

KT Program

Activity 1 – Enrichment

Interview questionnaire – **End of project 8 July 2022**

Hope Family Pork

**Verbal Questions to prepare (the answers will be filmed)**

1. Do you plan to continue to use enrichments in your group sow housing facility in the future?
  - a. Why or why not?

Yes, I would say that we will continue to use the enrichment. It does seem like it is giving the sows something to keep them occupied for a degree when they are just eating in the loose sow housing.

2. Do you think enrichments effectively reduced lameness or aggression in the sow herd?
  - a. Why or why not

For the lameness and aggression on our production records, I would say that our lameness isn't showing that it has gone down since we put the enrichment, but I think that the aggression is maybe slightly reduced but only during the time we introduce new sows into the ESF area.

3. When we first spoke, you mentioned hoping to see *'enrichment translating to just maybe a bit calmer animals that will lead to an increase in overall welfare and production on our farm'*. Did this come to be? What expectations were met and not met?

What we've seen is that with our dynamic loose sow housing groups, when we introduce new sows into the pen, we're noticing that a percentage of those sows that get introduced they will go to the enrichment right away but it's only for a short period of time. It may be for ten or fifteen minutes where maybe 25% of the sows that have entered the group will go to the enrichment and maybe those sows are not bothering or bullying other sows and focusing on the enrichment, so I will say that we're seeing probably a little bit of an improvement, but I don't think too much.

4. Your main concern was *'that the enrichment would be coming off and getting stuck in our electronic self-eating area and maybe causing some issues there'* - did this happen?

The chain would come off from time to time, we just make sure that we've got it fastened securely into a truss so for sure they won't. They pull on that chain pretty good in the pen,

so you do have to make sure that it's securely fastened into the truss through the ceiling but no it did not affect any of our feeding stations.

5. Do you think there was a benefit in rotating the enrichments?
  - a. Please provide details on your observations

I would say when we rotate again, a small percentage of sows would get up and go and chew on the new enrichment but again, it was typically for a short period of time so you may had 240 sows in one pen, there's maybe 5-6 sows that get up and go and chew on the new enrichment for a short period and then they go and lay down again so I would say that in the big picture I don't think we saw a large benefit to switching out and putting in new enrichments.

6. Which enrichment do you think was the most effective in your system? Which was the least effective enrichment?
  - a. Please provide details

I would say the rope was probably the most effective. They seem to like the rope the most, teared apart pretty quickly. The chain is probably with what they played the least, but they also really like to chew on the chain they liked it on their teeth and to chew on little bit. The chain is also the least maintenance so the easiest to maintain, you just hang the chain and off it goes. I say between the three, I will stick to hanging the chain as opposed to the rope or the wood.

7. Based on your observations, how were sows interacting with the enrichment objects?
  - a. Time spent interacting, one or more sows interacting at once
  - b. Young versus older sows use of enrichment.

In my sow barn we have dynamic pens so our gilts are all in one pen together and then the older sows are in 3 other pens, so the younger ones are always together with the younger ones and the older ones are always together with the older ones. I'd say whenever we introduce new animals to the pens, that's when you see the most activity on the enrichment and we typically put about 15 girls in at one time in each pen and out of those 15 girls, and you'd see 4-5 girls that would be chewing on the enrichment and they may stick around there for 10 minutes maybe 15 minutes and after that they are typically gone and they don't really come back to the enrichment much after that that's what we noticed.

8. How quickly do the objects wear and require replacement? How dirty do the enrichments get?

The least maintenance for sure is the chain. The rope, you have to replace it quite frequently every few days. The wood enrichment lasts a bit longer than that. I'd say the chain is the least maintenance and then followed by wood followed by rope. The rope

gets probably the dirtiest. The chain stays the cleanest and has the easiest maintenance. You just hang the chain, and you don't have to look after it after that.

9. Did the rotation of enrichments affect your daily work schedule?
  - a. Was it easy to accommodate?
  - b. Did it lengthen your workday?

I'd say it was part of our tasks to change the enrichment, so it takes a little bit of time but yeah I would say if I looked at long term I would stick to something that is as minimal maintenance as possible because we have a lot of things going on in the day and trying to be as efficient with our day as possible, you try to limit those types of things as much as we can but yes it takes a little bit of time but not a big deal.

10. How do you think we could increase the effectiveness of enrichments in group sow housing systems?

For our own system, I don't know if adding more enrichment or rotating them more frequently would really be all that beneficial. It seems it depend on your own sow herd and the behavior of your sows. Our sows seem to be very calm: 365 days of the year they're just very relaxed and they lay in their lane areas, and I think because they're so calm, the enrichment isn't that appealing to them. I think if you're in a farm where the sows are maybe more uptight or maybe a little bit more stressed, I think the enrichment would be more beneficial in that situation.

11. What do you think is the main roadblock that stops producers from installing enrichments in their group sow housing system?

I think probably it's just time to install and again keep an eye on the system and you know you have to be sure something's going to work for you before you spend time investing in something. So if there was enough data to say that you know for sure the enrichment is going to reduce lameness and reduce aggression, if that data was very clear, then I think for sure farmers are always trying to do the best they can to look after the welfare of our animals so it's helpful then and that would help with that really.

12. How do you think we could get more producers to install enrichments in their facilities?

I think if you want more producers to install enrichment, sort of like I said before, it needs to be clear in the studies and research done that it is going to be beneficial to the sows and reduce aggression and lameness in the animals. I think that for my experience in my operation I don't know if the enrichment has reduced our lameness and our aggression, so it needs to be clear that the studies and the research needs to be there to give some support to installing it.

**Written Questions to fill out/answer in advance (if possible)**

- a) What is your herd's performance numbers? (past 12 months: #total piglets born, #mommies, #piglets weaned, farrowing rate, sow mortality rate)

Farrowing rate	86.07
Total born	16.7
Live born	14.4
Stills	8.4
Mummified	2.2
Weaned per sow	12.3
Sow mortality	10.21

- b) Based on your observations, what is the incidence of lameness within the herd? (how many sows are affected (% of the group/herd))

3% of sows have lameness and 40% of the sow mortality is because of lameness.

- c) Based on your observations, what is the incidence of sow aggression? (when do they fight? (eg. at time of mixing? before every meal?), frequency? % of sows affected?)

Always at the time of mixing, 20 sows added to a 250 sows group and about 5 of the 20 like to fight. Usually the new ones start to fight.

Never at the feeding time.

Running 55 sower/station.