

Feed accounts for roughly 65–75% of the cost of production, making it the most expensive input for any swine business. Properly formulated diets are only part of the equation when it comes to feeding pigs. The feeder is the final interface between the pig and its diet, and if we cannot effectively deliver the feed to the pig, we are hurting both their performance and our bottom line.

<u>Feeder</u>	<u>Barn</u>
$630 \times 50 = 31,500$ lbs of feed/feeder/turn	$31,500 \times 24 = 756,000$ lbs of feed/barn/turn
$31,500 \times 2.8 = 88,200$ lbs/feeder/year	$756,000 \times 2.8 = 2,116,800$ lbs of feed/barn/year
$88,200 \div 2000 = 44.1$ tons/feeder/year	$2,116,800 \div 2000 = 1058.4$ tons/barn/year
Feed cost = \$185.00/ton	
$44.1 \times \$185.00 = \$8,158.50$ of feed/feeder/year	$1058.4 \times \$185.00 = \$195,804.00$ of feed/barn/year

To fully grasp the importance of feeder management, it is critical to consider the amount of feed that passes through a single feeder. Consider a 1,200-head barn with 48 pens (25 pigs per pen) and 24 fence line feeders. Assuming pigs enter the barn at 55 lbs. and are marketed at 280 lbs. with a 2.8 feed efficiency, they will consume 630 lbs. of feed.

The number of pounds and dollars of feed that pass through each feeder and barn per year is remarkable. Feeder management is a relatively simple way to reduce feed wastage and increase feed efficiency.

The three main components of successful feeder management are:

- Adequate feeder trough space
- Proper feeder adjustment/feeder pan coverage
- Reducing/eliminating out-of-feed events

Trough Space

Providing adequate feeder trough space is a crucial step toward improving overall feeder management. The first step is to determine how many pigs your feeder can handle efficiently. This is dependent on a myriad of factors, including:

- **Feeder design:** Wet/dry feeders can service more pigs than dry feeders because they put feed and water in the same location, enabling pigs to eat more feed in less time.
- **Feed form:** If pelleted diets are provided, the feeder can service more pigs due to an increase in eating speed when pigs are presented with pelleted diets.

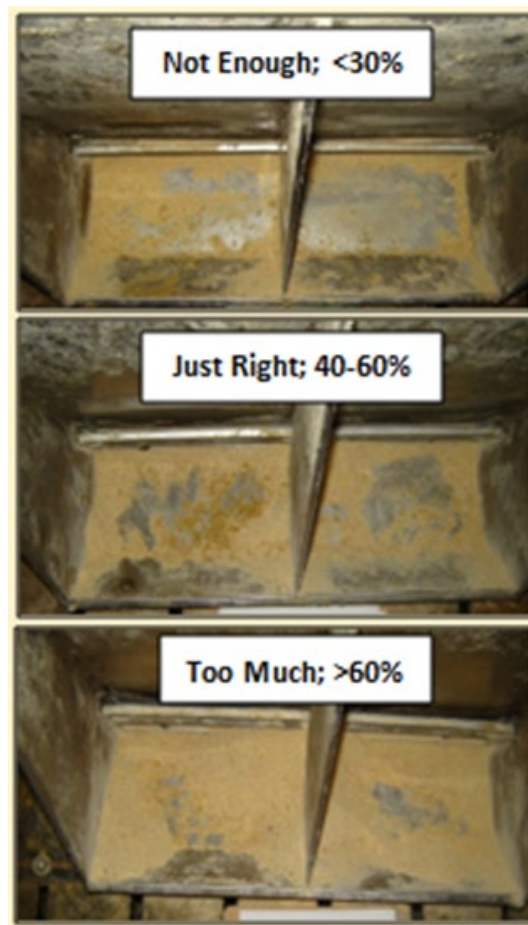
Feeder Type	Stocking Density
Dry feeder	8–10 pigs per space*
Wet/dry	12–15 pigs per space**
Tube feeders	11 pigs/drop/side*
*2" of trough space per pig minimum	
** 1" of trough space per pig minimum	

Feeder Adjustment

Studies have shown that an improperly adjusted feeder can increase feed wastage by 1.7–5.4%. This could equate to \$55–175 in wasted feed per feeder per group.

Due to the variety of feeder types available, there is no single setting recommendation for feeder adjustment. Rather, feeder pan coverage is utilized as a measure of proper feeder adjustment.

Growth performance is optimized when pan coverage is approximately 40–60%



It is also important to remember that feeder adjustment is not a one-time deal when pigs are placed. Feeders should continually be checked and adjusted to maintain the proper feeder pan coverage.

Changes in diet composition (fiber) and form (meal vs. pellet) will affect how the feed flows through the feeder. Therefore, feeders should be checked and readjusted if there is a significant change in the diet.

Adjusting feeders is one of those barn chores that often gets overlooked or preemptively marked off the to-do list. However, taking a little more time to evaluate feeder pan coverage can pay dividends through increased ADG and decreased feed wastage.

Out-of-Feed Events

An out-of-feed event can be defined as a period of time in which the pigs do not have access to feed because of:

- Late feed delivery
- Bridging bulk bins, feed lines or feeders
- Clogged feeders
- Equipment errors
- Blocked feed access
- Sick pigs

Regardless of the cause of the out-of-feed event, its impact on the pig is always the same. Following an out-of-feed event, aggression and fighting may be observed, along with an increase in the incidence of ulcers and HBS and a reduction in daily gains. A potential increase in mortalities, lighter pigs or more days on feed will occur, which will subsequently have an economic impact on the producer.