One way of lowering the need for antimicrobial treatment is to ensure that piglets are healthy and strong at weaning. This implies that the weaning weight should be 6-7 kg. Unfortunately, many piglets only weigh 3-5 kg at weaning, which predisposes them to disease including diarrhea, because they are not necessarily ready for a soy-based diet at weaning.

This abstract is based on a veterinary practitioner’s experience. The presentation will show how a change of the sow feeding during lactating will improve milk production, and through this increase the weaning weight of the piglets, and hereby lower the need for treatment of diarrhea post-weaning.

Nowadays, sows are fed twice a day with a cheap kind of feed with low energy, lowly digestible and high on soya. This should be replaced by feeding four times a day in the farrowing unit. Two phases of feeding should be used; Phase 1 lasting from 3 days before farrowing to 8 days after with a high-energy diet, highly digestible proteins and a low amount of soya. Phase 2 lasting from day 8 until weaning, where the ordinary feed is enriched with energy and soya. Hereby, the sows’ milk production is increased substantially. The weaned piglets will be more resilient and have a much lower probability of developing diarrhea compared to piglets weaned at a lower weight.

This presentation will share the experience obtained with this feeding regime in more than 100 Danish sow herds, and show that a sow can wean 12-14 piglets on average, whereby the need for cross-fostering is reduced.

The disadvantages of this system are that the farmer needs to feed four times a day and be willing to spend more money on the sow’s feed. However, the extra costs are compensated by lower costs for weaner feed.