

The Mystery Colony

This month's mystery colony is near Havre and may look a little different today. If you can't figure it out, call your Standard Nutrition Consultant and have them give some hints. January's mystery colony was Surprise Creek Colony.

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Tobin' Talk

Jason McNaughton



We break into 2009 with decent market prices which are favorable for those who produce meat. Opportunities have been created by the sag in crude oil prices, and many producers have now secured much of their energy needs through fall of 2009. On the meat/protein side the fundamentals point to a bearish scenario, although cash markets for pork have been supported above the futures levels of late. Why is this? Could it have anything to do with a possible black hole in production that has many packers concerned? We have begun to see evidence of the lag in supplies of meats may now be upon us.... We have all read bold predictions that reductions in our breeding herds will have supplies very short creating a windfall for producers. These predictions, have just not become a reality. Instead, our supplies of meat has remained consistent and supported robust increases in exporting. Now that these exports have weakened with a slowing Global Economy, our supply to date has remained high. But this may be about to change. Obviously the breeding herd in Canada has been dramatically reduced. Other numbers being reported though, have not been as clear. This has many packers asking questions as live supplies seem poised to dry up in early spring. This is what we know- many feeder pig operations through the corn belt are sitting empty without a consistent supply of weaners, many corporate producers are committed to high priced commodities that are straining their balance sheets, the current credit crunch has institutions calling in loans. We have also heard reports of large production companies being challenged with health issues such as PRRS. Personally, I believe 2009 will be a great year for our clients, and I know they are poised to take full advantage.

Don's Deal

Don Deleurme



It has come to many producers attention as of late what can happen in their facilities when temperatures drop and barns need to be closed so that the livestock can be kept at a reasonable temperature. For some with older facilities it becomes troublesome and negative effects are experienced. Fortunately mother nature, for most, has changed her course of abnormal cold temperatures with more mild weather and we all can see the positive effects of being able to ventilate the barns properly once again.

It has become apparent out in the field that some producers have taken the path of trying to feed livestock in a manner where they thought they could save some money by reducing the quality of their ingredients. Unfortunately many have already seen the negative effects of those decisions and the production side is reflecting this. Sadly it is difficult to change this back quickly in a positive manner and many do not take into account what or how costly that can be over time. Producers as of late have not stopped and done the figures of how well their operations are doing. Many are under the impression that their facility is doing well but if we do the proper analysis of their unit in many cases it is not as productive as they think. Usually there are many dollars left that can be easily captured if proper and continued monitoring of the operation is done. If you want your farm analyzed, call your local Standard representative and let them help you understand where your operation can be more profitable.

Craig's Corner

Craig Anderson



We had the opportunity this past week to visit with a packer representative to discuss the parameters involved with COOL, and what those directives will mean for the pork industry. In a nutshell, the interpretation part of the legislation will not be concluded until late summer or early fall. Yes, the law goes into effect April 1st, however, there are so many outside influences that can and will become apparent as this law moves through the retail chain, that only time will tell what the final outcome will be.

No one at this point can honestly tell you or explain what the true consequences will be regarding the marketing of your hogs in relation to COOL, or how the pork industry will be totally impacted by the Country Of Origin Labeling law.

We do see some light at the end of the tunnel as to pork supply on the horizon. We now think that the supply of hogs will decrease approximately 6% starting in the 2nd quarter of the year. We have less pigs according the pig report, we will have less flow from Canada, and we have PRRS affecting some major sow herds in the Midwest, all pointing to signs of a possible recovery period. We also know as of this week that SEW pigs are selling for \$55.00 per head, and for the first time in a long time we are starting to see empty finisher barns. All of this points to price appreciation this spring and summer, and I think that this price increase could be very significant. The pork industry needs this financial boost!

From the Field

Howard Koster

Standard Nutrition Swine Consultant



Health this winter in barns has been more of an issue than in the past. PRRS has been a big issue with some of the larger integrators as well as the 3,000 sow farms. Flu has been more severe this past winter than in recent years. Talking with my largest client who manages several hundred thousand pigs, they're seeing across the board increase in death loss, due to flu and PRRS. It appears that the newest antibiotics for flu aren't nearly as effective. They're telling me that they're seeing 2.5% to 3% more death loss which also translates into 5%-6% more re-sales.

The C.O.O.L. issue has definitely created a hole in production and flow. Numbers I see are 7% less pigs coming on feed into the U.S. since September 1st. This hole makes me ask the question "will C.O.O.L. have the effect that packers want us to believe." As of now, packers have indicated that as of April 1st only Tyson, in Perry, IA will take Canadian hogs. Tyson did a trial run to kill only Canadian hogs on the 14th in Storm Lake. As they indicated, one day kill for Storm Lake would be the only day they would kill Canadian hogs.

I had a meeting with one of the largest integrators and they indicated they have halted the building and expansion of any new wean-finish buildings for all of 2009. They have these sites permitted and some of the dirt work already done but are not

going to move forward as of now. Their statement was that they need to see profit in the hog industry and viable markets going forward.

I have several large producers who farm anywhere from 3,000 to 10,000 acres who stated that they will not apply any fertilizer this year. Their comment being that we need to get control of our cost, and stop being price gouged. Another client, who is a large seed corn dealer, tells me that farmers are refusing to pay the price for top hybrids and he's losing them to other companies that are more competitive in the eyes of the farmer.

With the issues that I see going on with health and decline in hog numbers due to C.O.O.L. I don't see the packing industry passing up on a dollar. That has just not been the history of the packer to leave a dollar on the table. I believe that when the packers can't fill all the shackle space, they will start killing the Canadian pig, thus making the playing field level out, so that profit comes back to the industry. These times are affecting the whole global industry. I see the opportunity for profit sooner rather than later. Producers see feed prices being more competitive due to less cattle, poultry, and hogs on feed.

With these statements being sent to the agricultural industry, I believe there is reason in the very near future for optimism.

Swine Health Update

Colin Kirkegaard, DVM, MS

PRRS Alert



Once again the winter season brings reports of herds breaking with PRRS virus. This is to be expected as the virus is very stable under freezing conditions. It has been reported that the virus can retain its infectivity for up to 4 months at -70 degrees C. We are all aware of the research documenting the recovery of PRRS virus from a snow ball placed under the fender of a livestock trailer. Now would be a good time to review how PRRS virus can enter a swine herd so we can reduce our risk of becoming infected.

The primary method of transmission is the infected pig. Infected pigs can shed the virus for up to 90 days while experimentally infected boars have been shown to shed the virus in semen for up to 93 days after infection. The proper isolation and testing of incoming breeding stock (including boars entering a stud) will go a long way towards reducing this risk.

Aerosol transmission can be a potential route of transmission under conditions of high humidity, low temperatures and low wind speeds. For this reason many commercial boar studs have started using filters in their ventilation systems to eliminate incoming air as a source of infection.

PRRS virus can also be transmitted by fomites. Contaminated needles, boots, coveralls, transport vehicles, and shipping containers all represent potential sources of infection. At the point of delivery of market animals the assumption should be that the pigs unloaded just ahead of yours were infected and shedding virus. Changing boots and coveralls as well as washing and disinfecting trucks and trailers are all necessary biosecurity procedures to prevent introduction of virus into our herds.

Migratory waterfowl have not been shown to transmit the virus under field conditions. On the other hand, house flies and mosquitoes have been shown to transmit the virus. Fortunately insects are not an issue during freezing conditions when the PRRS virus is the most stable.

It's always good management to follow sound biosecurity procedures to prevent the introduction of new diseases into our herds. Winter is the season to increase our biosecurity diligence as viruses such as TGE and PRRS find increased stability during freezing conditions.

Nutritionally Speaking

Michelle Tjardes, Ph.D.

Standard Nutrition Nutritionist

Genetic Potential—What does that mean?



High feeds and fuel prices have producers looking at every angle to reduce costs and improve efficiency. Fine tuning our management practices have never been more important to sustaining our livestock operations. So the question comes, why are my turkeys not growing like the breeding company tells me they should? There are many factors... Most importantly producers need to understand the following concept:

Performance (Profitability) = Genetics + Environment + (G * E).

Genetics is just what the primary breeder promises, the ability of the turkey to live, grow and yield meat. Environment includes not only nutrition, but temperature, stocking density, health, slaughter age, feed additives, etc. The wild card in this equation is the Genetic/Environment interaction or how your birds will respond to their environment. The primary breeder has been selecting birds that have the best feed efficiency. What has that done to our modern turkey? It means that today's turkey is gaining more weight on less feed and most of that gain is gain in breast meat. Indirectly, that has resulted in a bird who is more sensitive to its

environment and needs extra attention in that area of the equation. Currently only 25% of our turkey flocks achieve what the primary breeder sets forth as its standards for production goals. The reason for this is management. To achieve the primary breeder's goals, producers must really focus on the environment that birds is grown in. Any slip-up in our management of the environment will drastically decrease the genetic potential of our turkeys. For example, the ideal environmental temperature for maximizing growth in 8 week and older turkeys is between 50 and 70°F and 30 to 50% relative humidity. However, even in high-tech barns this is very hard to achieve during the coldest and hottest seasons. That is why we see 3 to 5lb market weight differences in birds slaughtered in March versus August. Producers are faced with making decisions on what is the best management practice to "optimize" returns and sustainability. In times of high feed prices, it is important to carefully evaluate your management in order to increase your Performance and Profitability.

Turkey Talk

Jim Plyler, M.S.

Standard Nutrition Turkey Consultant

Are you contributing to Antibiotic Resistance??



We recently talked about using drug sensitivities to improve cost, performance and maybe create a better understanding of how and what make our antibiotic treatments work the best. We now need to discuss issues that may be contributing to higher cost and poorer performance. This may be as simple as how we are treating our flocks.

Even after medicating your flock for just a few days, the mortality may have decreased, or stopped, continue with your full antibiotic treatment. This is because the majority of the bacteria have been killed, but a few will remain alive. These are the bacteria with the greatest resistance to the antibiotic being used and stopping the treatment early gives them a chance to survive and become stronger.

When they multiply the infection returns and this time ALL of the bacteria will be the resistant type. These resistant bacteria can be transmitted to others and treating the infection will require stronger antibiotics, or stronger dosing and a longer treatment period. This all will result in costing you more per treatment.

Remember antibiotics are not a replacement for good management but good antibiotic management will help improve performance and lower cost.

Just remember before you reach for any antibiotic ensure that you know the following:

1. What is the diagnosis?
2. What is the bacteria sensitivity too?
3. Will the treatment be cost effective?
4. Do I need to correct management issues?
5. What is the best antibiotic to use=Gram positive or Gram negative?
6. Use the "right" antibiotic the "right" way=bactericidal or bacteriostatic?

Use your antibiotic sensitivity and complete the treatment period, because it works! The wise use of antibiotics in animal production is positive as long as we keep it science based. By doing all that we have discussed we will help ensure maximum response and hopefully continue our antibiotic availability.