



# Trending Now: Sows with strong mothering ability weaning more and heavier piglets

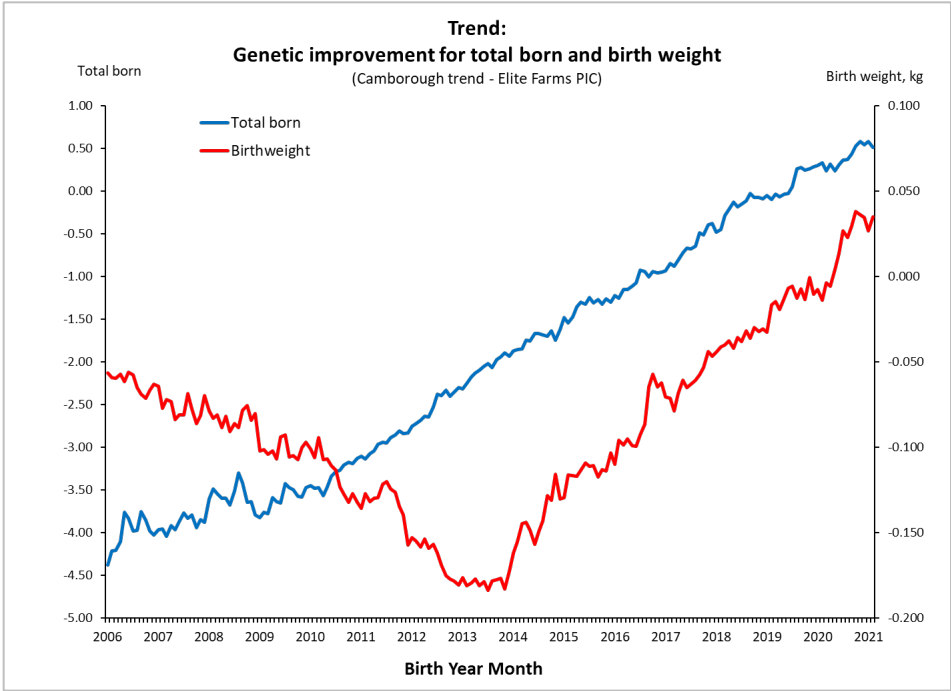
What’s trending today? Sows that are low-maintenance, high-performing and efficient. These sows can care for and consistently wean quality pigs. We’re measuring and selecting for sows with these capabilities. Here are a few highlights we are seeing in our Elite Farms.

### Total born & birthweight

PIC has genetically improved birth weight while increasing litter size at the same time. (Figure 1) A healthy birthweight is correlated with increased survivability, greater lifetime growth rate and improved feed conversion.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to this genetic trend, we see this first-hand in our Elite Farms performance. The percentage of females with low birthweights has decreased 6% (from 14% to 8%) over the last five years.

Figure 1 Genetic trend for total born and birthweight

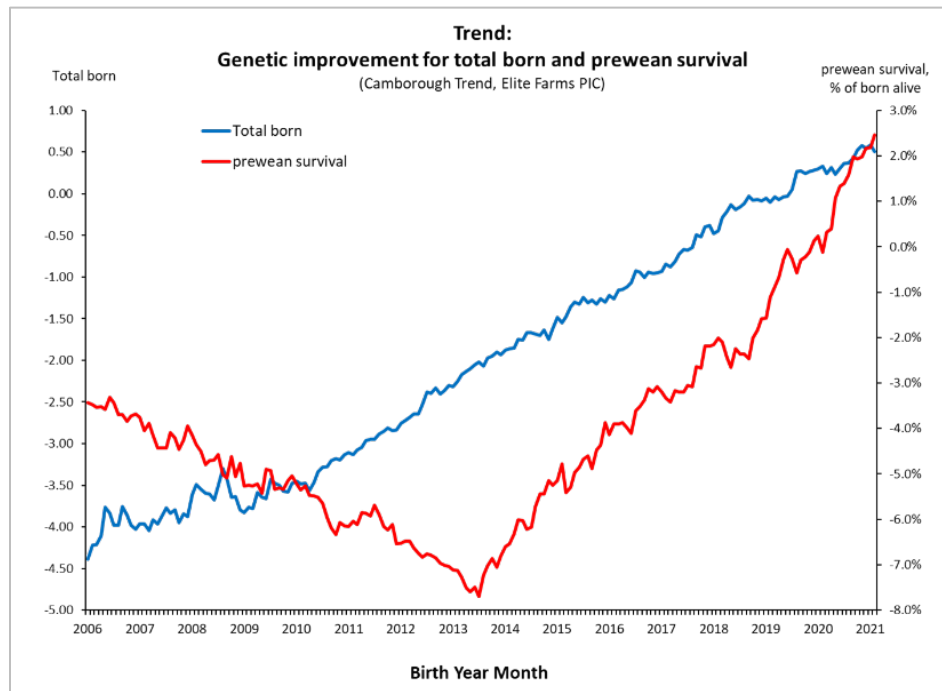


<sup>1</sup> Knauer, M. April 16, 2020. National Hog Farmer. Genetics of piglet throughput.

## Pre-wean survivability

Are those piglets surviving? We measure the survivability of those litters. Over the past year, the genetic trend for pre-wean survivability has been 1.7%. (Figure 2) Driving this trend are heavier, robust piglets and sow milking ability.

**Figure 2 Genetic improvement for total born and pre-wean survivability**



## Litter weaning weight & milking ability

Piglets rely solely on their dam for nutrition until weaning. To wean healthy, consistent litters, sows must provide ample colostrum and milk for all piglets. A sow's ability to milk and milk quality is positively influenced by genetics, proper gestational nutrition, and management.

Colostrum provides newborn piglets with energy and hydration to maintain vital body functions. It also provides antibodies critical for protection against disease, serving as the basis of a piglet's immune system development. Colostrum intake is positively associated with pre-weaning survival and weaning weight.

We select on litter weaning weight for milk yield. Genetic potential for litter weaning weight in PIC Elite Farms has increased 2.7 lbs. per litter in the last year, which corresponds to an increase in individual pig weaning weight just over 2 oz per pig.

The number of teats counts too. Having an adequate number of functional teats to nurse pigs reduces the need for nurse sows and extra labor to move and manage pigs. In the past year at PIC Elite Farms 58% of gilts had 16 or more functional teats and 95% had 14 or more functional teats.

## Putting it all together

We're excited our females are poised to be strong, predictable, and efficient mothers producing [quality weaned pigs](#). We also know daily management variables play a crucial role in reaching genetic potential on farms. Our technical service team continues to evaluate and update management practices recommendations to help producers achieve genetic potential.

Reach out to your PIC team or visit our [resources page](#) for the most recent technical team resources.