

## **Two Essentials to Control Odors in Buildings: Pull Pits and Keep Hogs Clean.**

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A few years back, I wrote an article for the monthly *Pork Pages* on controlling odors in pull-plug buildings. My advice read something to the effect, “Pull each pit every week, pull one pit at a time, and pull pits every day.”

The advice is still good, although I might add, “Wash excess solids from the pit, and refill immediately after emptying.”

It takes about 7 days for manure to start breaking down in a well maintained recharge pit. If you pull plugs every week, manure will not start smelling as it decomposes.

Pulling one pit at a time keeps the lagoon from being overloaded; and pulling every day keeps treated effluent circulated in the lagoon.

Solids left in the pit after pulling will start breaking down just like fresh manure, and if you don’t keep up with solids buildup every week, the situation will soon get the best of you.

Adding water or lagoon effluent immediately after the pit is emptied and cleaned means that raw manure is covered, and does not start smelling like, well, raw manure.

Good pit management is only half of the story, however.

If you have been raising hogs for any amount of time, you have probably realized by now that dirty pigs are smelly pigs. Keep the pigs clean, and your building will smell a whole lot better.

Easier said than done, right?

Just like keeping the pits pulled, raising clean hogs takes time and effort.

In gestation, farrowing, and nursery buildings, clean and disinfect crates and pens each time sows and pigs are moved. Don’t forget to wash down walls and walkways where manure may have splattered. Dust on the walls can also pick up odors, so keep those walls clean.

Washing down grower and finisher buildings after each load-out is important, but you also need to keep pen areas clean while pigs are in the building.

Swine are smart animals. They will not urinate or defecate in areas where they eat or sleep if they can help it.

The first step towards cleaner pigs is to keep the proper stocking density in the pens. It can get a little tight towards the end of the finishing cycle, but at least this occurs close to load-out and cleaning time.

The second step is to keep a portion of the pen as free of manure as possible.

By keeping the solid portion of a partially slatted floor free of manure, you can condition the hogs to “do their business” on the slatted part of the floor, and lay down on the solid floor near the feeders and waterers.

Fully slatted floors are a little more difficult, but if you can keep the half close to the feeders clean, hogs will treat it as a partially slatted floor.

Power wash empty pens when sorting, weighing, and moving hogs, and don’t forget to clean the walls and walkways.

To check out how these ideas affect odor, ammonia, hydrogen sulfide, and other emissions from your farm, go to <http://naqsat.tamu.edu/> to use the National Air Quality Assessment Tool.

The tool is a (fairly) producer-friendly, on-line questionnaire. The results show the relative impact of changes on air emissions.

These are your Checkoff and tax dollars at work.