

This is how you can produce more finishers per pen place

There are big differences as for how effectively you utilise the pens in a facility for the production of finisher pigs. In this article, you will learn how to optimise the flow in your finisher pens.

The article was written by Jacob Drehn, a Pig Consultant at VKST. The original article was published in Danish on the website Landbrugsavisen.dk, on 19 April 2022. You can find the article here: <https://landbrugsavisen.dk/gris/s%C3%A5dan-kan-du-producere-flere-slagtegrise-pr-stiplads?fbclid=IwAR1oyJ7mrn6V2SbdyDOI945dm13Ot7kk-UjcqB0t58c0Crn4hSFrVSKzUpE#>



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Pig producers always aim to get as many finishers through their facility as possible, without compromising neither animal welfare nor related regulations.

According to the latest economic benchmark in Denmark, there are huge differences between how effectively the pens in a facility are utilised; simply, how many pigs are produced per place per year.

Calculate how many kg per year per pen place

Another way this is measured is by calculating how many kg are produced per pen place. It is quite simple to calculate: when you have the difference between output and input weight, this is multiplied by the number of finishers produced per year. Then, this is divided by the number of places available in your finisher farm.

The growth per place per year is typically around 280-350 kg. Some producers can produce even more than 350 kg, which corresponds to around 4 finishers per year.



The fluctuations are around 1 more pig produced per year – from the best third of the producers, which can produce 4.2 pigs, to the worst third of the producers, which can produce 3.2 pig, when sorting according to the rotation cycle. However, for the producers with low rotation, the weight at arrival is 25 kg or lower, which means they will need more time in the stable. This is only a few of the farmers.

A system to produce more pigs per pen place

There are different ways to achieve more produced pigs per pen place.

The obvious one is higher daily gain, and then the pigs can also go through the system faster. There is nothing special about that.

However, there is one common feature of all the producers with the highest growth per pen place, and that is that they use more or less the same system.

At the beginning, they place 50 % more pigs than can go in at the end of the finisher period. The need for space is certainly less when the pigs are small. When the pigs have been there for a given number of days, typically two to three weeks, the extra pigs are sorted out and placed in a section of their own. Thereby, a batch has been divided into two thirds and one third of the pigs, respectively.

During the period with the extra pigs in the pens, it is important to keep in mind that it is acceptable to have a little bit of extra leftover feed in the cribs, to ensure that the pigs get enough feed.

When you have started sending pigs to the slaughterhouse, and the stables are about to empty, the remaining pigs are gathered in the section(s), where the extra pigs that were sorted out have been placed. This way, all the pens in the large section, or, alternatively, in the majority of the sections, are emptied, so that they are read to be washed.

At the same time, the pigs that grow slower have more time to reach the desired finisher weight.

Pros and cons

If the flow is adjusted according to the method mentioned above, it can often cut one or two weeks off the rotation cycle.

The method requires focus from those who care for the pigs. Especially, as mixing the pigs at the end of the period can give rise to challenges with leg problems, among other things. However, in recent years, this has been improved by the fact that the feeding curve typically ends at a higher level, so that the pigs are fuller and calmer.



If the management is skilled, experiences show that this system works really well, even with the male pigs.

If the herd has problems with diseases, the advantages of this flow are reduced significantly.

A disadvantage is that when the stables are fully utilised, the herd can be more sensitive to fluctuations from the normal. For example, if the slaughterhouse is a bit behind, and there are many delayed pigs waiting to be picked up, it can cause problems in the stable.

However, if the producer – by optimising the flow – can produce one pig or just half pig more per pen place, it is already worth taking a closer look at. Since, there is always a rent to be paid – and the more pigs you can produce to pay for this, the better for you.