

SWINE SOLUTIONS

Raising pigs: Balancing affordability and productivity

By Dr. Stewart Galloway, Hubbard Feeds Swine Nutritionist

It's been a tough time for pig farmers lately, with low hog markets — and even tougher for those farmers who have experienced increased death loss and reproductive problems from porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS) and other diseases. The Hubbard swine technical team has certainly seen an uptick in emails and phone calls as of late, and we find ourselves commonly discussing ways to decrease costs and minimize losses. While eliminating wasted costs is always important, we also need to consider the other side of the equation to improve productivity, efficiency and revenue.

Why Blueprint®?

When it comes to productivity, there are only two viable options for pig farmers to choose from: either maintain recent performance improvements or focus on increasing performance. About a year ago, Hubbard Feeds introduced [Blueprint](#), which is designed to improve sow productivity, support gut health and the animal's defense system, and increase the number of all-value pigs that reach market weight. Blueprint contains such Alltech technologies as [Bioplex](#)® organic trace mineral proteinates, which resemble those found naturally in plant proteins. This means increased availability with less interference by antagonists and less oxidative stress, leading to improved performance. Blueprint products are also formulated with [Actigen](#)®, a cost-effective means of maintaining gut health and integrity to support overall performance. All in all, the Blueprint swine program offers a new generation of nutrition for the next generation of pigs.

OptiSow® Blueprint®

The OptiSow Blueprint program was formulated to not only support larger litters, but also to provide the nutrients essential for increasing litter size. Blueprint is also designed to improve the lifetime productivity of sows, which combines top performance in each parity with an increased number of productive parities.

The feedback from customers using OptiSow Blueprint has been truly exciting. One producer presently expanding his herd noticed that his gilts are exceeding their breeding targets since feeding Blueprint. He even cancelled a load of gilts because of the high conception rate with this program. Others have reported increased feed intake and lactation within two weeks of starting Blueprint. One farmer commented that his sows did not dip in intake the first week after farrowing, resulting in improved milking by the sows. And another producer who has fed OptiSow Blueprint through an entire gestation cycle said his veterinarian commented during a recent farm visit that the pigs are now more uniform and thrifty than when he last saw them. The cost of the OptiSow Blueprint program is less than \$0.50 per pig, and results like these illustrate that the program provides an achievable return on investment.

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Blueprint in the nursery

The Hubbard Powerstart™ nursery program contains more than 12 different Alltech technologies that result in improved gut health, increased intake and gain, and improved survivability. This holistic approach of using the right products at the right time results in more all-value pigs leaving the nursery to grow rapidly and efficiently in the finisher, returning greater profit to the farm.

One unique technology that is part of Hubbard's nursery feed program is [Viligen™](#), a blend of ingredients designed to improve gut health and performance. Using our nursery feed program, our research trials have shown a feed intake increase in weaned pigs of 11 percent — which, in turn, resulted in a gain increase of 12 percent in just 23 days. Survivability of pigs increased, as did the number of pigs leaving the nursery as all-value pigs.

The news in the swine industry is not all negative. Sow productivity is at an all-time high — and we need to provide optimal nutrition for these high-performing metabolic engines. The increased number of pigs produced also requires an advanced nutrition program that allows these pigs to achieve full value at market weight. The Blueprint program is just one of many resources the Hubbard team offers to help customers meet their goals.

