



# Mitchell Veterinary Services

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## Pauly Veterinary Clinic

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### Utilizing Production Records

I've been providing veterinary services and management advice to pork producers for over 40 years and I often look into the rear view mirror and reflect on my career. I think that one area where I could have used my expertise to help my clients more was with the consultation of the production numbers. I probably should have insisted on seeing the herd records, helping to analyze them and advising how to develop more measurements to help benchmark a barn's performance.

Too often I was caught up in dealing with disease issues. Certainly this is what pork producers expect of a veterinarian. And when things are going reasonably well a lot of people don't really want an outsider critiquing their farm's production and performance. Often the producers have been too busy to make the time. Anyway, there are lots of reasons why this very important aspect of management may get overlooked.

The importance of having accurate swine production records when fine-tuning production techniques or making major management decisions cannot be overstated. A hog farmer will see improvement only if challenges are clearly visible. The record keeping system should help the producer, vets, and lender recognize what is happening in the barn. Therefore everyone working in the barn needs to diligently record data and managers must take the time to analyze the numbers.

By sitting down with the farmers and a good set of records the consultant can help pick out the good, not so good and the bad areas of production. Then we can discuss why this is happening and make suggestions to help improve performance.

Employees should know what is expected of the barn. So weekly, monthly and quarterly targets for key areas need to be posted. Also weekly, monthly and quarterly numbers achieved need to be posted. I don't get too excited about the monthly number as it can really vary depending if there are 4 or 5 Fridays in that month. Remember a quarter represents 13 weeks.

Sow herd performance is easy with all of the computer systems available. Getting good weaner and finishing numbers can be a bit more difficult because you really need a handle on weight of pigs in, out and amount of various rations used. But most successful operations are doing just that.

I like to analyze one years' performance and compare it to the previous years' data. Setting standards and goals for an operation is referred to as benchmarking. Benchmarking can be used within large companies to compare performance between units. It can also be used to compare production against other operations. However, to make comparisons with other operations measurements and calculations need to be identical. Too often it becomes comparing apples to oranges. I like to use benchmarking on a farm simply to compare one quarter or one year against the next. I.e. compare yourself to yourself!!!

Yours truly,

R.G. Reed

RR/jw