb.). Days on feed went up by about one day, which contributed somewhat, but the heavier out-weight was due mostly to an improvement in growth rate.

We keep looking for potential negative effects of porcine epidemic diarrhea virus (PEDV) on nursery performance, but we just haven't seen anything, at least as measured by mortality levels in the nursery. In fact, there haven't been any obvious negative effects of PEDV on nursery performance for the past four calendar quarters. Nursery mortality is the same as a year ago. Maybe it's time to stop looking (for PEDV effects in the nursery)?

Bottom line: Overall nursery performance in the second quarter of 2014 was better than in the second quarter of 2013.

In finishing closeouts, the average market weight (i.e., weight out) took a huge jump, from 271 lb. to 285 lb.,

showing the same thing that the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported, i.e., selling weights are up (a lot) on a year-over-year basis.

Finishing pigs were on feed for almost six days longer. ADG was about the same as a year ago, which means that the big jump in weight was almost completely due to the additional days on feed. Feed conversion got worse, while average daily feed intake (ADFI) increased. Both of these are simply a consequence of the increase in days on feed and not actual changes in performance.

In other words, one would expect feed conversion to get worse and ADFI to go up as pigs spend more time on feed. So, nothing unusual was happening with those measures.

The same pattern can be seen in wean-to-finish closeouts, which made a big jump in average market weight,

mainly due to seven more days on feed (168 versus 161 days). However, in contrast to the nursery closeouts, where mortality was the same, in wean-to-finish barns, mortality was down almost 10% from a year ago (5.9% versus 6.6%).

We saw something similar in last quarter's results, where nursery mortality in the first quarter of 2014 was down 6.1% compared with last year.

Looking ahead, we expect market weights to be somewhat lower in next quarter's results but assume that they will still be substantially heavier than a year ago. It will be interesting to see whether the improved nursery performance continues and if wean-to-finish closeouts will again show a big improvement in mortality levels compared with a year ago.

MetaFarms Production Index, Q2

Nursery	2013	2014	% change
Average pig start weight, lb.	12.9	12.8	-1.1
Mortality, % of pigs started	3.48	3.48	0.1
Average weight out, lb.	53.9	56.7	5.2
Feed per head, lb.	65.7	70.9	7.9
ADG, lb. per day	0.84	0.88	4.5
Feed conversion ratio	1.62	1.63	0.7
ADFI, lb. per head	1.37	1.44	5.2
Average days on feed	48.0	49.3	2.6
Finishing			
Average pig start weight, lb.	54.2	55.8	—
Mortality, % of pigs started	4.36	4.54	4.0
Average weight out, lb.	271.3	284.8	5.0
Feed per head, lb.	613.6	663.6	8.2
ADG, lb. per day	1.83	1.84	0.3
Feed conversion ratio	2.86	2.93	2.6
ADFI, lb. per day	5.25	5.40	2.9
Average days on feed	116.7	122.6	5.1
Days to first market sale	100.2	104.8	4.6
Wean to finish			
Average pig start weight, lb.	13.4	13.3	-0.6
Mortality, % of pigs started	6.57	5.95	-9.5
Average weight out, lb.	271.3	283.7	4.6
Feed per head, lb.	675.4	714.6	5.8
ADG, lb. per day	1.59	1.60	0.6
Feed conversion ratio	2.63	2.65	0.9
ADFI, lb. per day	4.19	4.25	1.4
Average days on feed	161.2	168.2	4.3
Days to first market sale	147.2	151.7	3.0

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