

SECTION 4: HOUSING & MANAGEMENT

Now that you have a better understanding about the economics and requirements for getting set up to raise pigs, it is time to learn about how to provide them with an appropriate environment.

The NFACC **Canadian Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pigs**⁽¹⁾ outlines housing requirements and recommendations.

- The B.C. Ministry of Agriculture references the NFACC Canadian Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pigs under regulation and recognizes it as a part of reasonable and generally accepted farming practices.
- While failure to abide by the Code is not an offence under provincial legislation, following the Code is a way for you to legally demonstrate how you prevented animal distress, and acted in line with the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act*.
- The Code reflects industry supported standards that promote animal health and well-being.
- The Code is available electronically at www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/pigs.
- Code requirements will be included throughout the manual and presented in a box as follows:

REQUIREMENTS⁽¹⁾

(Throughout this manual where a Code requirement is presented, specific wording of the Code requirement will appear in a box like this.)

4.1 FENCING & PROTECTION FROM PREDATORS

KEY POINT CHECKLIST

Appropriate fencing is of paramount importance when raising pigs. Fencing provides a barrier to keep pigs within a defined area, while also keeping predators or unwanted visitors out. Consider the following:

DO:

- Have **DOUBLE** fencing.
 - The distance between two above-ground fences should be a minimum 1.2 metres (or 4 feet) to a maximum 5.0 metres (or 16 feet).
 - Double fences should prevent nose-to-nose access with wildlife.
 - A second fence provides a backup plan if one fence fails.

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4.1 FENCING & PROTECTION FROM PREDATORS

- Use special **Hog Fencing**.
 - Hog panels OR page wire with boarded bottom and top.
 - Fence material must be 12.5-gauge hinge lock mesh fencing or heavier high tensile wire with spacing adequate to prevent fence-line breaches by pigs.
 - If electric fence wire is used, please see specifications in Section 9: WILD & FERAL PIGS IN CANADA.
- **Fence off feed** bins/feed storage.
 - Rodents, predators, and other pests (including wild pigs) will be attracted to spilled feed.
 - It is advisable that perimeter fencing be buried **underground** to a minimum 45 centimetres (or 1.5 feet).
 - Pigs will dig so fences must be deep.
- Fences need to be **high**.
 - Pigs will jump, so make sure fences and pens are high enough to keep them in.
 - Perimeter fencing should be constructed to be a minimum 1.5 meters (or 5 feet) in height above the ground.
- Regularly **walk about** to check for weak spots.
 - If you don't find them, the pigs will.
 - Pigs are escape artists and will test your ability to make a strong fence.



1. High double fence lines with space in between fences to prevent nose to nose contact with wildlife.
2. Strong double fencing with hog panels and hog fencing buried into the ground.

Photos: Dr. Kelsey Gray

AVOID:

- Only electric fences.
 - When used alone and not in combination with hinge lock mesh fencing, electric fences can provide a greater opportunity for sneaking through a fence.
- Weak or damaged fencing.
- Allowing pigs to create common routes that become dug outs around fence lines.
 - These areas can allow water to fill near a fence-line leading to areas where pigs can root deeply and get under a buried fence.



Photos: Dr. Kelsey Gray

4.2 HOUSING

SHELTERS – INDOOR & OUTDOOR

Pigs are susceptible to extreme weather challenges, which are common in Canada. Good housing should offer protection from all weather extremes. Pigs require shade from the sun and barriers from the wind, warmth from the cold, and somewhere to cool off when it is hot. Consider the following:

DO:

- Have enough shelters for all pigs if your farm is fully outdoors.
 - Pigs are prone to sunburn and require shade.
 - ALL pigs should be able to comfortably find shelter at the same time.
- Consider having indoor/outdoor access.

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- Having an indoor/outdoor facility improves your ability to accommodate extreme weather.
- Consider specific shelters for compromised animals.
 - Providing shelters and a heat source for newborn piglets.
 - Providing shelters for mother sows who are pregnant, farrowing, or nursing.
 - Providing shelters to segregate and isolate sick or injured animals being treated.



1. Shelter bedded with straw for outdoor protection.



2. Shelter with door access.



3. Inside of shelter showing the straw bedding for warmth.

Photos: Dr. Kelsey Gray

REQUIREMENTS⁽¹⁾

Nose rings must not be used.

Pigs must have access to shelter that minimizes the effects of adverse weather and provides a dry resting area and shade.

A protocol must be developed and implemented that protects pigs from parasites and predators.

REQUIREMENTS⁽¹⁾

Housing systems and their components must be designed, constructed and regularly inspected and maintained in a manner that reduces the potential for injury, provides suitable temperatures, fresh air, and clean conditions, and allows for inspection of all pigs.

Emergency plans must be developed to ensure that alternative means of temperature regulation, ventilation, feeding, and watering of pigs are available in the event of a power failure mechanical breakdown, or other emergency situation.

Pigs must not be tethered as part of their normal housing systems.

AVOID:

Bringing pigs who are not pets into your house for health and hygienic reasons.

SPACE

Ensure there is enough space for the number of pigs you are housing.

TABLE 1: PIG SPACE ALLOWANCES BY BODY WEIGHT

AVERAGE BODY WEIGHT (KG)	AVERAGE BODY WEIGHT (LB)	MINIMUM SPACE ALLOWANCE PER PIG (m²)	MINIMUM SPACE ALLOWANCE PER PIG (ft²)
10	22	0.16	1.67
20	44	0.25	2.66
30	66	0.32	3.49
40	88	0.39	4.22
50	110	0.46	4.90
60	132	0.51	5.53
70	154	0.57	6.13
80	176	0.62	6.70
90	198	0.67	7.25
100	220	0.72	7.78

4.2 HOUSING

AVERAGE BODY WEIGHT (KG)	AVERAGE BODY WEIGHT (LB)	MINIMUM SPACE ALLOWANCE PER PIG (m ²)	MINIMUM SPACE ALLOWANCE PER PIG (ft ²)
110	243	0.77	8.29
120	265	0.82	8.79
130	287	0.86	9.27
140	309	0.90	9.74

Source: Canadian Pork Council. Canadian Pork Excellence, 2020⁽²⁾

BEDDING & WALLOWING

Bedding provides multiple benefits for pigs: it offers warmth, it is a form of enrichment, provides comfort, and improves the animal's well-being.

Wallowing is a natural behaviour for pigs and is critical for their ability to cool off as pigs cannot sweat. Consider the following:

DO:

- Provide suitable bedding.
 - Most straw-based options are suitable.
- Use enough bedding.
 - Deeper bedding for cold winter months.
 - Can use ~1/3 less bedding in summer vs winter.
- Use clean bedding.
 - Manure or urine contaminated bedding can cause scalding and chemical burns to the skin.
 - Assess pig cleanliness frequently and regularly. If they look dirty, it's time to clean out and replace the bedding.
 - Add more bedding as dunging areas form to prevent the pen from dirtying rapidly.
- Change bedding.
 - Between groups of pigs.
 - When it becomes obviously soiled.
- Provide wallowing areas.
 - Mud pits, water pits, or water pools all work.
 - Pigs cannot sweat.
 - Wallowing areas are critical to raising pigs outside.

REQUIREMENTS⁽¹⁾

Flooring must be designed and maintained to minimize slipping.

Flooring must be designed, constructed and maintained in a manner that does not cause injury or suffering to pigs standing or lying on them, and must contribute to pig comfort.

Where bedding is provided, it must be clean, dry, and not harmful to the pigs.

AVOID:

- Wood shavings.
 - Contact your wood shavings provider to ensure the product is preservative-free.
 - Certain chemical preservatives in wood shavings (PCPs, chromated copper arsenate, or other wood-preserving agents) can absorb through the skin of pigs and create residues that are unsafe for human consumption.
- Dusty bedding.
 - Excessively dusty bedding, sandy soil, and dirt-pens can act as an irritant on their respiratory tract and predispose animals to infection.

SUPPLEMENTAL HEAT

There are certain situations where supplemental heat is necessary. Consider the following:

DO:

- Provide heat lamps for newborn piglets.
 - Extra heat is instrumental for the survival and strength of newborn piglets.
 - Supplemental heat lamps keep piglets away from the warm sow and prevent them from being accidentally crushed by her.
- Consider location of supplemental heat.
 - Ensure supplemental heat sources are checked regularly and positioned in a way that they will not catch fire.
 - Pigs LOVE chewing on things so make sure electrical cords are out of reach.
- Consider providing supplemental heaters indoors during cold and/or drafty winter spells.
- Keep heat lamps and supplemental heaters clean of dirt and dust to prevent a fire hazard.



Maternity pen with heat lamp on to provide extra warmth.

Photos: Dr. Kelsey Gray



4.2 HOUSING

A detailed summary of optimum and desirable temperature limits by age group is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2: OPTIMUM AND DESIRABLE TEMPERATURE LIMITS BY AGE GROUP

ANIMAL	OPTIMUM TEMPERATURE* °C (°F)	DESIRABLE LIMITS* °C (°F)
Creep areas for newborn piglets	35 (95)	32–38 (89–100)
Creep areas for older suckling piglets (2–5 kg [4–11 lb])	30 (85)	27–32 (81–89)
Young pigs (4–5 days post weaning)	35 (95)	33–37 (91–99)
Young pigs (5–20 kg [11–44 lb])	27 (80)	24–30 (75–86)
Growing pigs (20–55 kg [44–121 lb])	21 (70)	16–27 (61–81)
Finishing pigs (55–110 kg [121–243 lb])	18 (65)	10–24 (50–75)
Gestating Sows	18 (65)	10–27 (50–81)
Lactating Sows	18 (65)	13–27 (55–81)
Boars	18 (65)	10–27 (50–81)

Source: National Farm Animal Care Council. Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pigs, 2014⁽¹⁾

**Stated temperature reflects the desired temperature in the environment directly around the pig, and not necessarily the overall temperature of the barn. Supplementary heat sources (e.g., heat lamps) can be used to achieve desired temperatures.*

LIGHTING

Pigs prefer a well-lit environment when awake but prefer to sleep in the dark. **For pigs raised outdoors, their preferred lighting schedule is created naturally.**

If you house pigs indoors, or temporarily indoors, please consider the following:

DO:

- Provide lighting of proper intensity and duration.
- Light should be bright enough (to read a newspaper) for a minimum 8 hours per day.
- Light fixture number and placement should avoid creating shadows.
- Provide darkness for 6 consecutive hours at night.

REQUIREMENTS⁽¹⁾

Sufficient lighting must be available to permit thorough inspection of pigs and facilities at any time, and for normal husbandry practices.

A minimum of 50 lux of lighting (described as bright enough to allow a person of normal sight to read standard newspaper print) must be provided for a minimum of 8 hours per day.

Pigs must have access to darkened area (i.e., ~5 lux or less, with the exception of heat devices in the farrowing area and the first 48 hours for newly weaned pigs) for at least 6 consecutive hours per day.

VENTILATION

Pigs require quality air that is free of harmful gases and has appropriate humidity levels. **For pigs raised outdoors, the natural fresh air meets these needs.**

Young piglets are extremely sensitive to changes in their environment. Chills, drafts, and/or high humidity in the barn can create major health problems.

If you have pigs indoors, or temporarily indoors, please consider the following:

DO:

- Have appropriate ventilation that provides a continuous source of clean, fresh air at all times.
- Remove wet bedding and manure regularly to keep ammonia levels below 25 ppm. Your eyes will start to sting when ammonia reaches this level.
- Manage and minimize dust in the barn.

REQUIREMENTS⁽¹⁾

Environmental control systems must be designed, constructed and maintained in a manner that allows for temperatures, fresh air, and hygienic conditions that promote health and welfare for pigs.

Newborn piglets must be housed at temperatures that will assist them to reach and maintain normal body temperatures.

Reasonable steps must be taken to help prevent and manage housed pigs from becoming overheated or cold stressed.

AVOID:

- Manure and urine build-up, which can increase ammonia levels.
- Conditions that allow cold drafts, which can cause illness or death in young piglets.

4.2 HOUSING

HOUSING SOWS

It is uncommon to see gestation or breeding stalls in outdoor pig production. If you are using gestation stalls, please refer to the Code of Practice for stall requirements.

If you are using farrowing crates, follow space requirements from the Code of Practice.

If housing sows in loose pens, follow the space requirements from the Code of Practice.

REQUIREMENTS⁽¹⁾

All group housed sows must be able to stand, move about and lie down without interference with each other in a way that compromises welfare, and space must be provided for separation of dunging from lying and eating areas.

REQUIREMENTS⁽¹⁾

The length of a farrowing crate must allow the sow enough room to move forward and backward, and to lie down unhindered by a raised trough or rear gate.

When standing in a normal position in a farrowing crate, the sow must not touch the sides of the crate (not including the anti-crush rails) simultaneously, and her back must not touch any bars along the top.

Sows must not be kept in farrowing crates for more than 6 weeks in any one reproductive cycle except in exceptional circumstances (e.g., when a sow is required to foster a second litter).

The farrowing system must provide an area to which piglets can retreat when the sow moves.



Photos: Dr. Kelsey Gray

4.3 HYGIENE

There is a misconception that pigs are “dirty” animals. This is not true. They certainly look content wallowing in mud and rooting in the dirt, but they are in fact a very clean animal. Pigs will naturally establish a soiling area in their living space and will tend to defecate and urinate in that designated area.

It is difficult for us to predict which location they assign as the toilet. Pigs establish this on their own.

Pigs prefer a clean sleeping and feeding area, and typically will not dung in these places. Regardless of their own hygienic behaviour, they still require your active involvement in creating a safe, clean space for them.



CLEANING & DISINFECTION

There is a difference between “clean”, “disinfected”, and “sterilized”.

- **Clean** = Physically removing visible contamination, dirt, or grime (usually with soap and water and a mechanical tool like a brush).
- **Disinfected** = Chemically killing almost all invisible germs (usually with a chemical disinfectant that requires a specific amount of contact time).
- **Sterilized** = A chemical or physical process that gets rid of ALL pathogens or germs using extreme heat or specific chemical products.





For your farm, we will focus on proper cleaning and disinfection. An important part of cleaning and disinfection for farm animal health and food safety is **drying**. Whenever you clean or disinfect an area, pen, or equipment, always ensure it is **dried** before placing animals or using the equipment around animals. This is a key component to eliminating those invisible germs.

WHEN SHOULD YOU CLEAN AND DISINFECT:





<p>BARN</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In between batches of separate pigs. (See instructions below). • At least twice a year if you have a continued flow of pigs moving in and out. • Bedding should be changed as frequently as needed depending on weather and how soiled it becomes.
<p>TRAILER</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EVERY time after you haul pigs – inside and outside. • This should be cleaned, disinfected and dried.

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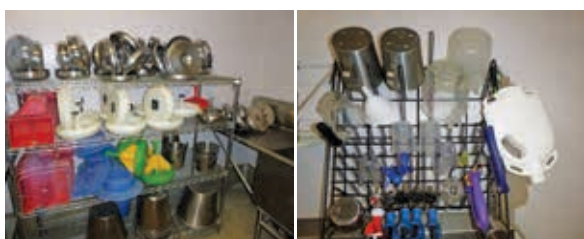
4.3 HYGIENE

<p>EQUIPMENT</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like boots, coveralls, handling equipment, wheel barrels, etc. • As frequently as you can. • After handling sick animals. • After and before use in quarantine areas.
<p>FEED & WATER TROUGHS</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In between batches of separate pigs. • As needed – do not let feed and water troughs build up grime and contamination – feed and water are great mediums for bacteria to grow. • Feed will grow mould, so make sure it is provided fresh every day.
<p>MATERNITY PENS</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In between EVERY litter. • Maternity pens and farrowing crates should be disinfected prior to moving a pregnant animal in here to farrow – remember, newborn piglets are new babies. • Ensure the pen or crate is completely dry before placing animals.
<p>SICK PENS</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In between housing sick animals to limit the spread of disease.

WHAT YOU NEED:

<p>Protective Clothing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boots, coveralls, gloves, masks, eyewear, and earplugs. 	<p>Power Washer or Hose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have an indoor facility or shelters, you may need a power washer. • A hose with a spray-gun can also work. • You can find attachments for your hose to attach soaps and disinfectants. 
<p>Soaps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are many different industrial grade soaps available. • Purchasing soaps from veterinary clinics or farm supply stores should lead you toward animal safe products. 	<p>Disinfectants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are many different industrial grade disinfectants available. • Purchasing disinfectants from veterinary clinics or farm supply stores should lead you toward animal safe products. 

Photos: Dr. Kelsey Gray

<p>Mixing Protocols</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure soaps and disinfectants are mixed according to label. • Over concentrated products can be irritating and toxic. • Under-concentrated products can fail to work and be a waste of money. 		<p>Manure Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Section 8.3 BIOSECURITY for information about manure management. • If you are a fully outdoor facility, cleaning may be focused on manure management and pasture rotation. 	
<p>Clean Space to Store Equipment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure cleaning and disinfecting equipment is dried and stored safely away from chemical contaminants, birds, and rodents 			

Photos: Dr. Kelsey Gray

HOW TO WASH THE BARN:

STEP 1	Pigs leave the building/barn.
STEP 2	Remove all feces, left-over feed, bedding, and other easily removed materials.
STEP 3	Compost all removed material.
STEP 4	Power wash or hose off all surfaces with water.
STEP 5	Leave for 30 minutes.
STEP 6	Examine the outside area.
STEP 7	Remove all fecal material, bedding, debris from outside area.
STEP 8	If outside area has been dug up, replace soil as needed.
STEP 9	You may need to turn over the soil surface.
STEP 10	Repair wallow area if needed. Drain the wallow area if possible to allow it to dry.
STEP 11	After allowing the barn/floor area to soak for 30 minutes, brush the floor or power wash/hose down the floor and area with soapy water. (Mix according to label.)
STEP 12	Clean floor, area, feed and water troughs, and equipment in barn thoroughly with soap.
STEP 13	Allow area 1 hour to sit – repair any damages to building/flooring.
STEP 14	Prepare disinfectant and disinfect all surfaces (up to 1 meter high on walls). (Mix according to label.) Let disinfectant SIT. DO NOT wash off with water.
STEP 15	Allow space and equipment to FULLY DRY after disinfectant is applied.
STEP 16	Allow pigs to re-enter facility after it is completely dried (minimum 24 hours).

Source: Manual for Pig Rearing in Uganda, 2011⁽³⁾

4.3 HYGIENE

REQUIREMENTS⁽¹⁾

*A sanitation protocol must be developed for each production area of the barn and followed at least annually.
Manure must be removed and stored in a manner that promotes the health and welfare of animals.*

RODENT & PEST CONTROL

Rodents, birds, and insects can be major contributors for spreading disease amongst pigs.

Rodents can shed pig diseases like *salmonellosis*, *erysipelas*, and *colibacillosis*.

Starling birds and pigeons can carry diseases that can cause severe diarrhea in pigs.

Insects can fly from farm to farm and carry diseases with them.

It is impossible to prevent pigs from interacting with these other creatures, however, reducing exposure and contamination by pests is beneficial for the health of your pigs.

Under B.C.'s *Farm Practices Protection Act (FPPA)*, producers have a legal obligation to manage their operations to prevent nuisances (e.g., dust, noise, odour, flies, rodents). See Section 1.6 PROVINCIAL LEGISLATION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

DO:

- Store feed in sealed or screened containers.
- Sweep and clean up spilled feed around feed bins or barns.
- Remove trash, equipment, or other objects that would serve as hiding places or attractants to rodents and predators from outside of the barn or near the walls.
- Regularly mow grass and/or weeds from around and near the barn and feed storage bins.
- Use rodenticides in sheds, barns, or near feed storage, but keep them away from livestock or pets.
- Place traps or bait stations in several locations around the barn.
- Keep rodenticides out of reach of pigs or pets – this can be toxic to them.
- Keep your barn and pig pens clean.



Fly control in the barn is a good way to reduce contamination by insects.
Photo: Alberta Pasture Pig Producer & Breeder

4.4 HOSPITAL PENS

At some point, you may have a sick or injured animal that needs treatment and extra care. A sick or injured animal may not be able to compete for food and water and are often picked on by dominant animals. These animals should be removed from the main herd and placed in isolation in a separate “hospital” pen. Consider the following:

DO:

- Create a separate pen.
 - Remove sick or injured animals from the main herd as soon as possible so they can be treated and have a better chance of recovery.
 - Removing sick or injured animals can reduce the spread of disease to healthy animals.
- Offer more bedding and/or shelter.
 - Sick or injured animals may require extra comfort and more bedding as they may not be healthy enough to handle everyday stressors.
- Pay attention to the animal’s social needs.
 - Separating the animal is usually recommended, but, if this animal has never been alone before, it may feel more stressed without a companion.
 - Consider a companion IF you are not worried about a contagious disease.
 - Be aware that when reintroducing the animal to the herd, there may be some fighting.

REQUIREMENTS⁽¹⁾

Every pig production facility must have the ability to segregate sick or injured pigs in a separate area where the necessary treatment can be administered.

4.5 SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Pigs are social animals and prefer to live with other pigs. Pigs will create their own hierarchy and establish dominant and submissive animals. Once the group establishes their hierarchy, this is easily disturbed by introducing new animals or removing animals. Pigs may fight when a new animal is introduced. It is important to monitor group dynamics and have a plan to assist an animal being picked on. It is important that pigs have interactions, but please consider the following:

DO:

- House pigs with other pigs.
- House pigs with pigs of similar size and age.
- Monitor group dynamics.
- Remove pigs from a group in which they are being picked on.

4.6 ANIMAL HANDLING & SAFETY

REQUIREMENTS⁽¹⁾

Strategies to minimize or eliminate aggression must be developed and followed.

AVOID:

- Introducing 1 new animal to a large group (if you are introducing one animal, introduce it to a small group of 2 or 3 pigs and gradually combine this group into the larger herd).
- Pig interactions with wildlife. Fences are critical to prevent this.
- Housing multiple domesticated species together. This is a good way to spread different diseases.
- Housing breeding pairs together year-round (they lose sexual interest in one another). See Section 6.1 REPRODUCTION MANAGEMENT.

4.6 ANIMAL HANDLING & SAFETY**KEY POINT CHECKLIST**

It is very important for your safety and that of your animals for you to understand pig handling and behaviour. Even when working with animals whom you have raised for a long time, you must always respect that they have natural animal instincts that can override a bond that they share with you. Animals who are frightened, injured, protective, hormonal, or who feel threatened may behave in unpredictable ways.



- Example 1: Sows in heat, or when giving birth, or when with their litters can display sudden aggressive behaviour and can seriously injure you. They will do anything to protect their litter and may see you as a threat.
- Example 2: Breeding age males (boars) can quickly become very aggressive with little warning, particularly if around female pigs in heat.

You should always practice good animal handling and always remain alert when working around pigs. It is beneficial to understand pigs' natural instincts and to respect their boundaries when working with them. For example, pigs will use their peripheral vision to drive on forward (if you block off an area to the right, they will see the opening over to the left and head that direction).

Pigs prefer to move with other pigs. Trying to move 1 pig at a time can be frustrating because the pig is bound to want to go back toward the other pigs, therefore, try moving 2 pigs at a time. Additionally, pigs are sensitive to sound and using rattles or shakers are useful to get their attention to get pigs to stand up when you are checking them.

The important thing to consider when handling pigs, is to be patient. The pig has a different perspective than you. **There is a good saying when working with animals “if you have no time, it will take all day, if you have all day, it will take no time”.**

Here are a few important “Pig Tips” authored by Jennifer Woods⁽⁴⁾:

PIG TIPS

- Pigs do not appear to discriminate between different handlers. They tend to generalize their experience with one handler and apply to all others.
- Due to their poor vision, pigs will often try to force their way through small openings. They will target in on small openings of light, especially if it is between the handler’s legs.
- Hog panels should be utilized at all times. In an alley, the panel should be slightly narrower than the alley. Other moving aids are canvas slappers and plastic shakers.
- Pigs do not like to back up. However, they can be guided backwards by placing a basket or box over their head, as they will try to back out of it.
- Pigs are prone to heart failure. A pig that is experiencing heart failure will collapse, breathe rapidly, and have blue ears and snout.
- Pigs have a very strong escape reaction.
- Pigs are not designed for exercise or endurance.
- Pigs do not like stepping up or down, but they can jump up to four (4) feet.
- Pigs startle easily. Indoor pigs are sensitive to light and will not go into bright light such as sunlight or headlights.
- Hogs will refuse to leave their building during truck loading when it is either cold or very bright outside.
- Excitable pigs are easier to handle and load if producers have walked through the pens every day during finishing. Do not spend too much time with pigs (over-socialize), as this will make them more difficult to handle. They will want to follow instead of being driven.
- Overcrowding or mixing of pigs can cause fighting, injury and savaging.
- A pig that is in distress will make loud, deep, gasping sounds, stand with their head down or lie down, breathe rapidly, make gasping sounds and refuse to move.
- Hogs are highly reactive and will react to changes in footing, flooring surface, temperature, lighting, odour, other people, drafts or winds, shadows and noises.
- Breeding stock (mature sows and boars) are very powerful animals that can be quite dangerous. They must be handled with extreme caution at all times.
- Sorting boards should be used at all times when handling breeding stock.

4.6 ANIMAL HANDLING & SAFETY

- Handlers should also be aware of where they are at all times and ensure they are not in a place where a boar or sow can crush them up against a fixed object (e.g., wall, feeder).
- Boars are extremely dangerous and extreme caution should be shown at all times.

EQUIPMENT

Below is a list of some appropriate animal handling tools. You should have some of these on your farm!

HOG HANDLING TOOLS



Hog Board – The most versatile tool is typically the sorting board or sorting panel and can be a single or bi-fold panel. A sorting board can provide both a physical and a visual barrier. When using a sorting panel make sure to use the ground as an anchor, don't try to hold back a pig with the board wedged against your legs/knees.

Rattle Paddle – The rattle/shaker paddle can provide auditory and visual stimuli. Shaker cans or bottles can also be used. Rattle paddles can also be used to gently tap an animal, but should not be raised higher than shoulder level.



Matador Cape/Bat Wings – A matador's cape can be effectively used as visual barrier with nearly all pigs. Its main use is as a tool to block a pig's vision and provide the illusion of a dead end.

Nylon Flag – A nylon flag is an effective, visual stimuli in many cases, especially with larger pigs. Used correctly, it can draw a pig's attention, as well as block its visual path.



Photos: Dr. Kelsey Gray

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Wear the correct equipment to keep yourself safe when working with pigs:

Boots

Coveralls

Gloves

Masks (if dealing with manure or chemicals to avoid the effects of harmful gases)

Ear plugs

Eye wear

DO:

Follow the Pig Tips.
Use appropriate animal handling tools.
Wear PPE.

AVOID:

Electric prods are not encouraged to be used in the industry; however, there is very specific time and place for their use. Please refer to the Code of Practice regarding the safe use of these instruments.

REQUIREMENTS⁽¹⁾

Use humane moving devices when moving pigs (e.g., chase boards, shakers).

Electric prods must only be used as a last resort and never as the primary driving device. When necessary, use of prods must be restricted to the back and hind quarters on lead pigs, but never used in the anal and genital areas, and only when there is clear path for them to move forward.

Electric prods must not be used in the finishing pen.

Electric prods must not be used on piglets, nursery, distressed, sick or injured pigs.

Pigs must not be handled aggressively (e.g., kicked, walked on top of, picked up or suspended or pulled by one front leg, ears or tail).

Pigs that become distressed during handling must be attended to immediately.

Pig must only be restrained for as long as necessary and only appropriate, well-maintained restraint devices must be used.

SECTION 4 REFERENCE LIST

1. National Farm Animal Care Council. Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pigs (2014)
2. Canadian Pork Council. Canadian Pork Excellence (2020)
3. Manual for Pig Rearing in Uganda. Drs. Linda Nelson and John Carrs, Daktari Animal Health (2011)
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