



# MORE PIGLETS BORN ALIVE WITH DEXTROSE

## ADDRESSING SEASONAL EFFECTS ON PIGLET BIRTHWEIGHT AND WITHIN LITTER VARIATION

### Project Participants

SunPork Group – Kate Plush, Sally Tritton, Dannielle Glencourse, Jena Alexopoluos, Roy Kirkwood and Darryl D'Souza

### Project

This project assessed whether adding dextrose to sow diets during the wean to mate period in summer would help reduce seasonal infertility.

### Value for Producers

Including dextrose into the wean to mate sow diet at 5 per cent can help to reduce litter weight variation and increase litter size during summer. It also results in less piglet removals and higher growth rates in those born to sows mated in summer, suggesting improved piglet vigour. Using dextrose during the wean to mate period increased the number of piglets born alive from 931 to 1118 per 100 sows bred.

### Background

Seasonal infertility in pigs, driven by temperature and day length, can cause reductions in farrowing rate and litter size. Previous research suggests reduced luteinising hormone (LH) concentrations may be responsible for seasonal infertility; a reduction of LH secretion in summer months causes more variable egg quality and therefore variable piglet birthweight. Whilst the addition of dextrose did not ameliorate summer infertility in this project, it did result in increased litter size.

Dextrose is an easy to handle, relatively cheap dietary inclusion. At about \$1000 per tonne, the cost is \$55 per tonne of feed milled. Dextrose has been linked to improved egg development when fed to sows during the insemination period, reducing the variation in piglet birthweight.



## Recommendations

Dextrose included into the wean to mate sow diet at 5 per cent increases litter size without increasing litter weight variation at birth.

With a wean to service interval of 5 days, and feed consumption for sows during that period about 3.5 kilograms per day, the application cost is less than \$1 per sow.

The benefits of including dextrose far outweigh the costs, provided farrowing house management is adequate.

**Note:** Small farms may struggle to order and store such a feed as volumes will be low and silo space limiting. However, top-dressing the sow's diets with about 190 grams of dextrose until breeding will still provide advantages.

## More Information

- For a copy of the report, contact Rachael Bryant at [rachael.bryant@australianpork.com.au](mailto:rachael.bryant@australianpork.com.au)
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