New Ideas For Hog Producers

Our thanks to Joe Vansickle, National Hog Farmer, for his help in pulling together these exciting new ideas for hog producers, some of which were entered in the magazine's inventor contest at the 1996 World Pork Expo in Des Moines.

He Composts His Dead Hogs

There's a better way to dispose of dead hogs than burying them around the farm or paying a rendering truck to come and haul them away, according to a Teutopolis, Ill., farmer.

Chris Hartke has been turning his dead hogs into compost that he has been spreading on his fields since 1994.

His composter consists of two concrete bins, 14 ft. deep by 13 ft. wide by 6 ft. tall. A third bin holds green sawdust which he mixes in with the hogs.

The sawdust is spread 8 to 12-in. deep on the floor of the bins and around the dead animals with a skid steer loader. It takes 4 1/2 to 5 months to fill each bin with casualties from Hartke's 300-sow farrow-to-finish operation. Piles are turned with a skid steer loader after three months. After turning the pile, it's left for another three months before being spread on fields.

"When you turn the pile there's only a musty smell, like leaf piles in the fall,"

Hartke says. "Otherwise, there's no odor at all as long as you keep carcasses covered by 8 to 10 in. of sawdust at all times.

"Temperature at the center of the pile is 140° which is hot enough to turn bones to a rubbery substance by the end of the first three-month cycle and to make them disappear completely by the end of the second three-month cycle."

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"Frisbee Feeder"

When James Stafford, Hope, Ind., switched to an early weaning farrowing program last year he needed to set up feeders for his 10 to 14-day-old pigs that would get them off to a good start. However, he felt that most commercial feeders were either too deep or too expensive.

He solved the problem by using frisbees and miscellaneous other materials to make what he calls "frisbee feeders".

"We use them as creep feeders in our farrowing crates and as feeders in our pre-nursery. We spent less than $6 apiece to build them," says Stafford.

A frisbee forms the base of each 20-in. high feeder. The frisbee is secured to a 6-in. steel plate. A piece of pipe welds to the steel plate and runs up through the frisbee and a piece of 3-in. dia. PVC pipe. A spring-loaded rod with a T-handle on top runs down through the pipe to a J-hook that extends down below the steel plate. The J-hook catches onto a slot in the floor to hold the feeder in place.

Pigs work the feed down by nudging their noses against four rods mounted in the bottom of the frisbee. The rods weld to a 3-in. length of flexible auger that's slipped over the bottom of the center pipe.

"Young pigs can't miss the frisbee and they waste very little feed," says Stafford, who has made 30 of the feeders. "Each frisbee holds about 2 1/2 lbs. of feed. I use a scoop that I made from a 1-gal. plastic jug to fill the the 3-in. dia. PVC pipes."

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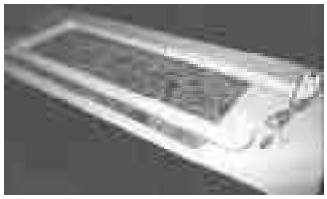
Heat Tubes For Farrowing Crates

"It keeps the floor temperature virtually constant for baby pigs at a fraction of the cost of heat lamps," says Norman Miller, Puxico, Mo., about the heating tubes he and his father Cletus made for their farrowing crates. The invention took first place at the 1996 National Hog Farmer inventions contest at the World Pork Expo.

Each unit consists of a 2-in. dia., 44-in. long, U-shaped length of PVC pipe that's filled with water and warmed by an electric nipple water heater line inserted into one end. The tubes are placed under the pen dividers so each unit can serve two pens.

"It works better than a heating lamp because it provides heat for the baby pigs yet keeps the sow cool, and it also costs much less to operate," says Miller. "It also has virtually eliminated piling of baby pigs and cut



our fire insurance premiums in half.

"The secret to farrowing is to have a separate zone of comfort for both the sow and the baby pigs. The sow is most comfortable at a temperature of about 60 degrees while the baby pigs need about 100 degrees. Heat lamps cause sows to get hot much more quickly, especially in the summer, and heat mats are more expensive because you need a thermostat to control the temperature. Our heating tubes keep the temperature at a constant 103 degrees which is about 3 to 4 degrees warmer than heat lamps, yet the sows stay cool. Sows also seem to eat better in crates equipped with heating tubes."

Miller estimates that it costs about $4 per day in electricity to operate the heat lamps in two crates compared to 10 to 15 cents per day to operate one heating tube. "Another advantage is that you don't have to worry about burning out any heat lamps. We've run our heating tubes for 8 months without burning up a nipple heater."

Miller says it's important to drill a hole in the pipe at its highest point near the nipple heater to prevent air pockets that could burn out the heater. "Make sure you use new PVC pipe because used pipe tends to crack from the heat and leak."

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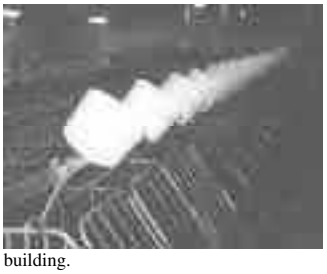
Automatic "Trip-Bucket" Feed System

Kimmy Kooiker, Sheldon, Iowa, got tired of hand feeding sows in a total confinement gestation facility that he built a few years ago. He didn't want to spend the money for an automated feeding system so he came up with his own automatic "trip-bucket" feeding system.

Plastic buckets mounted over each stall and attached to a galvanized steel pipe that extends the length of the stalls are used to hold feed. By pulling on a handle at the end of the pipe Kooiker can dump feed from all the buckets into open troughs in front of the stalls.

He welded steel brackets over every fourth stall to support the 1 1/4-in. dia. pipe and also welded a steel handle onto the end of the pipe at the center of the building. To support the buckets he bent 16-in. lengths of flat iron at right angles, welded them onto the pipe, and bolted the buckets on. Each bucket holds about 6 lbs. of feed.

Kooiker set up the system on four rows of stalls with all the handles located next to alleys that run crosswise at the center of the



building.

"It really makes feeding easy. All I have to do is walk into the building and trip the handles. Within 30 seconds, all the sows are fed and all is quiet. After I'm done feeding, I take a feed cart down each aisle and scoop feed into each bucket for the next feeding. I got the plastic white buckets free from an ice cream company in our area. My total cost was about $480."

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Food Coloring Marker, Rubber Boot Sow Muzzle Big Winners At Pork Show

Two low-cost inventions took first and second-place honors at the recent Ontario Pork Congress Innovations Competition.

Dan Scheele, Ingersoll, took first place out of 22 entries with his low-cost method of marking hogs for shipping. He previously used stick markers or commercial spray dye, both of which he felt cost too much.

So he started using regular food coloring as a marker. He just puts it in a regular spray bottle. The food coloring costs about one-third of commercial sprays and lasts a few days in summer and up to a week in winter.

John Schoonjans, Forest, Ontario, came up with a low-cost, simple-to-make muzzle for bad-tempered sows in labor. He uses an old rubber boot with the foot part cut off and two holes cut in the top for a piece of twine. The boot tube slips over the sow's snout and ties behind her ears. Schoonjans leaves them on nervous sows until they're finished farrowing.

Sows get used to the muzzle in five or 10 minutes and can still use a nipple waterer, says Schoonjans, who notes that the muzzles keep sows from killing piglets. **(Ontario Farmer)**

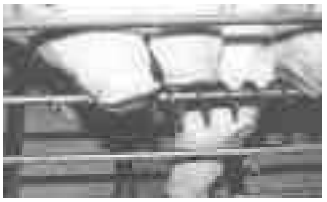
Hog Toy Made From Feed Auger

Doug Fischer, Long Island, Kan., used lengths of 2-in. dia. auger from a flex auger feed system to make a hog toy that he slips onto the side rails of pens in his 7,500-head finishing building.

"Hogs love to play with them which has resulted in greatly reduced tailbiting," he says.

Fischer came up with the idea after he replaced the auger feed system in his hog barn. He used a torch to cut the auger into 10-12-in. lengths. He used a pair of vice grips to keep one end of the auger from turning over and twisted the other end around the rails.

"Pigs spend hours chewing on them. They can slide the sections back and forth



but they can't get them off, no matter how hard they try," says Fischer. "The augers won't wear out or rust, and they clean up nice with a pressure washer."

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