



Facts about weaning without veterinary zinc

By June 2022, the use of veterinary zinc against weaning diarrhea will be prohibited.

Hedegaard recommends that you do not wait until this date to stop the use of zinc in the weaning feed. It gives you some important experience and at the same time you have the opportunity to “pull the emergency brake” and give veterinary zinc if a batch does not succeed. You do not have that option if you wait until the ban comes into force.

In order to be successful in weaning without the use of veterinary zinc, there are a number of conditions that need to be met. It is important to be aware that even if all these conditions are in place, you will probably still face challenges.

The following is important to be successful with “Zinc-free” weaning:

- √ Only get started if you already wean good strong pigs and have good production results in the weaning stable.
- √ The work starts in the farrowing stable. It is super important that all pigs are eating in the farrowing stable. Start with 4 times daily feed no later than day 5. It is more important that the pigs has learned to eat, than how old and how heavy they are at weaning.
- √ Although the pigs has learned to eat dry food, the older and the more robust the pigs is at weaning, the greater the probability of success.
- √ If you have climate stables with concrete slits, you should strongly consider replacing them with cast iron or plastic grates before the ban on veterinary zinc comes into force.
- √ The weaning stable must be washed with soap and subsequently disinfected. The stable must be COMPLETELY dry. That means the floor and inventory have the same temperature as the stable room. The stable room should be 30 degrees when the pigs are moved in. After that, the temperature is lowered to 23-24 degrees. Under cover the floor temperature should be about 32 degrees.
- √ Use good weaning feed composed of many different raw materials, with high digestibility and a low protein content. Use the same feed in the farrowing stable so that the pigs avoid feeding changes.
- √ It is important that the pigs are eating quickly after weaning. Long fasting damages the intestine. Let the light be turned on in the stable for the first 24 hours, then the pigs will start to eat the feed faster. Give the feed on the floor or even better wet feed in long troughs 4 times daily the first days.
- √ Have strong focus on feed hygiene. Be sure the drink water in feeders and cups are clean. Do not accept a bacterial soup of feed and manure.
- √ Accept that the growth will be lower during the weaning period. The main thing is that the pigs get through the period with a healthy intestine and a low mortality rate, because then the effect on the end weight will be minimal.
- √ Aim for equalized weaning age – in other words, equal weekly/mating batches.
- √ Test if there is edema in your herd and start vaccination, if there is – talk to your vet.

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