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Pork producers encouraged to evaluate optimal market weights

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THOUGHTS FROM 109 KILDEE
Pork producers encouraged to evaluate optimal market weights
As lower hog prices and higher feed costs continue to pressure pork producer margins, ISU Extension livestock economist John Lawrence said it’s time for producers to take a new look at their market weight strategies. While there often is a call for all producers to reduce weight to reduce supply, the real issue is what works for the individual, Lawrence says. For example, if you’re still marketing at the same weight that you did when corn was $2 a bushel and live hogs were near $60, it’s time to re-evaluate your decision. The most profitable weight at which to sell is when the additional cost of the next pound is equal to the revenue of that pound, and prices of feed and hogs have changed. The concept is simple, but it’s more complicated in practice. The cost of adding weight changes with feed prices, and additional weight can impact the lean premium and sort loss. To help producers think about the effects of possible changes in market weight, Lawrence has developed two versions of a spreadsheet calculator that producers can download and use on their own computers at no charge. To learn more and download the calculators (both in Excel® format) go to the IPIC Web site at www.ipic.iastate.edu/.

NEWS
Ossabaw hogs to help obese humans
The ongoing collaborative research with a type of feral pig at the Indiana University School of Medicine has an Iowa State connection. Dr. Mike Spurlock, who came to ISU from Purdue in 2005, is continuing work started there in collaboration with Dr. Mike Sturek and others on developing the Ossabaw pig as a model for metabolic syndrome in humans. One specific example is in the area of obesity and exercise. Left alone with unlimited food, these pigs act like, well, pigs. If those same pigs are provided with appropriate types and amounts of food, and appropriate types and lengths of exercise, their incidence of heart disease is reduced. You can read more in this article from the August 2006 edition of the Augustana (College) Magazine http://snipr.com/1x2t4 . Mike Spurlock has a joint appointment here at ISU with the departments of animal science and food science and human nutrition.

Meat from cloned animals safe for human consumption
A draft risk assessment from the Food and Drug Administration says that meat and milk from most cloned animals or their offspring is safe for consumers to eat. The agency is expected to approve the sale of products from cloned livestock this year. Scientists used more than 100 studies of cattle, pigs and goats to look at chemical composition of the food products from conventional and clone animals. Their work has
been peer-reviewed by independent cloning and animal health experts who agree with the findings, according to a release on the National Academies Web site. You can read the release and find links to other reports here http://snipr.com/1xg7h

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NRI grant report shows niche pork production numbers
Learn more about numbers from 41 farrow-to-finish farms that are part of a National Research Initiative Grant. The report, "Costs, Returns, Production and Financial Efficiency of Niche Pork Production in 2006," illustrates results from the project that focused on working with niche pork producers to establish production and financial record systems for their pork production operations. The report covers 2006 and uses both standardized information such as corn price, interest on capital, and pig inventory, and individual information such as other grains and supplements. Averages are included for all 41 farms. Averages for the top 15 farms and bottom 15 farms (based on return to capital, unpaid labor and management per hundred pounds of pork produced) also are included. The project is coordinated through IPIC and Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI), and the report was prepared by James Kliebenstein and John Mabry of ISU, Dave Stender of ISU Extension and Gary Huber of PFI. You can read and download the report from the IPIC Web site here http://snipr.com/1xgc4

IT'S A DATE

Continuing. PQA Plus™ certification sessions. A two-hour training session for pork producers or individuals who need PQA Plus™ certification. Cost is $25 and preregistration is encouraged. See IPIC Web site for locations, times and specific contact information http://www.ipic.iastate.edu/PQAPlus.html

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January and February. Confinement site manure applicator certification workshops. See the listing of dates and locations here http://snipr.com/1v8cy

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Jan. 23-24. Iowa Pork Congress. IPIC coordinates the Iowa State University area on the trade show floor. Learn more about the show, speakers and displays on the IPC Web site www.iowaporkcongress.org/

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Feb. 18-27. Iowa Pork Regional Conferences, five locations around Iowa. Cosponsored with Iowa Pork Producers Association. Topics include case studies of disease intervention, products and strategies to consider in feeding pigs in a bio-fuels world, and mortality management and troubleshooting the composting process on your farm. Five locations throughout Iowa, with program running 4 to 8 p.m. at all locations. See the IPIC web site for more information www.ipic.iastate.edu/events.html

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DID YOU KNOW?
Beginning Farmers Conference at ISU
The third annual edition of this conference takes place in Ames later this month. Session topics range from machinery sharing to intergenerational farming to the future of the livestock industry. The noon panel discussion features a retiring farmer, an ISU graduate who returned home to farm three years ago, and a student who plans to return home to the family farm. The conference is planned, coordinated and hosted by the ISU Beginning Farmer Network, a student organization that helps students plan a career in production agriculture by networking with other beginning farmers and experts. Conference cost is $30 per person when registered by Jan. 17, and $40 per person after that date. Read more in this news release from ISU's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences http://snipr.com/1x2vx
FOR THE RECORD
Pigs going green
The potential for useful transgenic livestock just took a colorful step forward. Chinese researchers announced this past week that 2 of 11 piglets born to a sow that had fluorescent green protein injected in its embryo actually glow a green color when they're placed under an ultraviolet light. The sow was mated with an ordinary boar, which offers evidence that somatic cell nuclear transfer technology used on the original embryos is successful because those resulting changes were passed on, to some degree, to offspring. Scientists say these young pigs show the possibilities for specialized breeding purposes such as human organ transplant sources. Read more in this article on the Web site of the Scientific American http://snipr.com/1x2yj

NEWS NOW from the Iowa Pork Industry Center www.ipic.iastate.edu
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