

Smithfield progresses with conversion to group sow housing

Smithfield has transitioned 71.4 percent of pregnant sows on its company-owned US farms from gestation stalls to group housing

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Smithfield Foods reported January 6 that its hog production subsidiary, Murphy-Brown LLC, made significant strides in 2014 in transitioning pregnant sows on its company-owned farms in the United States to group housing systems, reaching the 71.4 percent mark by the end of the year.

In the company's latest update, Smithfield Foods reported that during 2014 the company increased the number of pregnant sows transitioned to group housing systems by nearly 20 percent over results for 2013. That means at the outset of 2015 more than seven out of every 10 Murphy-Brown pregnant sows on company-owned farms in the U.S. are in group housing systems.

"We made a business decision in 2007, based on input from our customers, to convert to group housing for our pregnant sows on all of our U.S. farms, and I'm proud of the fact that our employees are working very hard to make good on our commitment and complete this challenging task by 2017. I am very pleased that our employees report that group housing works equally well from both an animal care and a production standpoint," said C. Larry Pope, president and chief executive officer of Smithfield Foods.

A year ago, Smithfield Foods announced it was recommending that all of Murphy-Brown's contract sow growers join with the company in converting their facilities to group housing systems for their pregnant sows by 2022, with a sliding scale of incentives to accelerate that timetable. "We have been encouraged with the initial response to our request to join with us in this commitment," said Dennis H. Treacy, executive vice president and chief sustainability officer of Smithfield Foods.

Smithfield's international hog production operations also will complete their conversions from gestation stalls to group housing systems on company-owned farms by 2022. Smithfield's hog production operations in Poland (AgriPlus) and Romania (Smithfield Ferme) began utilizing group housing facilities on company-owned farms a number of years ago. The company's Granjas Carroll de México (GCM) and Norson joint ventures in Mexico are committed to phasing out gestation stalls on company-owned farms by 2022.

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