

Feeding, Housing and Health Management of Nursery Pigs

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Abstract: A crucial phase of swine production is the effective nurturing of nursery pigs, which establishes the groundwork for the pigs' future growth and development and ensures that they perform well and are healthy. The main goals of feeding and management strategies addressed in this abstract are to maximise the health, growth, and general wellbeing of nursery pigs. Compared to other production phases, nursery feeding and management are still more "art than science." Enhancements made to nursery management will have a significant impact on overall performance, which will maximise farm profit.

Keywords: Nursery pigs, swine, weaning, feeding, growth

Introduction

Weaned piglets transitioning from sow's milk to solid feed are referred to as nursery pigs. A nursery is a structure or building created especially to hold young pigs who have just been weaned and are preparing to go to the grower/finisher stage. Giving the freshly-weaned pig the right surroundings enhances its health, reduces the stress of weaning, and boosts its productivity. Smaller pigs grow more slowly and use less feed, thus better nursery management raises exit weights and enhances grow-out performance. Compared to their heavier counterparts, these post-weaning pigs require longer time to attain slaughter weight due to their slower growth and increased mortality risk (Collins *et al.*, 2017). Inadequate nursery management can lead to a variety of issues, such as higher mortality rates, lower nursery exit weights, and more medicine being used to treat both individual and collective health issues. The various essential aspects of feeding and management techniques meant to maximise the health, growth,

and general wellbeing of nursery pigs are enlisted below.

1. Feeding management

The main objective of the nursery's feeding programme is to supply an economical nutrient-dense, and palatable diet that promotes consistent, quick pig growth. A nursery pig's ability to grow and develop depends critically on its diet. Newly weaned pigs need to get used to eating solid food and drinking from a bowl or water nipple. The importance of weaning management is highlighted by the shift in the environment, being separated from the sow, and going from sow milk to solid feed at the same time. Understanding the nutritional requirements is essential to creating balanced diets that support healthy growth and immune system performance.

Various feeding management that can be implemented are as follows:

- i. Ensure that the diet is nutrient-balanced and contains the appropriate amounts of protein, energy, vitamins, and minerals.
- ii. Make diet plans depending on the nursery piglets' specific weight and age.
- iii. Make use of premium feed items, such as grains, soybean meal, vitamins, and minerals. Pelletizing improves performance while lowering dustiness, feed bridging problems, and diet segregation.
- iv. To improve the feed's digestibility and palatability, crumble or pellet it.
- v. Create a feeding schedule that entails many meals per day to guarantee consistency in nutrient intake. Pelletizing improves performance while lowering dustiness, feed bridging problems, and diet segregation.

- vi. Observe feed intake and modify the feeding schedule as necessary.
- vii. Make sure to always have access to fresh, clean water to avoid dehydration and encourage feeding.
- viii. Regularly check the purity of the water.
- ix. To boost gut health and improve overall immunity, include health supplements like probiotics.
- x. Tray dividers on the feeders are necessary to keep tiny pigs from resting in the feed tray and possibly becoming trapped.
- xi. Feeding four to six times a day to encourage intake and aids in maintaining the freshest possible feed.
- xii. When pigs are first weaned, there needs to be enough space in the pen for feeders for every pig.

2. Housing Management:

The environment and the housing provided to nursery pigs are crucial to the health and productivity of the young animals. When pigs are weaned, their initial feed consumption is greatly influenced by environmental factors (Wensley *et al.*, 2023). The ideal space, temperature, and ventilation needs to produce an environment that is comfortable. When feed intake is very low, as it is in the initial days following weaning, the temperature would need to be raised. Various housing managements can be done for optimum growth and health and it includes:

- i. Each pig should have enough room to stand, lay down, and get to food and water.
- i. Refrain from overcrowding since it might cause stress and stunt your growth.
- ii. Keep the space tidy and pleasant with the right ventilation.
- iii. Adjust humidity and temperature to maximise pig comfort.
- iv. Pigs should arrive in a dry and warm room.
- v. In order to prevent cooling or excessive heater operation, adjust pit fans to provide enough airflow for minimal ventilation, avoiding excessive airflow.
- vi. Excessive temperature fluctuations should be avoided since they can create health issues.
- vii. To track temperature variations, a thermometer capable of recording both the high and low temperatures have to be placed in every nursery room.

- viii. A room with enough lighting will encourage more feed intake and better elimination habits are encouraged by a brighter barn.
- ix. After weaning, aim for a light intensity of 100 lux, measured at the pig's level.
- x. Ensure that the resting place is always dry, warm, and clean.

3. Health monitoring and disease management
Proactive health management strategies, such as vaccination, parasite control, and disease surveillance for prevalent nursery pig illnesses, To maintain a healthy pig population, the importance of early detection, quarantine procedures, and veterinary intervention is emphasised. It is recommended that the mortality rate for nursery piglets not surpass 10%. A decrease in group health issues reduces the requirement for medicines.

In order to guarantee a clean and disease-free nursery environment, strategies for disease prevention, biosecurity precautions, and waste management are also discussed.

- i. Ensure that all feed intake, health, and intervention records are kept up to date.
- ii. Keep a regular eye on the behaviour, feed intake, and general health of the pigs.
- iii. Implement a health care programme that includes vaccinations and disease prevention measures.
- iv. Implementing preventative steps to stop the introduction of diseases and infections onto farms, as well as to stop their spread, is known as biosecurity.
- v. Immediately isolate and care for sick pigs.
- vi. Termite management among other animals to prevent disease-transmission is important.
- vii. Utilise external bait stations and ensure preventing rodents and birds reduce the amount of lush vegetation that surrounds the building.
- viii. To remove possible harbour areas, clear up unnecessary clutter or debris.
- ix. To stop birds from entering the property, install and maintain bird netting.
- x. Track the fly and bug populations all year long as pig infections can be transmitted by flies.
- xi. Refresh disinfectant baths and designate particular boots to improve biosecurity.

Conclusion

Last but not the least, the abstract offers an overview of all the important factors to take into account when feeding and managing for nursery pigs. To ensure the success of nursery pig production and create the foundation for a profitable swine operation, it is vital to implement excellent practices in nutrition, housing and health management.

References

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