

YOU'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT

New-Style Hog House

by Don Muhm, Farm Editor
Des Moines Register

HUBBARD, IOWA — Pork producer Arthur Nehring had the hog in mind when he drew up the plans for a new finishing confinement building for the family's Pine Hills Stock Farm northwest of here.

First, Nehring came up with the idea of using psychology on the pig.

Then, he sought to reduce the amount of energy needed to keep the pigs warm by catching as much of the sun's warmth as possible on cold, winter days.

But most of all, Nehring wanted a pork production unit which met the standards of the Iowa Department of Environmental Quality.

Nehring, president of the family farm corporation, believes his idea of using T-shaped, concrete partitions within the 15 pens in the finishing building — which can house up to 2,000 hogs — is a natural. He is now seeking to patent and copyright certain features of the new unit.

The chief purpose of Nehring's concrete maze of partitions is to reduce fighting and scrapping among the pigs — one cause of hog losses in confinement buildings.

Nehring, 68 and a hog farmer since 1932, explained how the maze worked.

"All of the corners in the pen give the hogs a chance to hide, and a place to get away from it all," he said. "Out of sight, out of mind. And when one pig can't see the other, he tends to be less aggressive and there's less fighting."

"The trouble with confinement is simply confinement itself. And if you can let a hog get exercise and satisfy his exploratory drive — this is what my maze tends to do — the result is a more contented hog and less fighting," he said.

Nehring is enthusiastic about results from the first few months experience with the new hog unit — both in the conduct of the hogs and in the saving of energy.

One day last week when the outside temperature was about 20 degrees, the temperature inside was 70 degrees. On the coldest night in Hubbard this winter — about 20 degrees below (Fahrenheit) — Nehring reports the 1:30 a.m. temperature inside the hog house was 65 degrees.

These temperatures were achieved without the use of supplemental heat. Only the warmth of available sunlight and the hogs heat the interior of Nehring's hog unit. No ventilation fans are used.

The key to such warm inside temperatures is the partitions. Built of concrete, they soak up the winter sun's warmth and then give off heat into the night hours.

Nehring designed the finishing

house, which was constructed by Ax-tell Construction of Eldora, at a total cost of about \$190,000.

The main feature of the building is the southern wall, which is almost entirely sheets of translucent, corrugated fiber-glass material about 20 feet tall.

The hog house is 310 feet long and 40 feet wide, and was built over an eight-foot deep pit which can hold a three-month supply of hog wastes.

The manure pit, as well as the other aspects of disposing of animal

wastes, has the approval of Iowa environmental officials.

Nehring said that the cost of labor, lumber and concrete came to about \$160,000, while other facilities such as feed bins, the feeders, watering pipes and nipples, as well as earth moving, cost about \$30,000.

Nehring's son, Steve, 38 who lives nearby, is vice-president of the family corporation and resident-supervisor of the hog plant. Another son, Richard, who lives in Washington, D.C., is secretary-treasurer, while Linda Jo Nehring, Steve's wife, also is an officer.

The hog unit's big window faces south. The first morning rays of the sun extend almost to the back (or northern) wall of the pens so that the sun's warmth hits into the pens early after a cold winter night.

Nehring said in the summer, the positioning of the building is such that shade is cast over most of the interior of the unit. Four-foot open-

ings in the southern and northern walls of the hog house will permit summer breezes to cool the hogs.

So far, Nehring has sorted out one load of hogs from various pens in his new confinement unit. He noted an absence of fighting among the pigs bunched together from different pens for the first time.

He said the hogs like to nestle in the corners made by the T-shaped partitions. Nehring also was surprised at the lack of manure build-up in the T-shaped partition corners where he had expected some of the hog wastes to accumulate.

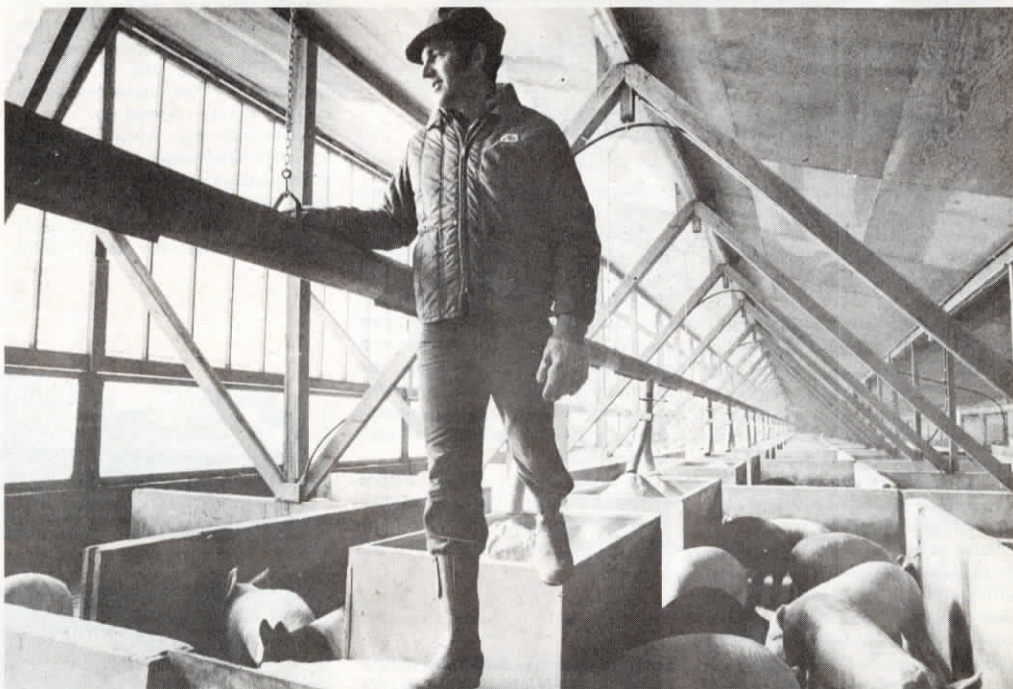
"The hogs seem to sort of keep that area clean themselves," he said.

Reprinted with permission from the Des Moines Register, Des Moines, Iowa.

For more details, contact: Art Nehring, 107 Michigan Ave., Iowa Falls, Iowa 50126 (ph 515 648-2768).



Art Nehring (above) designed hog confinement unit. Concrete partitions (right) help reduce fighting among hogs.



T-shaped concrete partitions within the building's 15 pens provide many corners for pigs to explore and hide in, thus reducing fighting and scrapping. Photo above shows Steve Nehring walking on partitions as he checks hogs. Note Southern wall made of translucent, corrugated fiberglass sheets about 20 ft. tall.

Photos by Carl Voss