

# Managing Weanling Pigs Without Using Antibiotic Growth Promoters

URBANA, ILL.

There is a growing market in the U.S. for pork raised without antibiotics, including certified organic pork. A researcher at the University of Illinois has created a resource to help swine producers identify strategies that they can use to manage weanling pigs without using antibiotic growth promoters (AGPs).

Hans Stein, professor of animal sciences, has released a new brochure titled “Strategies for managing weanling pigs fed no antibiotic growth promoters.” The brochure is the third in Stein’s “Swine Focus” series.

“The goals of the producer should be to promote growth, reduce pigs’ disease exposure, and increase their resistance to disease,” said Stein. “There are a number of measures producers can take to help pigs perform well in the absence of antibiotic growth promoters.”

Strategies for managing weanling pigs without the use of AGPs include:

- Weaning practices – Segregated early weaning and all-in-all-out production reduce disease pressure,

- Environmental controls – Keeping facilities at the proper temperature and avoiding crowding reduce stress on pigs, while pest control reduces pathogen exposure,

- Feeding pelleted or liquid diets – Pelleted and liquid diets enhance energy and nutrient di-

gestibility and improve performance,

- Restricted feeding – Feeding small amounts several times per day instead of giving ad libitum access to feed means that less undigested feed is fermented in the hindgut, which reduces the incidence of diarrhea,

- Feeding alternative cereal grains – Hindgut fermentation of specific fibers found in barley, naked oats, and oats may reduce pathogens and increase the concentration of favorable microbes,

- Feed additives – Acidifiers, functional proteins, probiotics, prebiotics, copper, zinc, and mannan oligosaccharides may improve pig health and growth performance,

- Low protein diets – Reducing the amount of undigested protein that reaches the hindgut reduces microbial fermentation and diarrhea.

“If producers follow the guidelines, weanling pigs that are not fed antibiotic growth promoters can be managed without loss of performance,” Stein said. “Even pigs that are being fed AGPs would benefit from these measures.”

However, if no AGPs are used, production costs are likely to increase because some of strategies listed above add to diet costs.

Stein’s brochure can be downloaded at <http://nutrition.ansci.illinois.edu>. For a hard copy, contact a U of I Extension office.     Δ