STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING THE RISK OF NURSERY SCOURS

The goal of starting a weaned pig is to have them transition from milk to a dry feed source with minimal enteric problems. However, this doesn't always happen in a commercial farm where there may be less than ideal weaning environments. Even in the healthiest pig flows, there will be a small percentage of pigs exhibiting loose stool or scouring events. The following are ideas to minimize the chance of a large nursery scour event and prevent enteric diseases from becoming endemic. To reduce the risk factor of developing scours in the nursery, producers should focus on the following: sanitation, barn management, pig management, and biosecurity.

Figure 1. Focus areas to reduce the risk of nursery scours between turns.

SANITATION

- Intensive power washing with hot water can kill bacteria on the pen surface.
  - Using hot water is the most effective intervention of scours available.
- Use an alkaline detergent to dissolve hard to remove biofilm from flooring, gates and feeders.
- Coating surfaces with a whitewash or drying powder may be an effective way to prevent the spread of pathogens.
- Clean out water lines and nipples with an appropriate product.

BARN MANAGEMENT

- Fully pre-heat barns prior to pig arrival by using a proper starting temperature curve (Figure 2).
- Ensure a draft-free environment by using proper ventilation.
  - Ventilation may need adjusted depending on barn layout and fill rate.
- Keep pens as dry as possible: wash equipment in the alley to prevent pen flooring and pigs from getting wet.
- Reduce stressors to pigs such as timing of vaccines and diet changes.

PIG MANAGEMENT

- Have enough mat space for the number of pigs per pen.
  - Additional mat space may be needed if less than 0.2 square feet per pig.
- Stimulation of feed intake by mat feeding and gruel feeding.
- Walk pens to encourage pigs to find feed and water.
- Identify pigs that are unthrifty and non-eaters.

BIO-SECURITY

- Follow sow farm sanitation protocols.
- Install proper entryway protocols to prevent barn contamination.
- Wash farm coveralls regularly.
- Keep office and common areas clean.
- Disinfect or change boots between rooms.

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Hot water may not be enough to break down the biofilm that remains after washing. Use of hot water and detergent together has an added benefit of reducing the time it takes to power wash a barn.

WASHING THE PEN WITH HOT WATER BETWEEN TURNS IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE METHOD TO REDUCE THE RISK OF NURSERY SCOURS AS IT KILLS DISEASE-CAUSING ORGANISMS FROM THE PRIOR GROUP.

Communicate with the sow farm on the quality of pigs entering the site, and if they are experiencing any health challenges. This may help identify treatments that may reduce the advancement of scours.

It is critical to have a warm, dry, and draft-free environment for the weaned pig. There should be proper ventilation that minimizes gases and humidity in the barn without chilling the pig. An example of a temperature and ventilation curve can be found in Figure 2.

NURSERY VENTILATION TARGETS*			
DAY	WINTER (F˚)	SUMMER (F˚)	MIN. CFM PER PIG
1	88	86	1
7	85	85	1.1
14	82	81	1.4
21	79	77	1.8
28	77	75	2.2
35	75	73	2.5
42	73	71	2.9

Table 1. Nursery temperature set-points and ventilation targets.

*These are only suggested targets for nursery ventilation. Ventilation and barn design may vary. Targets may need to adjusted depending on your operation.

STRESSORS

DIET CHANGES

- Going on and off feed stresses the gut and may cause scours.
- Not meeting feed budget targets and feeding a grain based diet too early stresses the gut.

TIMING OF VACCINES

- Vaccinations may cause an immune response where pigs become lethargic and go off feed and water.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

1. Ensure all potential leaks are sealed to reduce drafting. This includes curtains, doors, inlets and fans.
2. Relieving attic static pressure may be key to proper ventilation flow.
3. Resist the temptation to manually adjust the ventilation when doing chores. Pig movement and time of day may change the barn environment.
4. View the pigs through windows or doors before entering to observe lying patterns. Installing cameras in the barn will help in viewing pig behavior at different periods and may help identify drafting points.

Follow all proper entry procedures for people, clothing and supplies when entering each site. Refer to the six Critical Control Points (CCPs) videos to learn how to prevent pathogens from crossing lines or barriers that separate the exteriors of farms from the interiors.

Scan the QR Code to access each of the six CCP videos: Farm Entry Shower In/Out, Hand-washing, Supply Quarantine, Food & Genetics Pass Through, Mortality Removal, Load Out. Available in Spanish.

Contact your DNA Genetics representative for ideas on intervention strategies if scours occur in the nursery.

These strategies are intended to help or prevent enteric challenges from occurring in weaned pigs. Each farm has its own unique settings and challenges. Processes may need to be changed based on the health status and weaning age in your operation. When necessary, work with appropriate herd veterinarian to diagnose scour type. Remember, there may be times where even the best producers struggle with scours after implementing all strategies correctly.