



Gestation Management

1. Pen sows according to size and body condition immediately (within 7 days) after breeding. Gilts should always be penned separately if possible.
2. Consider feeding a fiber source in gestation. The advantages of this are many and often hard to actually put numbers to. Fiber in gestation will help reduce the incidence of gastric ulcers and keep the stomach more full during limit feeding. Both improve lactation feed intake. Options are: Dehy Alfalfa @ 100 lbs./ton, Wheat Midds at 200 to 400 lbs./ton, Soyhulls @ 200 lbs./ton, and Linseed Meal at 100 lbs./ton.
3. Use L-Carnitine in gestation diets to improve live born litter size and % lean of pigs from future litters. Expect 1 to 1 ½ pig improvement in litter size and .50% improvement in % lean.
4. Micron size of grind for gestating sows should be between 900 and 1000 microns. While feed efficiency is improved with finer grinds, gastric ulcers can also be an issue with fine grinds for the sow herd. Along with micron size you should be concerned with the standard deviation of the sample. This is an indication of the range of particles from large to small, the closer it is to 2.0 the better.
5. Maintain body condition of sows at Score 3 or slightly less. Maintain gilts at a Score 3 or slightly more. Sows that are over fed and too fat will tend to have lower feed intakes in lactation resulting in lower milk production and lighter weaning weights.
6. Do NOT move sows from pen to pen or stall to stall in gestation. Place them immediately after breeding into a “home” pen or stall and keep them there until at least 6 weeks pre-farrow.
7. Do pregnancy checks at 30 to 45 days of gestation. If this is not done sows will sometimes go stale and if not identified as open as soon as possible they not only cost the operation money but can be very difficult to get back into the herd. I prefer an ultrasound pregnancy checker over a boar for this reason. Accuracy should be at 90 to 95 % depending on the operator.
8. Begin heat checking for possible recycling sows at Day 18 after breeding. Expect them to recycle and breed on Day 21.



9. Records – Identify and record numbers on sows that recycle. Allow them to recycle only once after breeding. If they cycle back a 2nd time – cull them. Some sows will repeat this process from parity to parity, records will eliminate this from happening. Sows that recycle and re – breed more than once after weaning will have almost no chance of maintaining a pregnancy and will continue to cost the operation money.
10. Consider using Aureomycin at 400 grams per ton one week per month in the gestation diet. In PRRS positive herds this can be very effective in improving farrowing rates.
11. Increase feeding rates the last 10 to 14 days of gestation by 1 to 2 lbs. daily. This is done to improve litter birth weights. Piglet survivability increases dramatically as birth weights move up from 2.5 to 3.0 lbs.