

IMPLICATIONS FOR PIG FARMING

Treating the causes, instead of simply addressing the symptoms

My father and I work a farm with 45 ha of fields. Yet, the main activity of our farm is breeding pigs via 170 sows. In farming, one of my objectives is to continually improve our enterprise by means of the lowest cost possible and without resorting to large-scale technologies. The introduction of penergetic g into our operation is an example of adapting such innovation. I had tested several other substances before, but without success and had pretty much had enough of that, and this I viewed as a last attempt to improve our manure.

When I started to use penergetic g it caused our liquid pig manure to become homogeneous – an effect it is well known for. But, that was just a small beginning; for today we no longer have any buoyant or stinky layers in our manure containers and the air quality in the stock barn has improved significantly. All these positive effects have been the result of the application of penergetic g and today we have achieved what I would describe as an ideal state: homogeneous manure without any bad smell. This has also positive influences on the practical work: we no longer have to stir the manure and when it is spread we no longer have to work it into the soil. This significantly reduces our workload (and energy costs) associated with manure handling.

A further benefit is our sows and pigs are now healthier – no doubt largely due to their lungs and respiration tracts no longer being exposed to bad atmosphere in the stock shed (no evaporation of ammonia or methane). An intestinal disease that would sometimes affect the pigs does not occur any more. Having healthy animals has economic consequences as well: our veterinarian costs have declined by two thirds. Furthermore, the decreased application of drugs has a positive influence on the immunity of the total herd plus the associated side effects of medication and changes of their metabolism no longer appear.

Now, to disinfect the stock sheds we use only natural products, e.g. lime or penergetic g. Surely, one has to take some risks and is faced with setbacks, but the target is worth it. Manure that is free of chemical additives (e.g. penergetic-treated manure) is free of pollutants so it works better with the soil and can be applied directly onto forage crops. These changes in our operation did not take place overnight and one has to proceed to implement a change in one's operations slowly and observe the noticeable changes that take place at every step in the operation. In my case, the results I achieved stimulated a change of my thinking. Today, I reflect more on the consequences of all aspects of my farming practices. I find I have strayed from many of the teachings of my former formal (agricultural) education. At the beginning, it was a real change for me to consider my concepts, especially when it was something that I could not fully grasp with my brain. But, here I feel is an example of where I went with "my gut" in trying something new and innovative and the results have been impressive and no negative effects have occurred.

Today, only very rarely does a farmer query about the mechanism by which a pesticide or agricultural pharmaceutical works. For the vast majority of farmers it is the intended purpose of the product that matters and the negative side-effects and residual chemical impacts are frequently not adequately taken into consideration – often this mental processing takes place at a subconscious level. Yet, increasingly it is important to bring this consciousness about agricultural practices and good stewardship of the land and our animals to the attention of farmers and the general public (as consumers they also need to be informed). An important target group are school children. In the past, when I have spoken to students and teachers about integrated approaches to agricultural production, the response has always been positive.

There lies the starting point for a change to a better world. We do have the means; it is only up to us what we are going to do with them.

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