
Getting Started with Hoop Structures (Session 2A)

PRODUCER PANEL: Archie Kunz, Brooklyn; Don Lewis, Washington; Don Struthers, Collins

MODERATOR: Denise Schwab, former ISU Extension livestock specialist, East Central Area

RECORDER: Joe Sellers, ISU Extension livestock specialist, Southeast Area

Archie Kunz has six years of experience with hoops and has used all types of bedding. The style he uses has a concrete pad in the front, with beds in the back and a metal door. He said he thinks pigs are happy in hoops.

Ventilation can be one of the biggest problems. Hoops must be managed as cold housing, not like heated systems. Working facilities are critical. There also must be an adequate opening to keep moisture levels down. One person sorts pigs at market time.

Don Lewis built his first hoop in 1992 after seeing an article in a farm show magazine. He made several mistakes: 1) he built too close behind the structure, and 2) the split wall down the middle made bedding difficult. "Hoops need to be user-friendly. You need to make it work in all conditions."

Bedding must be kept up, or problems with smell will result. Bedding also must be kept up in the summer to keep animals off the hot manure pack. Bedding also must be kept dry, so good drainage on the site also is needed. Birds can be a problem. He's very excited about using hoops for early weaned pigs.

Don Struthers said his decision to build hoops included his sons and other partners. They first considered hoops for hay storage. They felt they could succeed with hoops if the Rhodes research farm was successful.

Their first project included four hoops; now they have 13. "There are a lot of different ways to raise pigs."

QUESTIONS:

Any tips on construction?

- To cut costs use cheaper materials.
- Panelists do not recommend using more concrete than needed.
- Most people prefer wooden walls; panelists would not choose concrete.
- It's a good idea to have an inner gating system to improve pig flow, make sorting easier.
- Storage or covers for bedding may be helpful because dry bedding is important.

What about taxes and insurance?

- Most insurance companies now understand hoop buildings and provide coverage.
- Hoops are included on property taxes.

SUMMARY:

Lewis: Set up your system so it is usable

for you. Sometimes you will get frustrated. You must be able to adjust to varying weather conditions. Timing of weather conditions and manure hauling also can be a problem. Bedding is important

Kunz: Make your system user-friendly. Having a door system in the back can

make bedding easier. Keep ventilation a priority.

Struthers: Determine your goals and see if hoops fit. Be sure hoops are what you want and then you can make it work. Hoops are flexible, simple and adaptable.