



Pig Improver

Feeding Gilts the Right Way

Proper nutrition is critical to ensuring sow longevity and high performance

The North American pork industry is constantly striving to maximize performance and efficiency across all stages of production.

Gilts must be given appropriate care in order to maximize their lifetime performance.

Alongside proper gilt selection, environmental conditions and stocking densities, **it is critical that gilts receive proper nutrition to prepare them for high lifetime performance.**

Some producers are making the mistake of providing gilts with a **market pig diet** instead of a **development diet** that focuses on preparing them for a long and productive life in the breeding herd.

Are there opportunities, even small ones, to improve gilt diets within your operation? Try our quick quiz on the next page and find out.

1. Overall vitamin and trace mineral recommendations for gilt development diets are _____ than recommendations for market pig diets.
 - a) Lower
 - b) Equal
 - c) Higher

Answer: c) Higher. "Vitamin and trace mineral content should be higher in gilt diets in order to support optimum skeletal development and reproductive function," explains PIC Nutritionist Marcio Goncalves.

2. The number of vitamins that are most commonly added to a gilt development diet, but not to the market pig diet are:
 - a) Two
 - b) Four
 - c) Five

Answer: c) Five. A vitamin/mineral premix for gilt development starting at 130 lbs (60 kg) will be the same as the one fed to gestating and lactation sows. The diet will not only have higher levels of vitamins and mineral than a market pig diet, but also include vitamins that help with reproduction and structure such as Folic Acid, Choline, Biotin, Thiamine and Pyridoxine.

3. Two minerals that must be higher in gilt development diets compared to market pig diets are:
 - a) calcium and magnesium
 - b) phosphorus and magnesium
 - c) calcium and phosphorus

Answer: c) Calcium and phosphorus. Macro minerals such as calcium (Ca) and phosphorus (P) are mainly involved in structural functions such as bone development and metabolism, but also are involved in other metabolic functions. Starting at 130 lbs (60 kg) the dietary digestible P recommendation is 0.35% and for Ca, it's 0.70%.

4. For maximum litter size, development gilts should have feed restriction 2 weeks prior to breeding. True or False?
 - a) True
 - b) False

Answer: b) False. Feed restriction can negatively affect litter size in their first parity.

5. Choose the true statement.
 - a) A very small grain particle size is more suitable for developing gilts than for finishing pigs.
 - b) Grain particle size is not a factor in maximizing gilt and sow lifetime performance.
 - c) If two grind sizes are available, a courser grind (750-900 microns) should be fed to gilts and gestating sows to minimize ulcers while a finer grind may be most appropriate in lactation and wean-to-finish pigs.

Answer: c) Gilts will likely have increased longevity if fed a coarser ground grain than market pigs.



Key points to remember

Nutrition provided to developing replacement gilts will have a **significant impact** on their lifetime productivity as well as their early and lifetime performance.

Gilts require specialized nutrition to ensure proper muscle growth, bone development, reproductive tract development and sound foot/leg structure.

Feeding your gilts a diet that is similar to a market pig diet **can negatively affect the health and productivity of your gilts**. Gilt diets should not be formulated in order to maximize growth. The diet needs to be formulated for optimum growth, targeting an ADG from birth to first service between 1.35 and 1.7 lbs/day (0.61 to 0.77 kg/day). This can be enabled by manipulating energy levels.

Vitamin/trace mineral, calcium and phosphorus recommendations for gilts are higher than for commercial market pigs starting at 130 lbs (60 kg). The diet needs to include vitamins that help with reproduction and structure such as Folic Acid, Choline, Biotin, Thiamine and Pyridoxine. **These five vitamins are not in the market pig diet but should be provided.**

Review these recent Pig Improvers on gilt selection and more on our website.

If you don't already have it, request the PIC '**NUTRIENT SPECIFICATIONS MANUAL**' from your account manager or [download here](#).

Our future – and yours – has never looked so bright, as PIC continues to deliver on our promise to Never Stop Improving.