

Feeding milk to suckling piglets to boost vitality

by L. Baarslag and P. T. van't Veld, Denkavit Nederland BV, Tolnegeeweg 65, 3781 PV Voorthuizen, Holland.

With the pork genetics used today, large litters of piglets are produced. The goal in piglet production is to wean as many live born piglets as possible, in a vital and healthy way. To support the sow in this job, it is more and more common to supply a milk replacer to suckling piglets.

Ten years ago, Denkavit showed the importance of feeding a high quality milk replacer to suckling piglets. This trial compared the performance of suckling piglets fed water or a milk replacer from day 2-18 after birth, water and milk being fed via the same kind of feeder. Both groups received a creep feed from day four until weaning (25.8 days of age). The results of this trial are shown in Table 1.

The intake of piglet milk is almost 75% higher than the intake of water in the same period. The intake of 2.6L milk replacer equals almost 400g dry matter from milk powder consumed per piglet. As well as higher milk intake, the intake of creep feed was also increased by more than 50%. At weaning, piglets fed the milk replacer were 0.6kg heavier than piglets in the control group.

Although the litter size in this trial was small compared to what is seen today, it still demonstrates the high benefit of providing a piglet milk

replacer with the extra nutrients and vitamins over just giving water.

This trial clearly shows that supplying a high quality milk replacer to suckling piglets results in heavier piglets at weaning. The combination of a higher weaning weight and higher creep feed intake before weaning will eventually result in less problems around weaning, with all its known positive consequences.

In 2002 Wolter et al. also studied the effect of feeding supplemental milk replacer to suckling piglets on pre-weaning and post-weaning growth performance and carcase characteristics.



In this study, milk replacer was fed until weaning and no creep feed was fed. Weight gain from birth until weaning was significantly increased (5.69kg vs. 6.60kg), while mortality during lactation and days from birth until slaughter were significantly decreased (9.4 vs. 5.2% and 146 vs. 143 respectively).

Because of increasing number of live born piglets per litter, the use of

	Water	Denkavit piglet milk
Number of litters	18	21
Birth weight (kg)	1.45	1.47
Weaning weight (kg)	7.4	8.0
Age at weaning (days)	25.8	25.8
Number of weaned piglets/litter	10	10
Creep feed intake (g/piglet)	187	283
Water/piglet milk intake (L/piglet)	1.5	2.6 (394g dry matter)

Table 1. Results of supplying suckling piglets with extra water or piglet milk (Denkavit research 2002).

piglet milk has become more and more popular during recent years. Denkavit recently introduced a new upgraded piglet milk – Denkapig Lactowean.

In different trials, the advantage of supplying Denkapig Lactowean to suckling piglets is demonstrated. It is advised to feed this milk from 2-10 days after birth.

In this period piglets consumed, on average, 160g dry matter via Lactowean. The intake of creep feed until weaning (26 days), which was already at a very high level in the group receiving no Lactowean, increased more than 40% when piglets received Lactowean from day 2-10 after birth (Fig. 1).

Furthermore, piglets which received Lactowean were on average 0.3kg heavier at weaning than piglets fed only creep feed (Fig. 2).

An important precondition for feeding supplemental milk replacer to suckling piglets is that supply should not be started earlier than 24 hours after birth to be sure that the piglets consume as much colostrum

as possible. The young piglet can only effectively absorb the immunoglobulins in colostrum during the first 24 hours, approximately, after birth.

Conclusion

The versatile piglet milk Denkapig Lactowean has been especially developed to enable professional pig breeders to increase both number and weight of piglets at weaning.

Its flexible dosing, varying between a condensed and a milky consistency, and application, either by hand or in numerous trialed automatic systems, make this piglet milk an unique product.

Feeding Denkapig Lactowean to suckling piglets increases feed intake and weaning weight. This will also result in better performance after weaning. An increased feed intake directly after weaning will support maintenance of intestinal health and, as a consequence, reduce the need for antibiotics. ■

Fig. 1. Lactowean and creep feed intake of suckling piglets (Denkavit research 2010).

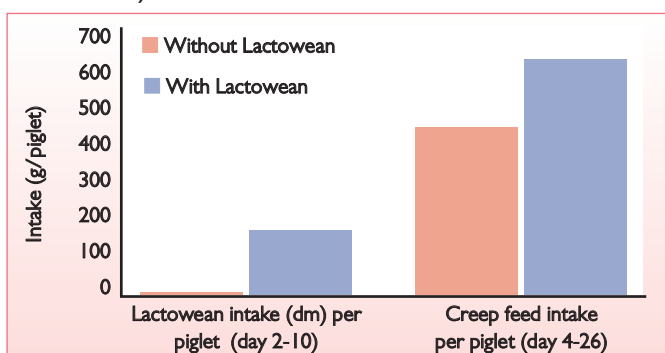


Fig. 2. Weaning weights of piglets fed Lactowean (day 2-10) (Denkavit research 2010).

