Electronic Sow Feeder Housing Options

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Electronic Sow Feeding 3
Housing Options

Now that we understand the benefits of Electronic Sow Feeding in general and the specifics of the Big Dutchman Electronic Sow Feeder (ESF) it's time to pull it all

together and design a housing system / floor pattern to facilitate the ESF and treat your pregnant sows the best way possible.

The Call-Inn Pro and Call Matic Pro have been designed to fit into many building plans, including older, existing barns with difficult dimensions. The

Big Dutchman ESF has a significant design advantage with the trough cover. In theory each sow would enter the ESF once or maybe twice a day. Realistically, an aggressive sow will enter the ESF many times each day if she is able to eat something each time. All ESF systems are designed to allow only a specific amount of feed per sow per day. If a sow is able to eat any left-over feed from the previous sow, she will continue to enter the ESF multiple times each day. Some systems require a longer distance between exit and entry point to limit this repeated feeding. Big Dutchman has solved this issue by covering the

feeder so an aggressive sow can not get any left-over feed so she will not enter the ESF multiple times as there is no reward for doing so. This is important for barn layout because this offers greater flexibility in designing the sow housing system with no requirements to limit repeated sow entry. You will notice in the diagrams included here that the Big Dutchman ESF is simply placed along an inspection / sorting alley way.

Click here to see a video on Big Dutchman ESF in action. At the 2:15 and 9:00 mark you will notice a sow in the ESF waiting to get fed. The scanner first reads the sow's tag and only if she has not eaten her daily allotment will the trough cover open. If she isn't allowed any feed the cover will not open and the entry and exit doors will open. The next sow will nudge her to leave.

The following points are especially important:

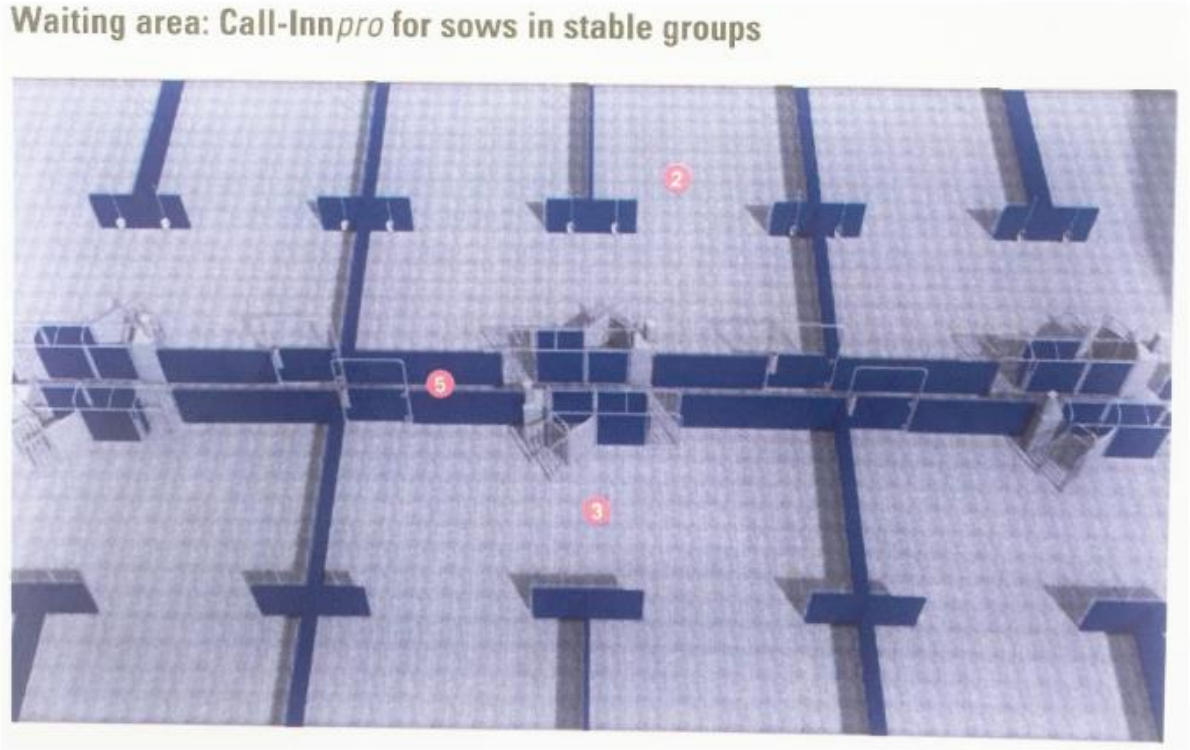
- sufficient space in front of the feeding station
- separation of the lying and activity areas
- installation of drinkers in the activity area (10-12 sows per drinker)
- there needs to be areas for sows to "hide" from aggressive sows

With the two types of group sow housing, stable and dynamic groups, there are two different housing styles.

In this type of group sows are coming and going each week as sows leave to farrow and enter after breeding. This system makes best use of the space as it should be close to maximum population at all times. More aggressive activity is to be expected in this style so more attention needs to be taken to assure sows have more areas to escape from aggressive sows. Care should also be taken in designing the flooring in the activity area, around the feeder entrance. Most of

the fighting will happen in this area and thus a higher chance of slipping and hurting feet.

1=small lying space, 3=activity area, 4=selection / aisle area



In a stable sow group the same sows stay together for the duration of gestation. While this type of housing system is quieter and more relaxed, thus increasing chance of higher numbers born alive, once the peaking order is established, the space isn't used as efficiently. As sows are removed due to non-pregnancy or illness, the space usage is less then ideal. Some operations will compensate for this by over-stocking the area, but with more then 65 sows per

ESF, it is possible that any timid sows will not get feed every day. Care must be taken to monitor feeding reports and install a coping tactic if this occurs.

2=large lying pens, 3=activity area, 5=inspection and driving aisle

As gilts enter the sow system, they will need to be trained to use the ESF before entering the larger group to ensure proper feed intake and no stress to the unborn litter. Since feed is involved, the gilts usually train quickly. Only a small percent will need to be culled due to refusal to enter ESF.

The layout above works for two groups of gilts, but this should be modified depending on the number of gilts entering the sow system to optimize usage of ESF. Each group is allowed access to the ESF seperatly and not allowed to come back so it's easier to spot gilts that are timid towards the ESF.

Conclusion

To get more information or to design your housing layout, bring your barn measurements, sow numbers and your preferred sow group style, to us at Dwyer Manufacturing so we can assist you in realizing your goals for electronic feeding in your sow group housing system.