

# THE INSIDER



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## MAXIMIZING SUCCESS: WHY THE SOW'S TRANSITION DIET MATTERS

*Despite the impact on farrowing, colostrum quality, and milk production, the transition period receives less attention than the other phases of the sow's reproductive cycle. Topigs Norsvin's Director of Global Technical Services, Chris Opschoor, presented on the topic during the Sow Management session at the Banff Pork Seminar this past January. His presentation, titled "Between a gestation and a lactation, a transition is made," was well-attended and well-received. The following article summarizes the presentation.*

Nutrient requirements differ between gestation and lactation, with these phases managed through separate diets. Gestation diets are generally higher in fiber with a lower energy and

protein density compared to lactation diets. The definition of the transition period is given as 10 days prior to farrowing until 10 days after farrowing. During the transition period it is common that when one of those two diets (gestation and lactation) are used, feed is restricted before and the first days after farrowing. This practice aims to prevent excessive milk production in the early days of lactation which can increase the risk of mastitis and udder tissue damage. However, this management style can lead to physiological challenges, such as gut health issues, constipation, and ultimately reduced milk production further on and in subsequent lactations.

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## MAXIMIZING SUCCESS: WHY THE SOW'S TRANSITION DIET MATTERS CONTINUED...

Furthermore, farrowing is an energy-intensive process, requiring substantial energy for uterine contractions, fetal expulsion, and colostrum production. Dietary energy is absorbed four to six hours after feed consumption and is directed to the mammary system. Feed-restricted sows must rely on stored energy to meet these demands, which can lead to prolonged farrowing, lower colostrum production, and increased stillbirth and pre-weaning mortality rates.

To address these challenges, a transition diet is recommended to be introduced a few days before farrowing and to remain minimum two to three days afterward.

**“ The overarching goal of a unique transition diet is to ensure a smooth shift between the distinct nutritional needs during gestation and lactation.”**

However, and maybe more importantly, the goal should be to maintain consistent energy availability from late gestation through farrowing. Transition diets should differ from lactation diets by including a higher fiber content, which aims to maintain feed intake without promoting the development of MMA, edema, or

excessive milk production shortly after farrowing. Moreover, a transition diet with higher fiber levels supports shorter farrowing durations and maximizes colostrum yield. The benefits include:

- Improved transition between lower-density gestation diets and higher-density lactation diets.
- Reduced constipation around farrowing.
- Balanced energy distribution during farrowing, to avoid extreme negative energy balance.
- Enhanced milk production in later lactation.
- Lower risk of mastitis and udder congestion.
- Improved piglet vitality and survivability.

Modern sows have greater energy demands than ever before due to their ability to farrow, nurse, and wean larger litters. Ensuring sufficient nutrient intake is essential for supporting milk production and maintaining the health of both the sow and her piglets.

For questions about the presentation or the studies referenced in its development, please contact Emily Prejet ([emily.prejet@topignorsvin.ca](mailto:emily.prejet@topignorsvin.ca)). If you're looking to discuss the transition diet on your farm, speak with your nutritionist!

## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT: RON MUSICK

I started with this organization as a Business Development Representative in 2005 when GAP Genetics was part of Maple Leaf Foods. I became an employee of TOPIGS when TOPIGS acquired GAP in late 2008 and finally Topigs Norsvin, following the 2014 merger.

In 2016, I accepted my current role as Export and Logistics Manager. In this position, I work with a great team to coordinate domestic and international shipments of Topigs Norsvin breeding stock. Together, we ensure the smooth movement of our products from our nucleus and partner multiplier farms to clients across Canada and many countries worldwide.

Over the years, I've witnessed the company's growth and success. I am pleased to be part of a team of great people who provide high-quality products and services to our customers.

I was born and raised in St. Pierre-Jolys, Manitoba, and have always lived and worked in the province. I graduated from the University of Manitoba and now live in Lorette with my wife and three children.

Outside of the office, I enjoy playing sports and music and participating in outdoor activities. I play the bass guitar in a local band and, in recent years, I've learned to play the fiddle, which is challenging but incredibly fun.



# GAINING EXPERIENCE ABROAD: VERA VAN ROOI'S INTERNSHIP AT TOPIGS NORSVIN CANADA

For the past six months, Topigs Norsvin Canada was host to Vera van Rooi, an international student from the Netherlands, for an internship focused on finance and data analysis. During her time here, she developed key professional skills, gained hands-on experience, and embraced life in Canada.

One of the most valuable aspects of Vera's internship was expanding her financial knowledge, particularly through the use of tools like Power BI and Excel—skills that will serve her well beyond her internship. "The increase in my financial knowledge is something I'll benefit from throughout my career," she shared. Immersion in an English-speaking workplace also strengthened her communication skills, and the opportunity to build connections within the industry added another layer of growth to her experience. "I was also fortunate to expand my social network here in Canada, which is something I find highly valuable."

Beyond the workplace, Vera took full advantage of her time in Canada, exploring the country and its culture. She was struck by the vastness of the landscape and the long distances people travel daily, something quite different from life in the Netherlands. "I was amazed by how far people commute every day. Canada is so much bigger than I expected!" Despite the cold temperatures, she found Canadians to be exceptionally warm and welcoming. Highlights of her time included attending a Winnipeg Jets hockey game, snowmobiling, and visiting major cities like Vancouver and Toronto.

As Vera returns home to complete her third year of university and work toward graduating with a Bachelor of Finance and Control in 2026, she takes with her new skills, lasting memories, and friendships that will extend far beyond her time with Topigs Norsvin Canada. We thank Vera for her dedication and contributions and wish her all the best in the future.





# PRODUCER PROFILE:

## SUNSET COLONY, MT



Located near Roundup, Montana, Sunset Colony was established in 2022 as an offshoot of Martinsdale Colony, approximately 200 km (120 miles) away. Since then, the colony has grown to 93 members and has taken on several ambitious projects, including the construction of a 2,700-sow full-unit I sowean barn—part of their commitment to expanding and improving their farming operations.

After considering various options, the colony selected TN70 gilts for their herd, citing the breed's strong reputation for producing and weaning large, healthy litters. They were also drawn to the benefits of Topigs Norsvin's InGene technology, which allows for efficient in-house gilt replacement management. The barn was populated with Z-line purebred and F1 TN70 gilts in December 2023, with breeding beginning about a month later.

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Construction of the barn was a collaborative effort, with both contracted workers and colony members contributing. The facility was built to comply with California's Prop 12 Farm Animal Confinement regulations, particularly regarding space and housing requirements. For the gestation barn, they opted for an electronic sow feeding (ESF) system from Fancom to optimize nutrition management. The barn includes InGene gilt nursery and rearing areas to keep the herd closed and reduce the risk of disease entry.

Biosecurity is a top priority at Sunset Colony, and the barn was designed with disease mitigation in mind. Danish-style entry systems with showers help reduce the risk of transmission, while RFID technology enables precise tracking and individualized care for each sow. With 140 farrowing crates in use each week and a 23-day weaning period, the setup is designed to support both production efficiency and animal well-being. The

colony also aims to produce antibiotic-free (ABF) piglets for the first 23 days after birth, using the FaroTek feeder system from Fancom to meet the nutritional needs of young piglets.

By the end of 2024, the colony had recorded an adjusted farrowing rate of 93.6%, with 15.38 piglets born per sow, 14.28 of those live born, and 13.5 weaned per sow. The average piglet weight at shipping was 14.22 pounds for gilts, with numbers steadily increasing as more P1s and P2s entered production. In just 6 months, the colony shipped over 46,000 pigs—a significant milestone for a newly established operation.

Looking ahead, Sunset Colony remains focused on refining its processes while prioritizing biosecurity, animal welfare, and efficiency. With strong management practices and a commitment to continuous improvement, the colony is well-positioned for future success.



“The TN70 sow’s ability to produce and wean large, healthy litters made it the right choice for our herd.”



# PIG OF THE MONTH



## December: Evergreen Colony, MB

Topigs Norsvin Canada is proud to announce Sow 2623 of Evergreen Colony, Manitoba, as our Top Pig of the Month for December! In her 8th parity, this remarkable sow farrowed 25 born alive and weaned 17 total. Prior to this parity, her lifetime average stood at 21.1 born alive and 14.9 weaned. Congratulations to the entire team at Evergreen Colony! Wishing you and this exceptional sow continued success in the future.



## January: Ferme G.M. Le Porc Inc., QC

Our January Top Pig of the Month is Z7174 at Ferme G.M. Le Porc Inc. in Québec. This 4th parity TN70 recently farrowed a litter with 20 born alive. Her average total born alive is 18.25 piglets, and she's weaned an average of 14 piglets per litter. She is a great mother and is doing very well in this herd. Congratulations to the team at G.M Le Porc Inc. for their excellent work!



## February: Root 44 Farms, ON

February's Top Pig of the Month is Sow 363 from Root 44 Farms in Rostock, Ontario! This impressive TN70 has averaged 18.75 born alive and 14 weaned across four parities, showcasing exceptional mothering abilities. Currently pregnant with her fifth litter, she is bred to a TN Duroc and expected to farrow in early April. Congratulations to Ty at Root 44 Farms for his dedication to high performance.

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# TOPIGS NORSVIN CANADA STRENGTHENS SALES TEAM WITH KEY APPOINTMENTS



Topigs Norsvin Canada has restructured its Sales Team to enhance customer service and operational efficiency. As part of these changes, John Sawatzky now leads as National Sales Manager, overseeing both regional sales managers and key operational roles.

In Western Canada, Marcos Amorim has returned to the company as Western Canada Sales Manager, bringing prior experience as a Key Account Technical Manager. Based in Winnipeg, MB, Marcos will lead the Western Canada sales team.

In Eastern Canada, André Lavergne has been named Quebec Sales Manager, continuing to support his customer base and drive growth in the province. Veronica Anderson has stepped into the role of Ontario Sales Manager, leveraging her seven years of experience in business development and logistics with Topigs Norsvin.

With these strategic appointments, Topigs Norsvin Canada reaffirms its commitment to delivering value to producers nationwide.



## OPTIMIZING REPRODUCTIVE SUCCESS

During heat, sows and gilts display distinct behavioral and physiological changes that indicate their readiness to breed. Recognizing these signs is essential for optimizing reproductive success. Changes include:



1. Interest in boars



2. Upright ears



3. Immobility and non-vocal in the presence of the boar

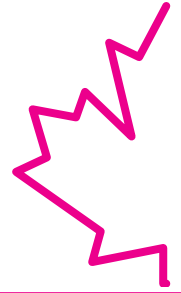


4. Immobility during back pressure test

For more optimizing reproductive success tips, speak with your Topigs Norsvin Business Development Representative.

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### Carlo Genetics Inc.

Ste. Anne, MB  
Katrin Braasch  
(204) 371-0411  
Order Desk (204) 355-4012

### C & M Genetics

Lucan, ON  
Dr. Corneliu Oltean  
(888) 259-7594

### CIPQ S.E.C.

Saint-Lambert de Lauzon, QC  
(418) 889-9748

### Magnum Swine Genetics Inc.

Fort Macleod, AB  
Andrew Buesekom  
(888) 553-4844

### Ontario Swine Improvement

Innerkip, ON  
Rod de Wolde  
(519) 469-3010

### Sunrise Genetics

Amherst, NS  
Mike MacDonald  
(902) 661-7883

### Total Swine Genetics Inc.

Tillsonburg, ON  
Stuart De Vries  
(800) 844-9913

## INSIDER QUIZ

### HOW TO PLAY

Please answer the questions in our Insider Quiz. All the answers are in this newsletter. Then fax, mail or email your answers, along with your name, address, and phone number to: Fax: 204-489-3152 or Email: info@topignorsvin.ca

Entries are to be received by **May 1, 2025**. The *first 10 entries drawn with the correct answers* will receive a \$20.00 gift card. The Topigs Norsvin rep in your area will deliver the prize. Employees of Topigs Norsvin and their subsidiaries are not eligible. PLEASE INCLUDE FULL COMPANY NAMES AND ADDRESS DETAILS OR YOU WILL BE INELIGIBLE.

1. What is one of the benefits of a unique transition diet that Chris outlined in his presentation?
2. What parity was the December POM?
3. How many pigs has Sunset Colony shipped in 6 months?
4. What is the topic of the Insider Insight?

Name:

Address:

Phone #:  Fax #:  Email:

### Topigs Norsvin INSIDER Quiz Winners

Topigs Norsvin Insider Quiz Winners from the 2024 Winter (December) issue will receive a \$20.00 gift card.  
Dave Waldner, Evergreen Colony, AB; Steven Kleinsasser, Big Bend Colony, AB; Amber Wipf, Baildon Colony, SK; Isaac Waldner, Eagle Creek Colony, MB; Jason Hofer, Starlite Colony, MB; Wyatt Waldner, New Rockport Colony, AB; Betty Murphy, James Valley Colony, MB; Jacob J. Kleinsasser, Mountain View Colony, MT; Joe Wipf, Vanguard Colony, SK; Luke L. Waldner, Willow Creek Colony, AB.