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Mechanical Baby Pig Feeder

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Various types of mechanical units designed to replace lactating brood sows are available. The Mini-Mor Corporation, Omaha, Nebraska, lent Kansas State University a unit designed to raise 36 pigs in individual cages.

We are not trying to replace the lactating sow but to save baby pigs when they lose their mothers, or when a sow has more pigs than teats. The unit also could be used with large litters, for pigs that are pushed back and obviously are not getting enough to eat when a few days old.

We have raised two groups of pigs in the Mini-Mor feeder. Mr. Heinly, the herdsman, has spent considerable time making minor adjustments in the machine and in management. He has supervised operation of the unit from the beginning and it is functioning very satisfactorily. The machine will feed baby pigs either pure warm water, milk replacer mixed with warm water, dry milk replacer, or a dry starter ration. There are three food pans in front of each pig. We are using a commercial milk replacer (Foremost-Soweena) plus one of our starter rations in the machine.

Nineteen pigs with an average birth weight of 2.98 pounds were put in the Mini-Mor June 24, 1970. Individual birth weights ranged from 1.3 pounds to 3.8 pounds. Ages of the pigs going into the brooder varied from 6 hours to 15 days. They were in the brooder from 28 to 33 days. Seventeen pigs with an average weight of 12.8 pounds were taken from the brooder. Their weights ranged from 6 to 18 pounds. All pigs appeared to be healthy and none was suffering from diarrhea.

A second group of 22 pigs went into the feeder July 27. Seven pigs were from very large litters and were only a few hours old and apparently got no colostrum milk. All seven developed severe diarrhea and died. The others are doing well.

We will continue to work with the feeder and report further results.