



BREEDING

Reproductive Performance

Shedding some light on reproductive performance

Farm facts

Location: Cornwall

Farm size & enterprise: 300 sow farrow to finish

Benefits

- Increased litters/sow/year (+ 0.28)
- Increased numbers weaned per litter (+ 0.15 pigs)
- Increased pigs weaned/sow/year (+ 3 pigs)
- Increased farrowing rate (+ 11.3%)

Background

It has long been known that light is important for the initiation of the breeding cycle and maintenance of pregnancy. The weaned sow environment on this unit was hindering reproductive performance; light levels during winter were poor and sows were exposed to extremes of weather. !

Key to success

- Improving the light levels (lux) in the sow accommodation
- Increasing the size of the sow accommodation

You do not need to completely refurbish the accommodation to see improvements, consider the following:

- Replace broken light bulbs
- Clean bulbs/tubes and outer casings where present
- Clean the windows!
- Check light programmers are working and set correctly
- Paint walls and the undersides of roofs white to reflect light

“ Since improving lighting and increasing the size of the sow accommodation the producer has seen a marked improvement in reproductive performance. ”

Helen Thoday, BPEX KT Manager for the South West



The system

The owner decided to refurbish the sow accommodation. A roof was built over the feed crates (also used for AI) to shelter the area, this was previously open to the elements and sows and stockpeople had no shelter or shade from the weather.

Lighting was installed in the roofs of the kennels and along the new roof so the sows have light wherever they are in the pens. These lights are on a timer, remaining on for 16 hours a day.

The sow accommodation was also increased in size so that sows can remain there for four weeks post-weaning. This makes checking for returns more efficient, and sows are not moved through to the ESF straw yards until they are past their return date.

This could be further improved by instigating preg checking at this point.