

Gilt Management Meeting: Practical Considerations for the P1 sow

John Hayden BVSc MRCVS
Integra Veterinary Services
Part of Garth Pig Practice Ltd



Key fact

- Adrenaline is the enemy of all reproductive hormones – when you are fighting or flighting you are not interested in reproducing – your only concern is to save your own skin!



What we are after in a weaned gilt?

- Udder development – teats that have worked well
- A gilt that has suckled well will come on heat well
- Weaned gilt condition – correct condition is key to future performance





What are the basics for good reproduction – from the wild boar?

- Abrupt weaning



What are the basics for good reproduction – from the wild boar?

- Abrupt weaning
- Plenty of feed



What are the basics for good reproduction – from the wild boar?

- Abrupt weaning
- Plenty of feed
- Boar presence



Abrupt weaning

- Plenty of piglets to suckle
- Optimum Feed Intake



Plenty of piglets to suckle – calm farrowing – no adrenaline

- **Accustom gilts to human contact**
- **In between sows indoors**
- **Provision of nesting material**
- **Relief of farrowing fever**
- **Stresnil / NSAIDs orally or injectable**
- **Day 2 fostering and tailing etc**



Plenty of piglets to suckle – calm farrowing - outdoors

- Accustom gilts to human contact - time
- Individuals – 20 x 20m – one hut – one sow – one litter
- Hut direction
- Vents, fender management
- Fill farrowing 1 week before farrowing
- Level bed 2-3 days before farrowing
- Wheat rape / rye base, barley top up.
- Day 2 fostering and tailing etc



Plenty of piglets to suckle

- Foster to 11-13 depending on genetics / teat numbers
- Lifting decks – reduce overlays
- Piglet health – scour control – Hygiene, E coli, Clostridia, Coccidiosis
- Hygiene for joint ill control – clippers, dockers, umbilical cords



Optimum Feed Intake

- A long story – starts at birth – but today discuss from 20 weeks



Optimum Feed Intake – some facts

- Gilts grown too quickly are more susceptible to leg weakness in late pregnancy



Optimum Feed Intake – some facts

- Good lactation appetite is linked in pigs to low mid-pregnancy feed intake



PIC – Nutrient Specifications Manual 2016

- Fat sows at farrowing will likely have low feed intake during lactation, lose more weight, produce less milk, and consequently, may wean lighter piglets.
- This negative energy balance will then likely influence a reduction in the subsequent litter size.

Optimum Feed Intake – some facts

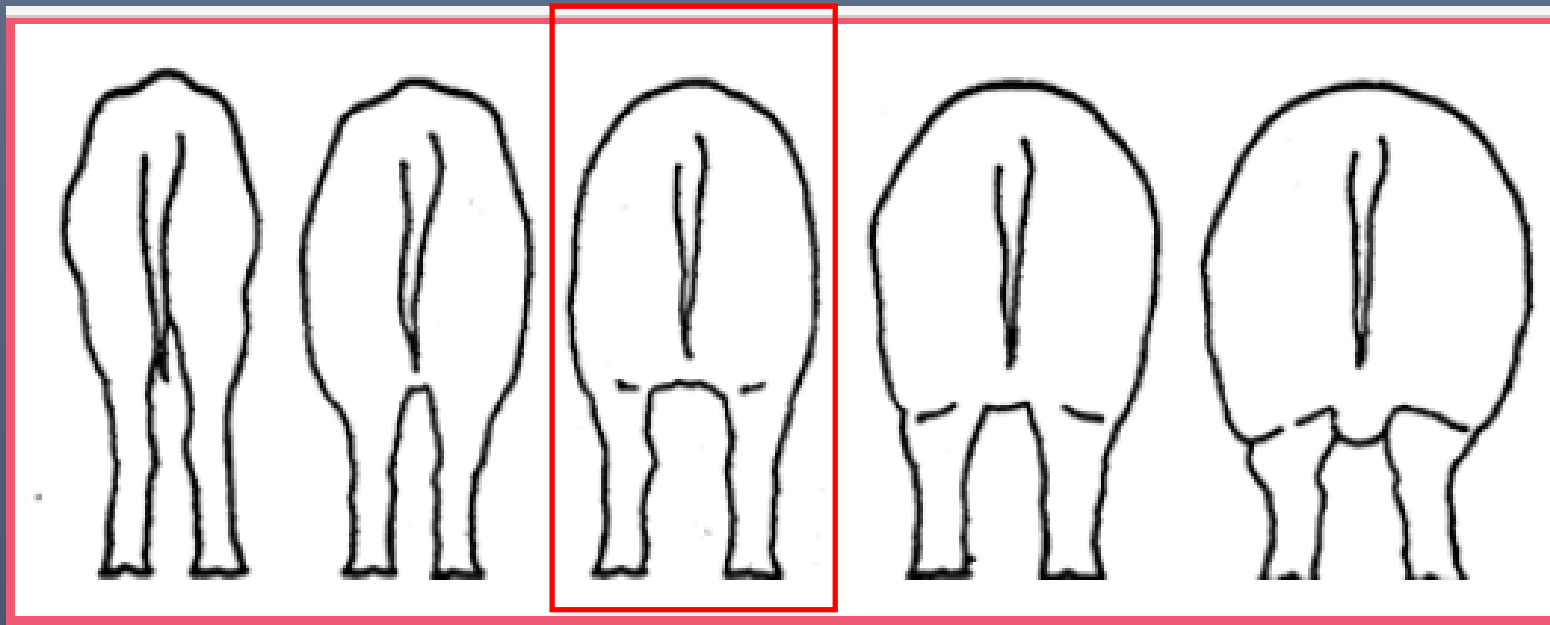
- Over-fit gilts at farrowing are more susceptible to Farrowing Fever



Optimum Feed Intake – Pre-service gilts recap from Spring Meeting

- I want a gilt in condition score 3.5-4 at service
- I want strong bones
- I want 33-35 weeks of age
- I don't want more than 150kg at service





Body Score	1	2	3	4	5
Score	Condition	Body Shape			
1	Emaciated hip	Backbone prominent to the eye			
2	Thin hips	Backbone easily felt without applying palm pressure			
3	Ideal hips	Backbone felt only with firm palm pressure			
4	Fat hips	Backbone cannot be felt			
5	Over fat hips	Backbone heavily covered			

Optimum Feed Intake – Pre-service gilts

- Restrict feed from 110kg – 22-24 weeks
- Sow ration – either dry sow or gilt development as per nutritionist guidelines
- Flush for the last 2 weeks before service or from finishing Altrenogest to service
- If dosing Altrenogest by mouth can flush for the last 2 weeks before service



Optimum Feed Intake – Served Gilts

- Just over maintenance – we want steady but not rapid gain
- Allow for low mid-pregnancy feed
- Allow for extra 0.75kg for the last 3 weeks before farrowing without making the gilt too fat



Optimum Feed Intake – Served Gilts

- 2.1-2.75kg from service to 13 weeks
- +0.75kg for the last 3 weeks before farrowing



Optimum Feed Intake – Farrowing Gilts

- From 3 days before farrowing low level – 2kg
- Stotfold scale +0.5kg a day
- Maybe quicker with modern genetics
- Aim for 8-9kg indoor, 10kg outdoor
- ?Ad-lib
- Calcium levels to avoid osteoporosis
- Temperature of the farrowing house – 20°C once pigs over 3 days



Optimum Feed Intake – Farrowing Gilts Early

- Serving gilts 1 week ahead of the sows in a batch system
- Leads to longer lactation, more time on maximum feed levels
- Stronger piglets, better lactation, stronger heats?



Optimum Feed Intake – Farrowing Gilts Early – down sides

- Low born alive – you can't top up with sow piglets
- High born alive – you have nowhere to foster them to for a week



Optimum Feed Intake – Recovery if you still have thin weaned gilts

- Skip a heat – miss the heat at weaning and serve 3 weeks later
- Keep on ad-lib
- Use Altrenogest to delay the weaning heat by 1-2 weeks
- Meanwhile keep on high levels (can't go ad-lib as Altrenogest needs to be given)



Plenty of feed – Weaned Gilts

- Step up feed – 2, 4, 6, 8kg
- Ad-lib dry sow
- + sugar / dextrose / glucose / sugar
beet / potatoes
- Supplements



Plenty of feed – Weaned Gilts

- Keep separate from older sows
- Beware slippery floors – grooving
- NSAIDs



Plenty of feed – Served P1 Sows

- First 7 weeks – aim to be back at condition score you would be happy to farrow at
- Feed accordingly – maintenance +0.5kg??
- Make the sow think ‘times are good!’



Plenty of feed – Served P1 Sows

- No mixing
- No moving
- No vaccinating (NB PRRS Blitzing now done as an exception)
- No feed changes
- No stress - adrenaline!



Plenty of feed – 7+ weeks in-pig P1 Sows

- Condition should be good by now
- Low level feed for mid-pregnancy to prepare for the next good lactation feed intake.



Dry Sow / Lactation ration split

- 65:35
- US 60:40
- Yours?



Checks

- Calibrate feeders / scoops / buckets regularly



Boar Presence

- Boar in from weaning to the day before service
- Boars back in from 24-hours after last AI for 5 weeks



What does 'good' look like ?

- FR% to gilt service is higher than the herd average (gilts are the most fertile group).
- Litter size from the gilt litter is no more than 1.5 pig less than my mature SOWS
- Each 2nd parity sow's litter is larger than her gilt litter(not herd ave for parity 2 which includes return services and a proportion of P2 sows with a distinct 2nd litter drop)
- And finally, I retain 80% of each of my gilt intakes to 3rd farrowing and so achieve at least 45% of the herd in parities 3 to 5.