MANAGING AND MONITORING THE FINISHING BARN - SIX THINGS NOT TO DO

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There are many factors that constantly need to be monitored, assessed and juggled to successfully grow and market finishing pigs. Instead of discussing all of the various factors that one should focus on, I thought I would briefly highlight six things **not** to do to when attempting to improve overall finishing pig efficiencies. In the workshop, examples will be provided in support of these six items. These six items are in no particular order of importance:

1) **Do not** limit feed intake. Easy to say, difficult to do. There is nothing you can do to increase a pig's feed intake; unfortunately, there are a number of negative things you can do to decrease or limit a pig's feed intake – eliminate these negative factors.

2) When utilizing feed budgets, **do not** always assume that "more feeds are better". There is a fine balance to over-feeding the bigger pigs vs. underfeeding the smaller pigs. If you utilize very lean genetics, default to over-feeding the bigger pigs if you have to make a choice – lean genetics usually respond to the elevated level of nutrition. If possible, know the different requirements between your barrows and gilts. The differences are not consistent across genetic lines.

3) **Do not** underestimate your non-feed production costs – they are bigger than you may think. Do not make yourself feel better by conveniently forgetting or neglecting some of them when talking about your "cost of production".

4) **Do not** always assume that you are getting a huge "bang for your buck" if you use growth promotants. Do you really need them? Try to determine the actual level of benefit received – unfortunately this is easier said than done.

5) **Do not** always assume that bigger is better: bigger barns, bigger pens, bigger pigs. Target for manageable group sizes that are just big enough to maximize the production, costing, and marketing efficiencies within your operation.

6) If utilizing grow/finish contract barn services, if possible, **do not** keep all of the reward or assume all of the risk. The sharing of rewards and risk enhances sustainability and often works as a good incentive program. Good barns are good; good people are better. Be careful not to not put too much weight on incentives that barn managers have limited control over.

There are many other "**do not's**" that one could discuss. These six cover very big subject areas. These factors could also be applied to nurseries as well.

"**Do not**" sounds very negative; however, focusing on some of the above mentioned "negatives" can lead to some more "positive" results. We all can use some more positives.