

Book review — Boekresensie

A quantitative biology of the pig

Edited by I Kyriazakis

1999. CABI Publishing, Wallingford, UK, 398 pp., 62 figures, 52 tables. Price £60.00. ISBN 0 85 199 273 0.

The measurability of pigs is not a new concept, but this book adds depth and brings much of new investigative techniques to the questions of pig biology. The overall intention is to improve simulation modelling as an eventual production tool. The editor states, in the final chapter, that there are problems involved in converting models into practice and difficulties in including stochastic elements when trying to predict population performance from quantitative measurements in individual animals. This does not detract from the wealth of usable information in this excellent book.

The editor has enlisted some 30 contributors from outstanding scientific teams worldwide. In the course of the 16 chapters, most aspects of the pig, its composition, reaction to environment, social interaction, breeding patterns, pre- and post-natal growth, sow lactation, lean and fat development, hormone controls and other factors are examined, quantified and presented in readable form, aided by numerous tables, graphs and diagrams.

The major area of investigation is, understandably, nutrition. Nearly half of the book is devoted

to detailed examination of this subject, from constituents of feeds and their absorbability and metabolism to the requirements of pigs at all ages and in various circumstances.

The contributors take a new and critical look at many conventional wisdoms – are we really able to analyse amino acids, is sow milk the best food for piglets, why do we use 6.25 to convert N to CP, why do we have problems balancing the energy flow equation, should we not be more concerned with physical and physiological attributes of feeds than chemical analysis ...?

Although this book is written largely for nutritionists, animal scientists and statisticians, every chapter has a final discussion or conclusion paragraph that summarises the content, and the references are numerous and recent.

Any veterinarian who is concerned with modern pig production will find a great deal of up-to-date, authentic and useful information in its pages.

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