New Bolton Center's Swine Facility Goes Green

BY JENNIFER RENCH

Penn's New Bolton Center has always been at the forefront of teaching, healing and research—and now its swine facility is at the forefront of alternative energies. Recently installed solar panels at the facility are now active and generating solar energy for it. "Our goal is to be proactive in the 'greening' of animal agriculture," said **Dr. Tom Parsons**, associate professor of swine production medicine and head of the swine facility.

The globally rising cost of energy has necessitated cheaper, alternative energy sources. Penn is the first swine facility to adopt the idea of "going green." **Dr. Zach Matzkin**, staff veterinarian with the Penn swine group, and Dr. Parsons started the initiative through funding provided by the Sustainable Development Fund, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and the Pennsylvania Pork Producers Council.

"The genesis of this initiative was the recognition that there was a lot of roof space on pig barns ideally oriented for solar panels," said Dr. Parsons. New Bolton Center's swine facility has developed this project as a prototype that eventually may be adopted by the entire swine industry.

Dr. Matzkin will track the solar panels' energy production over the next two years and quantify how much energy is produced during certain times of the year, and how much of this energy can be used in the swine facility.

Penn Vet is fortunate in that Pennsylvania has been a leader in developing innovative environmental and energy solutions. In October 2006, Governor Ed Rendell announced that $5.1 million will be given to support 27 state projects advancing the use of clean-energy technologies, lessening U.S. dependence on foreign fuel and significantly reducing air and water pollution. "Pennsylvania is harvesting the benefits of strategic investments in clean energy technologies to protect our environment, improve our energy security and put our residents to work in the most dynamic manufacturing sector of the twenty-first century. Our Commonwealth is leading the way to build a bridge to America's clean energy future," Governor Rendell stated.

Above: Solar panels on the roof of the swine facility capture energy. Photo by Dr. Zach Matzkin. Right: Piglets in one of the facility's stalls. Photo by Sabina Louise Pierce.