



Meet the Needs of Your Wean-to-Finish Pigs

Bigger, faster-growing pigs have different space and management requirements.

The pig industry is changing and so are the pigs in the barn. As it evolves, the pivotal question becomes, “Are you keeping up with the changes?” There are five key variations that impact how you raise wean-to-finish pigs, says Nat Stas, technical service specialist with PIC: market weight, [genetic improvement](#), people availability, feed cost and space cost.

Stas, who studied applied swine genetics at the University of Illinois, says market weights have increased by more than 20 lbs. in the last 20 years. The average market pig weighed 262.5 lbs. in 2000 and in 2017-2018, market pigs averaged 282.6 lbs. That rate shows no signs of slowing down. Improvements in genetics, nutrition, ventilation, health and management will continue.



Limiting Factors

Certain factors impact a pig’s ability to maximize its genetic potential and two of those potentially limiting factors are [ventilation and temperature](#). Your staff members need clear procedures and an understanding of why those procedures are important to properly troubleshoot, Stas says.

Having the right person in the right job will improve efficiency and productivity. Make sure you’re providing:

- Intensive training
- Clear standard operating procedures
- Technology and tools to perform tasks effectively
- Shower-in, shower-out facilities with emphasis on biosecurity
- Family benefits and alternative work schedules
- Creative hiring practices to attract good and stable labor

The pork industry is making great strides in increasing the rate of lean growth and decreasing the rate of fat deposition, which has tremendous implications on expectations for a ventilation system, says Mike Brumm, professor emeritus at the University of Nebraska. But heavier pigs need more room and lower temperatures in the building.



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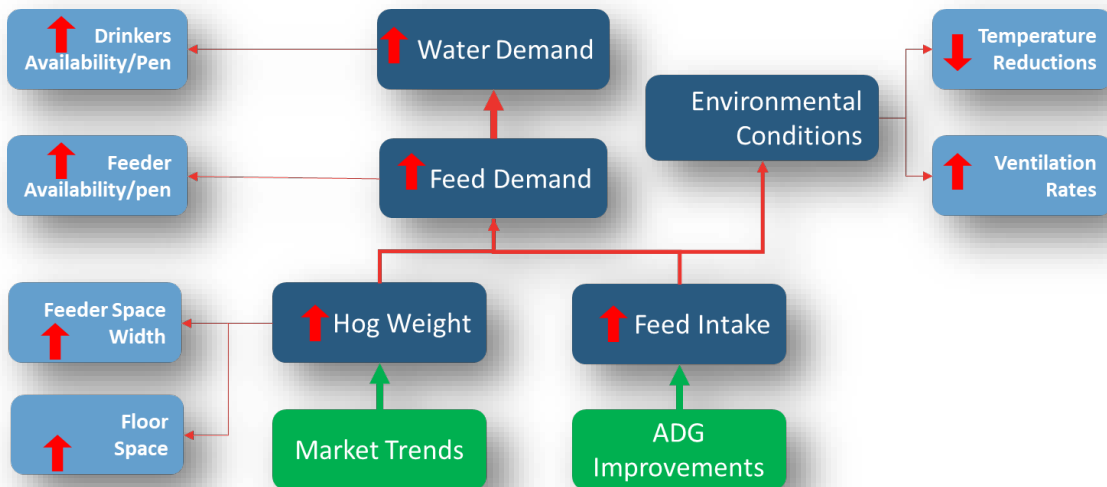
“As you create a hotter burning engine, these pigs are producing more BTUs per pound of finished product,” Stas says. “Don’t be afraid to turn the temperature to 62 degrees in your finishing barns.”

You might not be able to change your barns, but consider these action items:

1. Incorporate clear ventilation procedures
2. Watch humidity control & records... below 65% is the goal
3. Use proper air speed at inlets... 600 – 800 FPM (feet per minute) is the goal
4. Use proper air speed at curtain/cooling pad
5. Develop ventilation curve based on CFM/pig
6. Make sure water is readily available
7. Review temperature settings
8. Review bandwidth by season
9. Require regular use of ventilation tools
10. Use a ventilation checklist
11. Initiate regular ventilation training

As hog weights increase, so will feed and water demand, he adds. With increased feed intake, environmental conditions also change. Producers need to make sure pigs have easy access to drinkers and feeders. Bigger, wider pigs may not fit with the present feeder and floor space provided.

Requirement changes as weights increase



When wean-to-finish facilities are double-stocked (with twice as many pigs per pen as there will be during the finishing stage), it is not uncommon to expect a 0.10 lb./day reduction in average daily gain compared to pigs at standard stocking rates in nursery facilities, Brumm says. One of the main reasons for this decrease in early wean-to-finish performance appears to be a reduction in feeder and drinker space per pig and the impact of group size, especially in small-pen facilities that house from 25 to 50 pigs/pen.

Stas agrees: “If we’re going to continually go up on weights, we need to think about the requirements needed for these changes,” he says. “We may need to start looking at 8-plus sq. ft. at market per pig.”



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The Big Picture

Consideration of all the variables and how they fit in the overall picture is critical, says Stas. Although a farm may be limited by facility restrictions, changes are possible in number of pigs per pen, feeder space and other factors that will impact the bottom line.

“We’re either adding more market weight or a higher number of pigs,” Stas says. “Have an action list that includes your market strategy, proper placement plan, feeder space, feeder adjustment, water availability, ventilation rates, temperature settings, impeccable early pig care procedures, and optimum health care.”

The bottom line is that the pig industry is changing based on market demands, genetic improvement, labor availability, feed costs and space costs. As a result, new barns need to be designed with these changes in mind.

“It’s important to think about current and future pig requirements and how farm procedures and building designs will handle the capturing benefits of future progress in the pork business,” Stas says.

To keep up with changes, contact your PIC team today.

For more information on ventilation, check out the Pig Improver ventilation series:

- [Optimizing Ventilation in the Pig Barn: Why ventilation is so important, and how to get it right.](#)
- [Ventilation Air Exchange: Is your air exchange promoting maximum herd productivity?](#)
- [Getting it Right: Temperature and Ventilation](#)
- [Is Your Math Correct? Calculating the right air exchange to maximize your herd](#)

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