

Experts advise farmers to maintain hygiene and avoid some diseases attacking their pigs, writes **Esther Oluka**.

What you ought to know about piggery

Dr David Mutetikka, an associate professor of Animal Science at Makerere University, says when buying piglets or the adult pigs (boars and sows), one should not buy them because of their appearance.

"Do not buy the animal because it is big in size but rather choose basing on factors such as the litter size. If the piglet was born in a litter size of four, however good looking it is, there is a likelihood that it will maintain the same cycle and having the same number of piglets," he said.

One should also buy piglets at eight weeks and feed them exclusively for four months until they weigh between 90 to 100kilogrammes.

During the growing stage, they should be eating about four kilogrammes of feed in order to gain one kilogramme of body weight on average.

Disease control

Workers managing the pigs should ensure they wear gumboots and overalls and change them before entering a sty if they had used the same in other places.

"One of the deadliest diseases we battle within pigs is African swine fever which neither has a cure or vaccine. Spreading it can be controlled if hygiene is observed," Mutetikka said.

It is also important for farmers to stick to a particular deworming programme. The mature pigs should be dewormed twice a year while the growing ones every once in three months.

Profit

Sows should be able to give birth twice a year and should be pregnant again by the end of that year.

"Profit is determined by the number of piglets produced and those that survive to the market," Mutetikka said.

Litter numbers should be 10 to 12 piglets "If the sow gives birth to a litter size of six piglets, there could be a problem of either the genetics of the sow or the farmer is not feeding



Participants checking out a sty during the Farm Clinic on Saturday. PHOTOS BY ALEX ESAGALA

HOUSING AND HYGIENE

The problem with keeping pigs is that they produce an odour that may inconvenience people. "The deep litter system, like the one used in poultry helps deal with the stench. The system involves use of repeated spread of straw and sawdust material to use as bedding material," Dr David Mutetikka, an associate professor of Animal Science at Makerere University, said.

Part of the hygiene practices includes limiting the number of visitors entering the pigsty as well as isolating new pigs for about three weeks whenever they are brought in.

them well," Mutetikka said.

In addition, if one visited a farm and wanted to buy an already growing pig, they should look for one with a longer frame whose size will allow room for a lot of pork.

If one is keeping a boar, they should have a minimum of 10 females for reproduction because the cost of maintaining a boar is paid for by the

piglets produced.

Challenges

Piggery, like any other projects has challenges. Expensive feeds which are sometimes of poor quality affects pigs. For instance, some maize bran supposed to be white in colour is sometimes brown.

In addition, customers always insist on buying at the lowest amount.

"The price they offer is usually less than what we have invested into the pig. You may price your pig at Shs160, 000 but the buyer insists on buying it at Shs120, 000," he said.

Solutions

Mutetikka says government should set up an abattoir where farmers can deliver their pigs. "This makes it easy for us to set prices according to the conditions of production Mutetikka said.

He also advises farmers to observe what veterinarians do and learn that they do not need to c them up every time there i problem.

trending now> FARMERS SET FOR ARMYWORM

Fall Armyworm Moth is a migratory pest native to North and South America. This pest occurs in large numbers and its caterpillars cause severe damage to more than 80 plant species especially cereal crops such as maize and rice.

The army fall worm which caught many farmers off-guard in 2017 has ravaged more than 750,000 acres of maize in Africa in putting hundreds of millions of people at risk of hunger.

There is a risk of further spread into Europe via the Mediterranean basin and Asia through the Middle East if the pest is not controlled according to the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

To control this pest, farmers should plant early and adhere to regional planting calendar by avoiding late and off-season planting. Avoid planting new crop near infested plants and use recommended fertilizers. Farmers should also keep fields weed free to boost plant vigor.

Mass trapping should be done by setting up 4-6 FAW Pheromone traps per Ha to suppress the moth population.

The potential effective insecticides against this pest include: Diazinon, Alpha Cypermethrin, Chlorpyrifos, Diflubenzuron Triclorfon (Dipterex), Chlorantranil prole, Spinetoram, Emamectin benzoate, Indoxacarb and Lambda Cyhalothrin.

For effective control in maize, spray at least three times starting two weeks after emergence, at knee high and just before tasselling. However these products need to be used appropriately at right environmental conditions to minimise development of pest resistance. All farmers in a given locality should spray to avoid neglected farms, which become breeding grounds for the insect and a source of re-infestation.

Farmers are discouraged from moving infested plant materials to areas where the pest has not been reported.

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