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The Effect Of Creep Feed on Post-Weaning Weight Gain in an Age Segregated Rearing Facility

Darcy Pauls and David Hunt

The Puratone Corporation

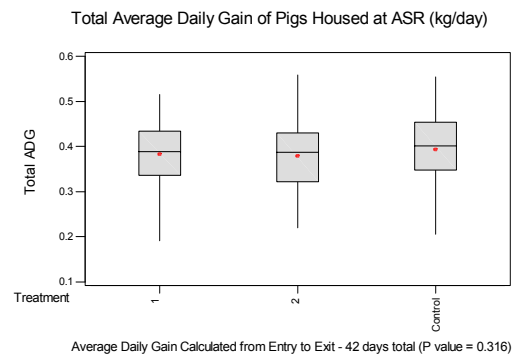
The benefits of creep feed have been demonstrated in heavier weaning weights for piglets in typical four week weaning programs. However for piglets weaned at earlier ages, there has been little evidence of such a benefit, with the possible exception of piglets within unusually large litters or piglets from sows with poor milking ability. Creep feeding prior to weaning may also serve to develop the enzymes required for the digestion of a dry feed, as well as provide the piglets time to learn how to consume a dry feed while still receiving nutritional support from the sow. Such a benefit could reduce the growth check that occurs immediately following weaning when the piglet experiences an abrupt change from a liquid diet to a meal diet.

The purpose of this creep feeding experiment was to determine if creep feed fed pre-weaning would have a significant positive effect on weaning weight and on average daily gain post-weaning within a sow system that weans at an average of 19.1 days.

The experiment was conducted at Puratone Corporation sow and age segregated rearing (ASR) barns located in Manitoba between December 23, 2003 and March 1, 2004. A total of 592 piglets from 60 sows were tagged and weighed at 7 days of age. Litters were randomly assigned to treatment groups; Treatment 1 was a commercially available micro-pellet creep feed that retailed for \$1.88/kg (Canadian funds), Treatment 2 was a commercially available course crumble creep feed that retailed for \$0.97/kg (Canadian funds), and the Control group did not receive any creep feed. Creep feed supplementation began at Day 10. Creep feeders were filled two times a day with 60 grams of the specific creep feed at each feeding, during the same time as the sows were fed. Any remaining creep feed

was removed and weighed prior to refilling the creep feeder. This procedure continued daily until the piglets were weaned. Piglet weight data was collected at weaning, and on days 3, 7, 14, 21, 28, 35, and 42 at ASR.

The results showed that there were no significant differences in weaning weight between the three groups, nor were there significant differences in average daily gain from day 7 to weaning ($p>0.05$). In addition, there were no significant differences in average daily gain from entry to exit at ASR, or in final exit weights at day 42 ($p>0.05$).



There was also not a significant difference between the total amount of Treatment 1 creep feed consumed and the total amount of Treatment 2 creep feed consumed (12.33 g/pig compared to 10.31g/pig, $p>0.05$). Hence there was no significant improvement in consumption as a result of providing a more expensive micro-pellet creep feed.

The results of this study show that supplementing piglets with creep feed pre-weaning in an early weaned system do not result in heavier weaning weights, nor an increase in the average daily gain post-weaning. There is also no reduction in the growth check that occurs immediately following weaning which may be a result of the low level of creep feed consumed at these early ages.