Owning and Operating a Swine Feeder to Max Profits

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Perfection is not attainable. But if we chase perfection, we can catch excellence.

~Vince Lombardi

What does this Vince Lombardi quote have to do with dry feeders? No matter how hard we try, we can not entirely eliminate feed wastage from a feeder, but if we work at it, we can definitely minimize it.

The reason we have heard many presentations and seen so many articles on feed wastage at the feeder is because it's such a big deal.

The Facts:

Feed costs through finishing barn = $80 per pig (source: Pork News & Views, Dec/16 Swine Budget)

Finishing barn will turn about 3 times per year. average 800 grams growth per day, 27 kg – 122 kg.

A triple double sided feeder will support 48 pigs

Each year that feeder will support 144 pigs

Per year $11,520 worth of feed will go through each feeder.

Per year 1% feed wastage equals $115 per feeder

Over 15 years $172,800 worth of feed will go through each feeder

Over 15 years wastage of 1% equals $1,728 worth of feed per feeder

A typical 2000 head finishing barn would have 42 feeders, therefore 1% feed wastage equals $4,830 per year and $72,450 over 15 years.

The calculations above show there are significant dollars in the balance. So how do you get some of those feed dollars in your pocket?

The first step is picking a feeder that works well, not the one that costs the least. A feeder that costs a little less but doesn't perform as well will end up costing you big $$ in the long run.

Dwyer Manufacturing offers a quality Wet/Dry Shelf feeder made by Thorp Equipment.

Long-term reliability due to heavy gauge stainless construction and simple shelf adjusting system.

The Thorp Feeder is 36” tall, 6” taller then other popular feeders giving it more capacity with no additional extensions to buy.

Hole spacing width of 14” – 16” available

Feeders available up to 84” long.

Here are the basics of Feeder Management:

Daily inspection / adjustment of feeder is a must to maximize potential growth and minimize “out of feed” events so pigs continue to grow evenly without stress. Out-of-feed events can cause bowel syndrome, twisted gut, ulcers, and tail-biting all resulting in higher mortality, higher health expenses and slower ADG.

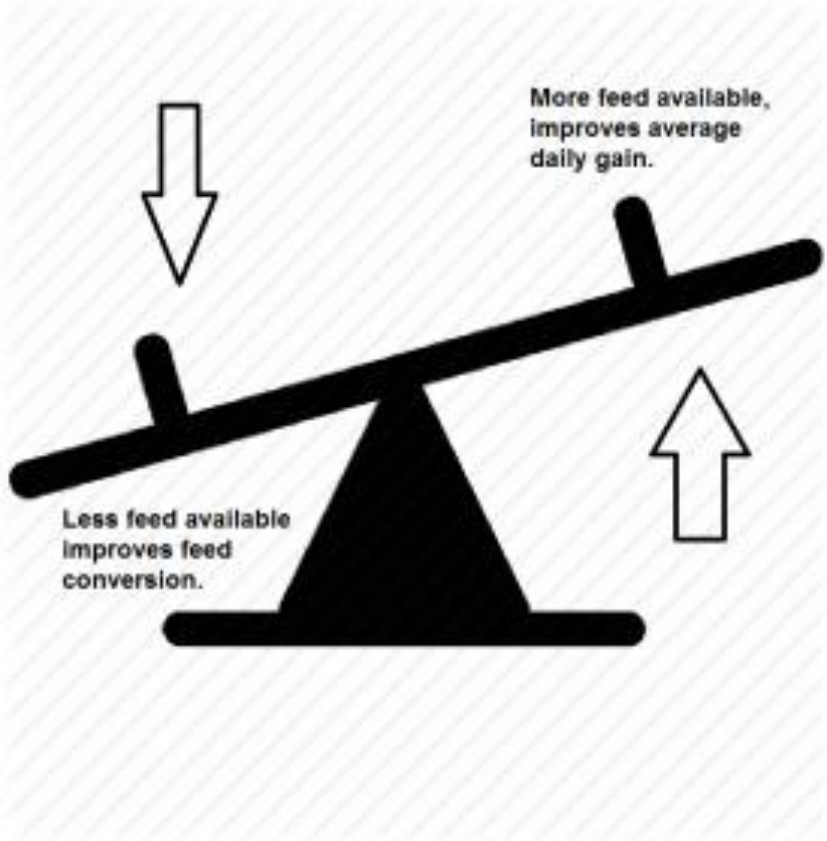
Things to look for each day are:

- Mechanical issues. Mechanical problem found early are usually an easy fix
- Adjustment. A poorly adjusted feeder can cause feed wastage or restrict feed available slowing down growth.
- Drinkers can either plug or leak, both will reduce pig productivity
- Manure in feeder is an indication of another problem. Has there been a change in the ventilation or maybe the feed has gone stale?

Points to consider:

Any change in particle size or feed ingredients will change how the feed flows through a feeder. Be ready to make adjustments to optimize the balance

between growth and feed wastage.



If you have a scale available, it will pay dividends to run some on-farm trials with different feeders and/or varied adjustments.

Below is an example of a simple trial done with the goal of comparing the relationship of ADG and F/G at different feeder settings. The feeders where adjusted to 3 different settings over the whole growth period in a finishing barn.

The results are interesting but to know your facility's results, you need to do this sort of thing for yourself. A little time spent now can generate information that will improve production and put dollars in your pockets.

Table 2. Effects of feeder opening on growth performance of finishing pigs

Item	Feeder opening[1]		
	1	3	5
ADG, lb	2.08	2.05	1.94
F/G	2.40	2.34	2.37
# plugged feeders	0	0	92
Final weight, lb	223	221	213
Feed cost, $[2]	63.23	61.78	62.57
Feed & facility cost, $	76.16	74.89	76.46

[1] One, 3, and 5 represent feeder adjustment widths with 1 being the most open and five being the least. Percentage pan covered averages 80% for setting 1, 55% for setting 3 and 15% for setting 5 (see figures 5, 6, and 7).
[2] Assumes 220 lb of gain and feed cost averaging $0.12 per lb.

Feeder setting #1, 80% pan coverage

Feeder setting #3, 55% pan coverage

Feeder setting #5, 15 % pan coverage

Out of feed event

Feeder test information Source
: http://www.thepigsite.com/articles/2747/feeding-and-feeder-management-influences-on-feed-efficiency/