

Phase feeding of lactating sows

Report 785
April 17, 2007

Gunner Sørensen
Danish Pig Production

Abstract

It is assumed that the sow's feed intake the first ten days of the lactation period will benefit her in the form of a reduced weight loss. The feed intake after day 10 will benefit the piglets in the form of a higher milk yield of the sow. As a result, phase feeding with two different diets in the farrowing facility (start and end diets) makes it possible to a greater extent to benefit the sows' need for nutrients during lactation.

This was investigated in practice by comparing phase feeding with two diets (start and end diets) with traditional feeding with just one diet (end diet) in the entire lactation period.

The composition of the start diet was aimed at stimulating the sow's feed intake and gastric health, and therefore contained less protein than recommended in the standard for lactating sows. The diet contained 100 FUsow per 100 kg and included 25% fluted barley. It was also possible to use the start diet in the service facility and for gilts weighing more than 90 kg. The composition of the end diet was aimed at benefiting the milk producing capacity of the sows. Among other things, the diet included additional short-chained fatty acids in the form of coconut oil, and the starch/fibre ratio was adjusted to benefit the peristalsis of the intestines and the supply of starch. Fishmeal was also added to maintain a high protein digestibility. The diet contained 111 FUsow per 100 kg.

In two herds, phase feeding was therefore compared with traditional feeding with the end diet in the entire lactation period. The start diet was also used in the service facility and for gilts weighing more than 90 kg, and the reproduction results were satisfactory. The start diet replaced a regular lactation diet that is normally used for this category of animals. Identical production results were achieved whether the sows were given one or two diets in the lactation period.

If phase feeding is used, approx. 50% of the regular lactation feed can be replaced by a start diet in practice. This provides for cheaper feeding of the sows as the start diet is significantly cheaper than a lactation diet, but it also requires a double feeding system.