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Making scale barns work

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The purpose of this presentation and open forum discussion will be to share scale barn information that Propig's production system has experienced and utilized with existing scale barn systems. We will also explain Propig's development of our working variation of a scale barn system. The development and modifications in our system have been through the efforts of our entire Propig field service staff, Dr. Wayne Freese, Dr. Reed Leiting, Dr. Keith Wilson and myself.

The scale barn segment of our swine production is being driven by economic parameters and returns at the packer level. Scale barns have drawn a great deal of interest as well as come under a fair amount of criticism and frustration since their inception. We know that there are scales and scale systems that work well and that there are scale systems that have been banished to the rusty farm grove collection of equipment stored for future use. Propig's objective has been to create a system that is cost affordable for grower and pig owners, is as grower and pig friendly as possible, and yields the necessary economic returns to the pig owner.

Our production system is based on barns that are leased from barn owners and filled with owner retained pigs from producers in Canada and the United States. We currently manage 1,000,000 pigs per year. The majority of our sites are 2000-2400 head sites with a number of 3-5000 head sites. Our scale barn experience has evolved over the last 4-5 years in existing and newly leased facilities. Over the last 4 years our lease sites have all been limited to 2400 head double wide tunnel buildings with the majority of these being wean-to-finish barns. Currently, about a third of our sites are equipped with scales. Most of these buildings are two 1200 head rooms with the building size being 103 x 192, which lends itself very well to our scale barn concept. The rooms have 120 head pens with swing gates at the front and back of each pen divider as well as one swing gate per pen between the end of the feeder and the pen divider gate. We have 7-9 one ways per room and utilize only one scale per room. We currently use the scales

and one ways manufactured by Henway Manufacturing in Fairmont, Minnesota. We also have other scales and one way systems such as Farmweld and Sort All in some of our sites.

- The topics that will be covered in this presentation will be:
- The rationale for the number of scales and one ways per room as well as the cost of these systems
- Scale usage and hits per day patterns
- The basis for lease fees paid by pig owners to barn owners for scales
- Our scale system design, barn design, pig training and pig flow strategies
- Scale and Non-scale marketing strategies
- Marketing and packer results obtained with scale barns
- Problems, issues and precautions with scale barns
- Genetic issues and problems that pertain to functional scale flow issues
- Labor issues that arise with scale barn systems
- Information on workable incentive programs paid by pig owners to growers
- Advantages to loading trucks as well as the positive effect on the number of slows and deads in our marketings

Our modified scale barn system has been driven by the need to offset the restrictions in ADG and FE experienced by the classical design of food/water court scale barn systems. At times, these barns will require additional labor but the returns to the pig owner and barn owner outweigh these factors.

