

Farm Tips

By Dr. J. W. Pou
By shortening the weaning period for pigs, Tar Heel swine producers are getting more litters per sow per year.
"Twenty years ago the weaning period averaged eight weeks, but now it is down to five weeks or less," said Dr. J.R. Jones, specialist-in-charge of extension swine husbandry, North Carolina State University.

Also, Jones said, a changeover to the confinement system of production has enabled many farmers to boost feed efficiency and get more pounds of gain per pound of feed.

As recently as the 1960's, average producers needed 4.5 pounds of feed for a pound of gain. Today, many producers with the same types of pigs are getting a pound of gain with four or even 3.8 pounds of feed.

"Some producers are down to using only 3.4 to 3.5 pounds of feed per pound of gain," Jones said.

The specialist said the confinement system also enables one person to supervise a large operation.

North Carolina has more large swine production units - turning over 5,000 or more hogs per year - than any other state. In total number of hogs and pigs on farms, North Carolina ranks seventh among the states.

One swine operation in the state markets 150,000 hogs a year, and several others also are very large.

Hogs produced on modern Tar Heel farms bear little resemblance to their forebears of 20 to 30 years ago. Their carcasses yield much more lean meat and much less fat.

This of course, has been achieved through genetics.

Boars (males) are performance tested at the N.C. Swine Evaluation Station at Clayton. Boars whose offspring yield desirable meat-type carcasses qualify as superior herd sires and are used for breeding.

"By shifting to meat-type pigs, producers in North Carolina and across the nation have been able to maintain per capita pork consumption at a higher level than otherwise," Jones said.

In 1981, Tar Heel farmers' cash receipts from swine production reached an all-time high of \$357.6 million.

North Carolina apple growers have had a major disaster this year, primarily as a result of the severe freeze on March 25.

Mel Kolbe, horticultural specialist for the N.C. Agricultural Extension Service said growers may get \$10 million to \$15 million for what remains of this year's crop. Apples grossed \$40 million in 1981.

The huge losses, the horticulture specialist added, will affect the income of everyone who depends on the crop. "Pickers won't be needed, containers won't be sold, salesmen won't have a job," he pointed out.

Kolbe said that the Red Delicious variety, which normally accounts for about half of the North Carolina production was essentially destroyed. About half a crop of Golden Delicious is expected.

The Rome Beauty variety in which many growers were counting to pull them through "snow-balled" last spring at bloom time. This is a condition in which all buds bloom at the same time rather than in stages, and when it occurs a poor fruit is likely. Kolbe now estimates the Rome Beauty crop at 50 per cent of normal.

Adding to grower woes were four hailstorms this summer in Henderson County, which normally produces about three-fourths of the state's apple crop. Damaged fruit can be used for juice, but Kolbe said, "There's no money in that for the growers."

However, a few orchards in the state look good. Some growers on parts of Brushy Mountain in Wilkes County are reported to have good crops of apples.

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