



Advancement in PRRS Resistance

By Kevin Schleusner

Babcock Genetics learned early in its 40+ year history that the best genetics in the world will not make our customers profitable if they are plagued with disease that compromises their performance and robs them of their profits. That is why Babcock Genetics closed all levels of genetic multiplication to live animal introduction and developed the internal multiplication system for our customer's farms. This went a long way in maintaining the SPF health status of our multiplication system and keeping disease out of our customer's farms.

The 1990s brought a new disease that wreaked havoc on pork production systems and has cost the industry millions of dollars annually. PRRS has proved to be one of the most challenging diseases to ever hit the swine industry. Fortunately, our closed-herd internal multiplication system helped keep PRRS out of many of our customer's herds. Those who did become infected saw the herd stabilize quickly and return to normal production levels. It wasn't long before many genetic companies began to follow our lead and offer closed-herd programs. Not all were successful, because to have a truly closed herd, it must start at the primary nucleus.

Babcock soon discovered that some hogs were more resilient and could handle the challenges of the PRRS infection better than other hogs. From the beginning, Babcock developed a genetic selection program for robustness and vigor. This program was implemented because our genetic multiplication system had a SPF health status, but we wanted to ensure that we selected animals that could handle the real-life conditions and health challenges of commercial hog farms by selecting the hogs that were most resistant to the diseases that plagued our industry. We needed to simulate the effect of disease on growing hogs and select those who excelled under those conditions.

Customers, veterinarians, and nutritional consultants have long been telling Babcock that its hog maintains its industry leading grow-finish performance even when barns are infected with whatever new strain of PRRS has hit their area. This did not come to us as a surprise, but as evidence that we were on the right track. In December of 2014, Babcock received third-party confirmation of this. South Dakota State University contacted us after using Babcock market hogs, which were purchased from one of our customers, in a study on the effect of PRRS on grow-finish hogs and the role nutrition plays in mitigating its effect. They were surprised by the minimal effect that the inoculation of PRRS had on Babcock hogs and provided us with the following quote:

"Babcock pigs showed no external signs of PRRS, other than a few pigs with a little cough and being lethargic. We expected more morbidity during the trial and didn't see that with Babcock Genetics." - Dr. Robert Thaler, South Dakota State University.

Having been in business for over 40 years, Babcock Genetics is the oldest U.S. based swine genetic company. Through those years we have consistently selected for traits that have the greatest impact on profitability for our customers.