Keep your pigs cool

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CORRECT MANAGEMENT and husbandry of pigs during the hot summer experienced in Western Australia is of the utmost importance if production is to be maintained at a profitable level.

Hot weather conditions can often bring a decline in production. This simply means that the animals' normal physiological processes have been adversely affected by exposure to environmental conditions beyond the range of those which give maximum efficiency in production.

The domestic pig is an animal which suffers great stress during extreme conditions of heat. It does not have sweat glands, which are the natural cooling mechanism found in most animals, and furthermore, the relatively heavy layer of subcutaneous fat which growing pigs develop insulates them so that much of the heat produced from their feed is retained in their bodies.

These factors, together with high atmospheric temperatures, combine to produce a very uncomfortable situation for the animal. The consumption of feed decreases under such circumstances, and as a result, less is available, above that used for body maintenance, for conversion into flesh on the body. Growth rate and efficiency of feed utilisation is limited, and when such conditions exist for a prolonged period profits can be considerably reduced.

To alleviate as much as possible the effects of hot weather on his stock, the pig raiser should provide adequate facilities to ensure their comfort.

Water

The first and major consideration is the provision of water.

Water is a particularly important factor in nutrition; its most important function is to facilitate the propulsion of feed through the alimentary canal, and it is the major medium in which food is digested and absorbed through the gut wall, to be circulated in the blood to the tissues of the body. It is also the main vehicle for the removal of waste products from the body.

Muscles, or lean meat, contain about 78 per cent. of water and since the greatest relative growth of lean meat is made
during the earlier stages of development, it is obvious that the young growing animal has a particular need of ample water in the diet.

Since water can also help regulate body temperature it is obvious that it must be available to stock at all times. Automatic or ball tap operated waterers are most suitable as they ensure a constant and a fresh supply.

Shade

Adequate shade is essential, and whether it is in the form of natural shade trees, specially constructed portable shelters of timber and iron, or bush shelters, the most important feature of the shelter is that it allows the free circulation of air. It is desirable also to have a supply of drinking water nearby.

Vitamin A

During the summer, when few pig raisers have green feed available, Vitamin A reserves, of which green material is a natural source, may be depleted in the pig’s body to such an extent that deficiency symptoms arise.

The deficiency may show itself as failure of sows to come into season, birth of dead or malformed piglets, infertility of the boar and paralysis in growing pigs.

To prevent this from occurring, commercial synthetic vitamin A supplements should be provided. These are available as powders or in liquid emulsion form for mixing with the feed. Details of quantities to be fed are supplied with the various preparations.

Care of the Sow

During summer periods of hot weather the pregnant and the lactating sow must be the object of a high standard of husbandry.

Practical observations have shown that sows, particularly in the later stages of pregnancy—when they often have an excessive fat coverage—become most uncomfortable when high ground temperatures are experience.

Any influence at farrowing which results in excessively fatiguing the sow is detrimental, not only to her own health but to that of the newly born litter. If the sow is uncomfortable and becomes irritable she may refuse to allow the litter to suckle and may even savage them. More comfortable farrowing quarters may prevent such losses.

In hot weather farrowing quarters should be shaded to some extent, and designed so as to allow a free air circulation throughout the building. Clean and fresh drinking water must always be available, particularly at the time of farrowing.

A short time spent hosing down the roof of pig houses periodically during the day greatly reduces their internal temperature.
The Boar
The boar is equally important, because his ability to work efficiently depends largely on his management. When the weather is unduly hot the boar's vigour is reduced, and infertility may result from prolonged high temperatures. Although this infertility is only temporary, it results in delayed conceptions and general inconvenience to the pig raiser.

It is essential to provide the boar with conditions which will ensure his ability to work efficiently at all times.

GREATER STUDY OF ATOMIC CONTAMINATION OF FOOD CALLED FOR

The study of radioactive contamination in food and agriculture should be given high priority, the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) decided at its 11th session in Rome.

Considering the question of atomic energy in food and agriculture, the Conference called for international study of such matters as standardising procedures for monitoring radioactive contamination of agricultural products, establishing permissible levels of contamination of food and applying these levels in practice, and decontaminating agricultural resources and products.

The Conference stressed the importance of the application of radioisotopes and radiation in food and agriculture and called for an increase in FAO's training courses and fellowships in radiisotope techniques in agricultural research.
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