## New Pig Birth Technique Offers to . . .



## REDUCE HOG DISEASE LOSSES

Diseases are taking their toll in your hog herd every day. Some diseases like virus pig pneumonia (VPP) and rhinitis (AR) may not show up so you notice them. Checks of hogs going through packing plants show 50% or more may be infected with these diseases. If present, they're slowing gains and increasing your costs.

A new pig birth technique developed by Dr. George Young of the University of Nebraksa shows promise of helping to eliminate specific diseases and increase your hog profits. Young says many diseases are spread through pig contact. That's the case with VPP, AR, TCE and many other hog diseases. Pigs farrowed under average farm conditions pick up these "bugs" from the sow and, as a result, you really never get the disease stopped.

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To break this contact cycle, Young takes unborn pigs from the sow by surgical methods three to four days be-

fore natural birth. The pigs are then placed in a sterile incubator where they're provided filtered air and fed a special diet of cow's milk, egg and minerals. After about a week the pigs are placed in special isolation brooders where they are kept to four weeks of age. They're then ready to be moved to the farm.

Cooperating farmers in Nebraska have been using these pigs from the University laboratory for about five years now. After having sold all their other hogs, cleaned up the premises and followed prescribed management and disease control practices, these farmers still have herds free of diseases. There have been some side effects too. Young says these pigs have less trouble with both internal and external parasites and there's been no problem with anemia in the pigs.

Growth rate has been almost unbelievable. Bert Worthan of Cass County, Nebraska, says one load of these pigs, sold when they were five months and one week of age, averaged 234 pounds. Others right here in the state report similar results. Tests indicate it takes less feed to finish a hog to market weight, too. In total, many experts feel producers of market hogs can realize an increase in net profits of 20% to 25% with these pigs.

Nearly 50 laboratories have been licensed to produce "Specific Pathogen Free" (SPF) pigs in major hog growing areas. All are operated by veterinarians who must follow prescribed methods. To make the program even more beneficial for farmers, an organization called the National Swine Repopulation Association has been formed. This association has set up specific rules which are used in qualifying and certifying hogs.

Several hundred farmers around the Midwest now have foundation herds of SPF pigs. This past fall more than 20 Iowa swine producers were farrowing SPF gilts. Farmers in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Minnesota, South Dakota and many other states are rapidly expanding the SPF program. While the waiting list for SPF breeding stock is now fairly long, almost any farmer will soon be able to purchase certified breeding stock.

The first requirement for developing a herd free of these specific diseases is to get rid of all original hogs on the farm. Since few farmers can afford to be without income from their hog operation until after the newly purchased SPF gilts farrow, some are working out a joint arrangement with neighbors and getting one farm repopulated at a time. If you're farming more than one property, you may be able to repopulate one and still keep your original hog program in operation on the other until the SPF herd is in production. All equipment must be kept separate, however, and different people should take care of each herd.



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Almost hospital-like methods are used by veterinary laboratories set up to produce Specific Pathogen Free pigs. Clothing and equipment must all be sterilized. To eliminate profit robbing diseases like pneumonia, rhinitis, enteritis and dysentery, the cycle of pig to pig contact must be broken. This is done by taking pigs from the sow by surgical means just a few days before she's scheduled to give natural birth.

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