“Tire Door” Keeps Heat In Hog Barn

“Tire doors” installed across the open doorways of Ron Holubar’s hog finishing barn solved health problems caused by drafty conditions inside the barn.

The Solon, Iowa, farmer uses a linoleum knife to cut the sidewalls off bass ply tires, leaving 6-in. wide tire strips that he cuts in half so they’re 3-ft. long. He bolts the strips side by side across a 2 by 6 board that he lag bolts underneath a sheet of plywood that covers the upper two thirds of the door. The plywood is hinged at the top so he can swing the plywood sheet up and hook it, leaving enough room to get in with his skid loader to clean out the pen. The tire strips, which just barely scrape the ground, swing freely back and forth as hogs go in and out between them.

“They keep heat in and drafts out and are maintenance-free,” says Holubar, who has built six “tire doors” so far. “Hogs chew on the tires, but they’re practically indestructible and absorb all the punishment hogs can give them. I built the first one seven years ago and it still works great. I take them off in summer.”

Holubar drills two 5/16-in. holes into each tire strip and drills 1/4-in. holes in the 2 by 6board tomatch. He uses 1/4-in. carriage bolts to fasten the strips in place.

“Radial tires are too difficult to cut. Wide implement tires won’t work because the tread is too thick and tends to curl up,” notes Holubar.

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“Wheel-Out” Calf Pens

Cleaning out calf pens is a much easier job for Winford and Junie Little, Eatonton, Ga., since they built “wheel-out” calf pens for their open-sided pole barn. The pens roll along steel tracks embedded in concrete.

The 2 by 4-ft. pens are mounted on stainless steel frames and have easy-to-clean polyvinyl sides. The front two-thirds of the floor in each pen is expanded metal covered by rubber cow mats while the back third is parlor grate positioned directly under the barn’s 24 by 18-in. flush gutters. There are four rows of 30-pen sections inside the 120-calf barn.

“They have eliminated many of the disease problems usually associated with calf barns,” says Winford. “We had been raising calves outside, but it was miserable working in cold weather. We still get cold in the winter, but not wet. Calves in confinement need to be kept as clean as possible to reduce the chance of disease. Whenever we want to clean the pens we simply roll them out and use a scrubber and steam cleaner to disinfect them. The nonporous polyvinyl sides clean off easily. We leave them in the sun as long as we can until we need them again. The pens have helped reduce our calf death losses down to less than 5%. We keep calves in the pens until they’re two months old.

A pair of concrete runways for each 30-pen section extends 30 ft. outside the barn. A 3 by 3-in. track made from galvanized angle iron is embedded in one side of each pair of runways. The wheels on that side of each pen are grooved to follow the track. The other side of each pen is equipped with caster wheels that simply roll freely along the flat concrete.