

Good results from determined efforts in the farrowing unit

Organised and determined efforts are the means to achieve good results. That is the message if you talk to one of Sweden's best pig producers, Örjan Bertilsson. He became the first Swedish pig producer to achieve 30 weaned pigs per sow per year in 2015.

by the technical team,
Jyden, Denmark.
www.jyden.com

Örjan Bertilsson's farm, Persgaard, is a commercial herd with 280 sows situated in Varberg, Sweden.

Productivity has always been one of the main objectives at Persgaard and since 2011 the herd has been placed in the top five of Swedish PigWin records of number of pigs produced per sow.

PigWin is a program for production management and analyses of productivity, and every year they publish top lists and averages of the Swedish pig producers.

On the list, published in May 2016, Örjan Bertilsson did not only place at the top, he also became the first pig producer in Sweden to reach 30 pigs per sow per year. These results have not come from nothing – in every unit at Persgaard there are strict routines and they focus on having a quiet and peaceful environment for the sows.

They have a great eye for detail

and the work is done by skilled and professional employees with a good take on the animals.

Danish design

The farrowing pens are designed in collaboration with Jyden and based on the design of Jyden's JLF10 farrowing pen for loose housed sows with partly solid floor and cast iron slats. The pen is designed with a heated creep area where temperature is automatically regulated. The creep is placed adjacent to the aisle to facilitate an easy supervision of the piglets. The creep area can easily be closed off to keep the piglets in the creep when any work has to be done with the piglets.

Örjan chose a layout of the pen where the trough is placed next to the aisle as well. The reasoning behind this is that feeding management is one of the key elements to successful production so there must be easy access to and overview of the trough.

A special designed farrowing rail is mounted diagonally in front of the trough, 20cm above the floor. It serves as a protective rail in the critical days and can then be removed when it is no longer needed. They use wood shavings and chopped straw as bedding in the creep area and as enrichment and rooting material on the solid floor.

Targeting the farrowings

Sows enter the farrowing unit according to age. Before the sows enter, the pens have been thoroughly cleaned. A robot takes care of the preliminary wash and an employee then washes the section down manually afterwards. Once the pens are dry the floor is burnt with a gas burner and chemically disinfected to make sure all the pens are as clean as possible.

Jyden's equipment and the layout of the farrowing pens is designed to facilitate a high level of hygiene. The fibreglass has a smooth surface and the number of corners or nooks and crannies, where dirt and bacteria can hide and accumulate, is



reduced. Fibreglass is also very durable and resists the burn without any problems. The sows farrow in batches of 46 sows in a week-based system with farrowings in two consecutive weeks and then again four weeks after. Running the system like this means there is a peak in the workload in the two weeks with farrowings but the following lactation weeks are a lot quieter.

Örjan finds it important to have a flexible system that allows the workers to take time off and at the same time put a lot more focus on the farrowings in the farrowing weeks. During farrowing weeks, the employees are at work from 6:00 in the morning to 16:00 in the afternoon. From 16:00 to midnight Örjan is then doing rounds to make sure that all farrowings progress as they should. When a sow has finished farrowing she is taken for a walk around the barn and fresh water is provided in the trough. This can sound like a labour-intensive rou-

tine but to Örjan it is worth the effort because the sows recover faster and better from the farrowing.

Future vision

Hard work is the reason why they succeed at Persgaard. "There are no tricks or shortcuts. If you want a high level of productivity and good results you have to define your goals and objectives and plan your efforts in order to reach them," says Örjan Bertilsson.

The next step at Persgaard is to move the production of gilts home so that everything is gathered in one place. This requires an expansion of the existing buildings to give room for another 190 animals.

Örjan's goal is not to have a herd with a 1,000 sows, but to have an efficient and profitable herd that is also attractive for the next generation of farmers. ■

Photos by Seges, Denmark

