

Reducing Lameness in Sow Herd Improves Profitability

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CANADA - A researcher with the University of Minnesota suggests pork producers can improve the productivity of their herds and the economic viability of their farms by addressing lameness in the sow herd, according to Bruce Cochrane.

When we examine the prevalence of lameness in swine production we see at least 10 percent in almost all herds and as high as 40 percent in some severely affected herds.

A series of workshops hosted by the Prairie Swine Centre in partnership with Swine Innovation Porc to update pork producers on research being conducted in the area of sow lameness, longevity and temperament travels to Winnipeg 23 October.

Dr John Deen, a professor of swine production systems with the University of Minnesota, says lameness affects the general well being of the animal as well as its ability to adapt to different environments, to eat, drink and function normally and when we consider those productivity factors we see there are true economic effects.

Dr John Deen-University of Minnesota

There's two main areas where we see strong effects of longevity upon farm productivity. We need to keep sows into their prime to increase the individual sow productivity and thus, by reducing lameness, we reduce the number of reasons either directly through lameness or indirectly through the fact that lame sows reproduce more poorly we get to keep them longer because they're better sows.

The second part is something that is less studied but, when we cull sows for lameness and eliminate them from the herd, the overall herd productivity drops because in many cases when a sow is removed she is not replaced immediately and thus there are more empty spaces in the herd as well.

Dr Deen says the combination of these two factors may result in a loss of four to six pigs per sow due to reduced productivity from replacing these sows too early.

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