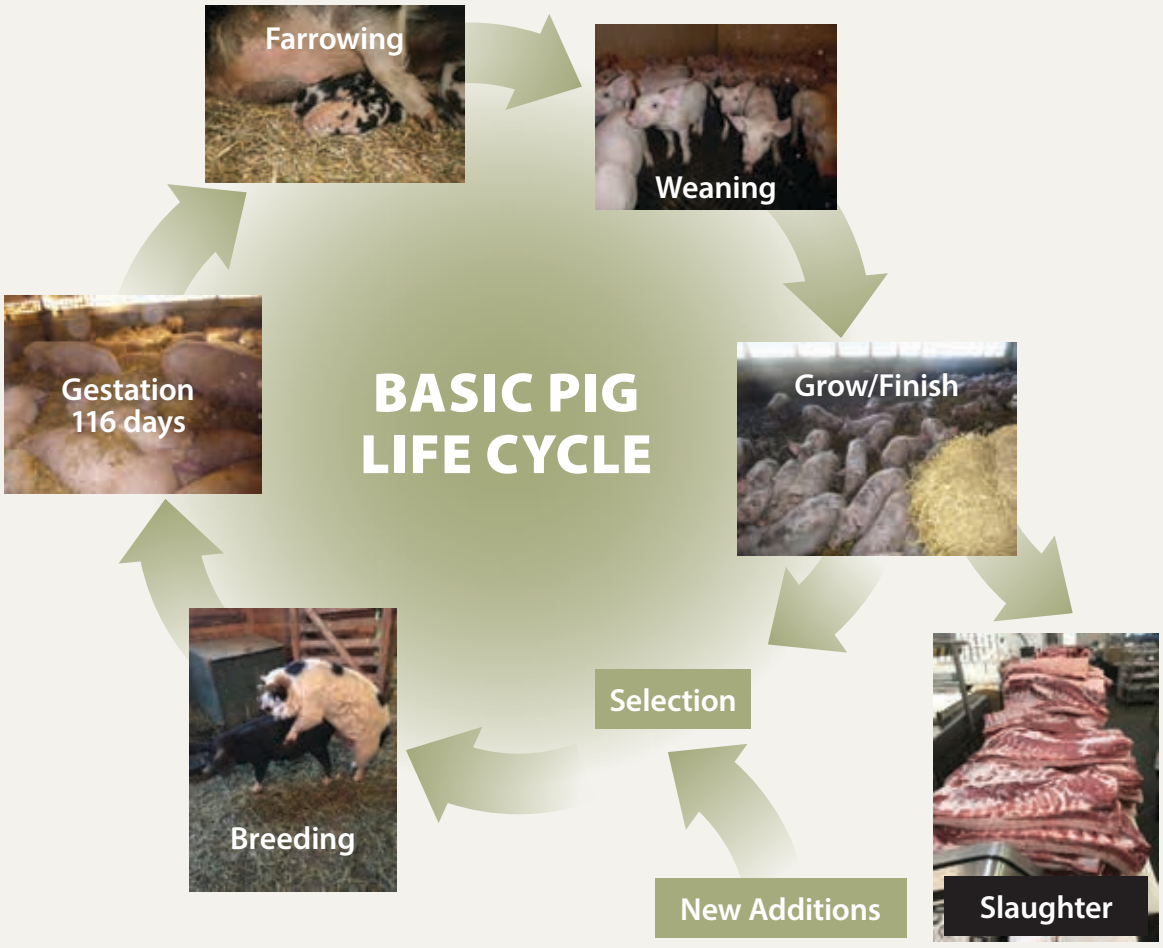
SECTION 6: THE PIG – WHAT TO EXPECT

You should learn basic information about the life stages of a normal healthy pig. This section will review the basic timeline of a pig and what to expect at each life event. It begins with breeding and pregnancy, followed by farrowing, and then proceeds to descriptions of the pig's life through various growth stages from day 1 to finished market weight. Information on farrowing and associated complications are also included in this section.

BASIC PIG LIFE CYCLE FACTS[1]

Age at breeding:	varies around 7–7.5 months for gilts and boars
Heat/Estrus cycle:	lasts 18–24 days for a female
Gestation:	116 days (3 months, 3 weeks, 3 days)
Breeding season:	generally year-round, poorer in summer and early autumn
Slaughter weight:	about 95–110 kg, around 26 weeks of age



6.1 REPRODUCTION MANAGEMENT

PUBERTY & SEXUAL MATURITY

1. Females
   - Most females go through puberty around 6–7 months of age.
     - Age at puberty can be breed-specific (e.g., Meishan breeds can go through puberty as early as 3 months old).
   - When a female is 6 months of age, exposing her to sexually mature males and allowing nose to nose contact with them once a day can encourage her to come into "heat".
   - After a female goes through puberty, she will show a "heat" which is a hormonally driven process that tells a boar she is sexually receptive.
   - It is normal for females going through puberty to mount other animals (males or females).

2. Males
   - Most males are sexually mature for breeding around 12 months of age.
     - This can be breed-specific (e.g., Meishan breeds can be sexually mature for breeding around 6 months of age).
   - It is normal for males going through puberty to mount other animals (males or females).

FEMALE ESTROUS OR FERTILITY CYCLE

- After puberty, females go through a 21-day cycle ***on average***.
- The most important concept to understand from this is that most post-pubertal females can potentially get pregnant every 21 days.

- There are 3 main phases of the female cycle.
  - Pre-Ovulation or "follicular phase".
  - Ovulation.
  - Post-Ovulation or "luteal phase".
- Pregnancy will disrupt this 21-day cycle.
- Do pigs breed 12 months of the year?
  - Domesticated pigs are considered "non-seasonal polyestrous" which means, they can be bred year-round and will cycle every 21 days regardless of the season.
  - Wild pigs are documented to be "seasonal breeders" which means, they generally breed when days are short (late winter) and farrow out in the spring when it is warmer. This would be beneficial in the wild to rear young piglets when it is warmer out.
  - "Autumn abortion" is a phenomenon described where gilts or sows lose pregnancies that do not align with natural seasonality.
  - Overall, you can expect year-round breeding of your pigs, but you should not be surprised if breeding in late summer or fall is less successful.

FEMALE ESTRUS OR "HEAT"

- During the cycle, about every 21 days the female comes into "heat".
- Heat means she is sexually receptive.
- Being in "heat" lasts about 36–96 hours.
- During that time, you can expect the following:
  - Red swollen vulva.
  - Restlessness and frequent urination.
  - Smelling the boar.
  - "Locking up" or standing rigid for the boar.
  - Allowing mounting by the boar.
  - Allowing copulation from the boar.

Photo of a gilt in standing heat. This gilt is ready to be bred.
Photo: Dr. Kelsey Gray

BREEDING

- There are two major categories for breeding: natural and artificial insemination.
- Most outdoor pig producers use natural breeding.
  - Natural Breeding
    i. You need approximately 1 sexually mature boar per 20 females.
    ii. Boars should ***not*** live with females 24/7 – females can become "refractory" or uninterested in boars sexually.
    iii. Introduce females to the boar when you want to breed them.
    iv. Allow boars to be with the females for at least 21 days – you will not know where a female is in her 21-day cycle; however, the boar will detect when "heat" occurs.
    v. Boars will be highly interested in females who are in heat – smelling them and mounting them.
    vi. Boars will not be interested in a pregnant female.
    vii. Boars will not be interested in a female who is not in heat.

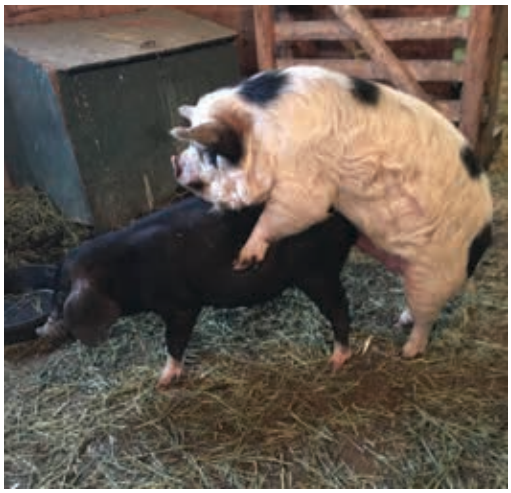


Photo of a natural breeding. This is a boar breeding a young Meishan gilt. Please note, Meishans go through puberty much younger than other breeds.
Photo: Alberta Pasture Pig Producer & Breeder

  - Artificial Insemination (AI)
    i. This is not straight-forward or economical unless you are a commercial producer.
    ii. It requires daily heat checks, the presence of a boar, equipment, training, and appropriate facilities to perform this.
    iii. Talk to your veterinarian if you are considering artificial insemination (AI).

- Unsuccessful Breeding
  - Can be a result of health (e.g., disease) or fertility issues with male and/or female pigs.
  - Feeding a diet that is not nutritionally balanced.
  - Under-conditioned or over-conditioned pigs.
  - Environmental or management related issues.
  - Consult a veterinarian if breeding is unsuccessful on your farm.

BOAR CARE

- Sexually mature boars can live together if there are not any sexually receptive females in the pen.
- It is recommended to allow boars to live together in their own home pen, and to introduce one boar into a breeding pen at the desired time.
- Feeding strategy for boars is similar to feeding pregnant females – achieve and maintain a desired body condition and do not over-feed.
- Two times per day feeding is common.
- 24/7 access to quality water.
- NEVER EVER trust a boar. These animals can be very aggressive and unpredictable. You should always use extreme caution when handling them, particularly when they are among females that are in "heat". Do not turn your back on them.

6.2 PREGNANCY/GESTATION

PREGNANCY CONFIRMATION

You can "diagnose" pregnancy via the following methods:

- Ultrasonography
  - Veterinarians can perform pregnancy ultrasounds as early as 28 days after breeding.
- Heat Checking
  - Pregnant animals should not show a heat.
  - A boar should not show sexual interest in a pregnant animal. If your boar is trying to mount a sow, she is unlikely to be pregnant.
- Wait/Monitor
  - Witness the breeding event and assume pregnant. You cannot rule out a failed conception or pregnancy loss this way.
  - Waiting for the expected farrowing date is an option; however, it is not an economical way to determine if a female is pregnant.
- Visual Assessment
  - This is difficult to do even for experienced pig producers.

GESTATION

- Normal gestation: 3 months, 3 weeks, and 3 days (116 days on average).
- The feeding goal is to maintain ideal weight and body condition score. Increase or decrease feeding amounts as necessary (see Section 5.5 BODY CONDITION SCORING).
- Two times per day feeding is common.
- 24/7 access to quality water.
- Her environment should consist of clean comfortable housing with minimal changes to the social structure in order to minimize stress.
- Prevent disease and stress. Fever and stress can both cause pregnancy loss in animals.
- A healthy gestation should be an uneventful time.

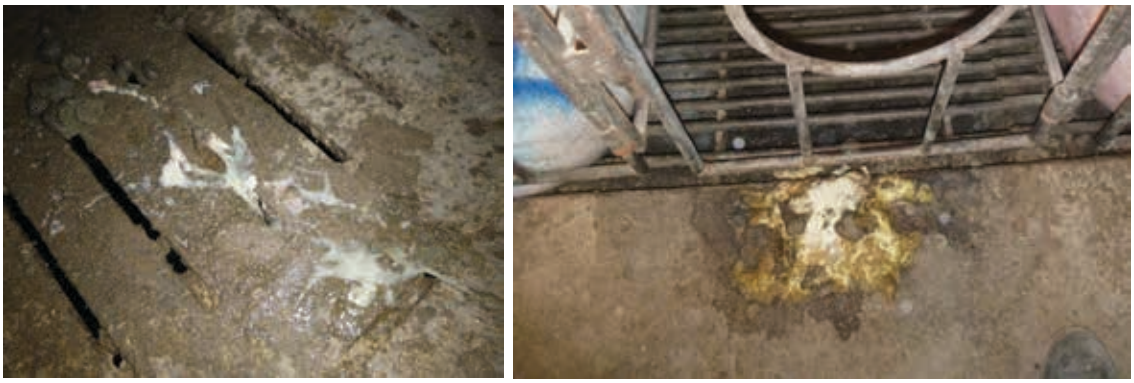
6.3 GESTATION COMPLICATIONS

SICK GILT/SOW

- There are many reasons a sow or gilt could be sick. A sick pregnant animal is at risk of losing her pregnancy.
- Consult your veterinarian to get a diagnosis and an appropriate treatment.

DISCHARGE

- Thick white vaginal discharge can indicate an internal infection which requires treatment.
- It is very unlikely your animal is pregnant if they have a discharge.
- Consult your veterinarian about appropriate treatment.



Two photos of purulent vaginal discharge from sows. This indicates infection and these animals need treatment. Photos: Dr. Kelsey Gray

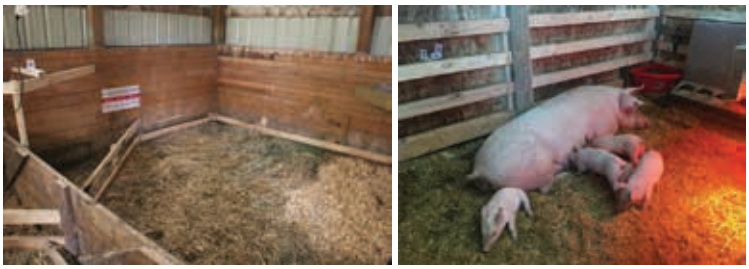
ABORTION

- A pregnancy loss after 55 days of pregnancy is considered an abortion.
- It is not easy to determine the cause of an abortion from a single animal.
- Record details concerning any abortions that occur (e.g., stage of gestation).
- Multiple abortions should be very concerning. Consult your veterinarian if this occurs.

6.4 FARROWING

PRE-FARROWING PREPARATION

- Sow Behaviour
  - As your sow nears 116 days of gestation, she will start preparing for the birth of her piglets.
  - She will have a natural desire to build a nest. Providing a sow with material to build a nest will ease her stress and make her more comfortable. Straw-based bedding works very well for this.
  - When a sow is within hours of farrowing, she will become restless. She may get up and lay down often, pace, and may become aggressive to other animals and people. Use EXTREME CAUTION when approaching these animals.
- Environment
  - Moving your sow into a pen about a week before she is due is a good way to acclimatize her to the farrowing area.
  - Ensure the maternity pen has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected, has dry, fresh bedding prior to farrowing, and is draft-free.
  - Keep this area as clean as possible for piglets. Remove manure daily.
  - Prepare additional heat sources (e.g., heat lamps). These should be turned on as close to farrowing as possible. If it is warm outside, do not turn them on too early as you do not want to overheat the sow and waste energy.
  - Cleanliness and warmth are incredibly important for newborn piglets. Regard and treat the farrowing space like a maternity room for a newborn.



Two photos of clean, straw bedded maternity pens. Notice the heat lamp for keeping piglets warm. Photo 1: Alberta Pasture Pig Producer & Breeder Photo 2: Dr. Kelsey Gray

- Feed
  - Sows will lose their appetite close to farrowing and likely will not eat on the day of farrowing. This is normal.
  - Sows should start drinking and eating soon following farrowing.
  - Ensure sows have ready access to a clean supply of quality water IMMEDIATELY AFTER farrowing.
  - Offer the sow fresh feed a few hours AFTER farrowing or the day AFTER farrowing to encourage her to begin eating.
  - Sows need to begin eating soon after farrowing to produce milk, so ensure the feed available to her is FRESH and readily available. Do not leave feed sitting there for days and expect her to eat it once her appetite comes back after farrowing. FRESH FEED IS THE KEY.
  - See Section 5: NUTRITION & FEEDING MANAGEMENT for more information.
- Midwife Supplies
  - It is your job to act as a midwife for your sows. It is very important to have the correct supplies on hand in preparation for farrowing. See 'Farrowing Complications' below for more details.
    i. Large animal obstetric gloves.
    ii. Lube.
    iii. Bucket of clean warm water.
    iv. Soap.
    v. Clean towels.
    vi. Speak to your veterinarian about pharmaceuticals that you should have on hand and protocols for their correct use.

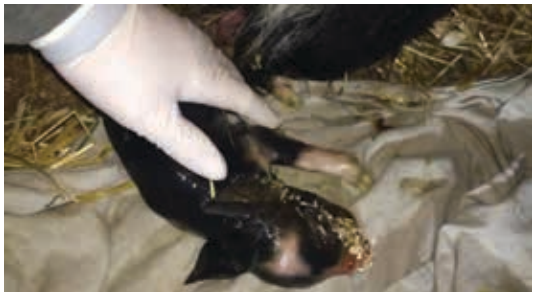
FARROWING

- When a sow begins farrowing, she will likely be laying on her side, breathing rapidly, and her vulva will become very reddened and swollen.
- Farrowing can take anywhere from 1–6 hours, and piglets can be born seconds to an hour apart – **ideally piglets are born within 15–20 minutes of each other**.

- Normal delivery of piglets will be one piglet at a time, head or feet first, and piglets should be born no longer than 30 minutes apart from one another. Longer than this can mean trouble.
- Litter size can vary depending on the breed and genetics of the sow and boar. Read the literature on what is a normal litter size for your breed.
  – A litter can range from 4–20 liveborn piglets.
- A gilt will usually take longer to farrow than a sow.
- When a piglet is born, the umbilical cord will still be connected to the placenta inside the sow. The cord will snap naturally as the piglet moves towards the udder or if the sow stands up.
- The afterbirth (placenta) will be delivered after the last piglet is born.
- It is normal for sows to have a swollen vulva and some discharge for a few days after farrowing.
- Once your sow starts farrowing, you should check on her every 30 minutes to see that she is progressing with her delivery. If your sow is not having any troubles, the best thing you can do is leave her alone and let nature run its course.
- During farrowing, the sow will let down colostrum the entire time. Piglets should make their way to her udder to nurse shortly after birth.
- If your sow is NOT progressing on time, or is in distress, you may need to intervene (see Section 6.5 FARROWING & POST-FARROWING COMPLICATIONS).

1. Swollen vulva with clear, mildly bloody discharge.

2. Advancement of piglet head.



3. Piglet being delivered onto clean sheet. Notice the farmer/midwife is wearing clean gloves.

4. Placenta/after birth delivered.

Photos 1,2,3: Alberta Pasture Pig Producer & Breeder, Photo 4: Dr. Kelsey Gray

POST-FARROWING SOW CARE

- After farrowing, a healthy, comfortable sow should lay on her side and allow her piglets to nurse.
- A sow should milk easily and lay on her side with her udder exposed for her piglets to nurse.
  - You can feel her udder and try milking her to see that she is milking.
- A sow should show interest in piglets and should not show aggression towards them.
- A sow should be offered fresh feed soon AFTER farrowing and begin eating feed within day 1 of farrowing.
- A healthy sow in a farrowing crate will show very predictable behaviour after farrowing: Sleep → Nurse piglets → Stand up → Defecate or urinate (not every time she stands but often) → Eat & Drink → Repeat.
- A sow in an open pen will likely show similar predictable behaviours, but may include some exercise in between nursing and sleeping.
- It is NOT normal if a sow has vaginal discharge that is beyond a few days, if she is aggressive to piglets, does not allow piglets to nurse and lies directly on her udder, does not show interest in food, is lethargic and fails to stand up when encouraged, or is breathing hard. Call your veterinarian.

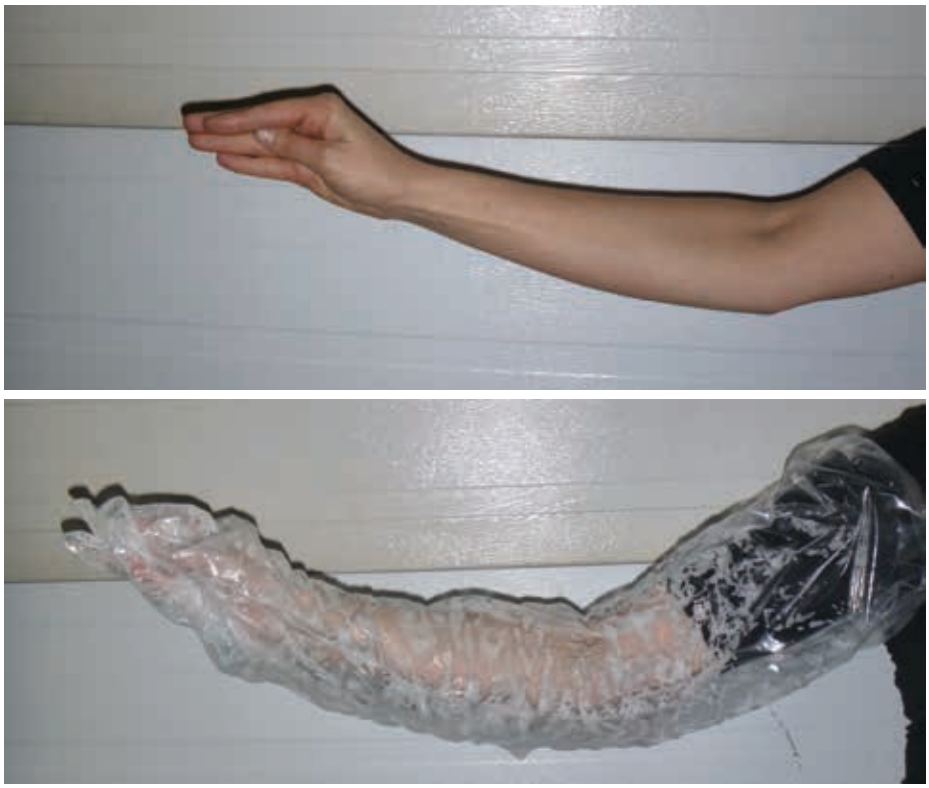
6.5 FARROWING & POST-FARROWING COMPLICATIONS

Note: All comments on health complications and recommendations are general and are for improving your understanding of topics. You should always consult with your veterinarian regarding health issue diagnostics, and subsequent treatment protocols and pharmaceutical use.

DYSTOCIA/LABOUR DIFFICULTY

- If a sow or gilt is pushing and it has been 30–45 minutes since her last piglet was born, it is time to perform an internal exam.
- Wash your hands, use a new clean obstetric glove with lots of lube, and with fingers together in a cone shape, you can carefully enter the vulva and vagina to begin exploring the problem.
- Use a NEW CLEAN obstetric glove anytime you perform an internal exam.
- There are different positions a piglet could be in that can interfere with normal delivery. It takes time and experience to develop technique, but the goal is to manipulate the position of the piglet so you can assist getting the piglet out.

- If the sow contracts on you while your arm is advanced internally, then stop, wait for the contraction to pass and do not push forward.
- If a piglet needs to be manually pulled out, you should pull while the sow pushes thus working with her.
- You must be gentle but confident. Time is critical.



Correct hand position and correct application of soap and lubricant to a clean OB glove.
Photos: Dr. Kelsey Gray

PROLAPSES

- Sows and gilts close to farrowing (before or after) can be susceptible to prolapses as a result of pushing.
- Types of prolapses: rectal, vaginal, bladder, uterus, or a combination.
- Uterine prolapses are uncommon, but when one occurs, regard this as an emergency and call your veterinarian immediately.
- Animals who prolapse are likely to prolapse again and may not be a suitable animal to rebreed.

- There are specific rules about shipping animals with prolapses (see Section 11: TRANSPORTING PIGS).

Image of a rectal prolapse in a sow that has occurred after farrowing. Photo: Dr. Egan Brockhoff

MASTITIS OR AGALACTIA "NO MILK"

- Mastitis is an inflammation of the mammary gland caused by an infection.
- Agalactia is a failure to secrete milk.
- These problems can arise from multiple causes and they can both lead to one another.
- An animal with mastitis or agalactia will have a hard, hot, red udder, and piglets will continuously try to nurse and bite on her teats with little to no success at getting milk.
- Management involves treating the sow or gilt as well as caring for the piglets:
  - Sows usually require a combination of antibiotics, anti-inflammatories, and potentially hormone therapy. This depends on the cause and the veterinarian's recommendation.
  - Piglets need to be supplemented with an energy source (e.g., milk replacer) to prevent starvation. This is CRITICAL. Starving piglets will quickly die.

Swollen hard udder from a sow. She is not milking. Photo: Dr. Kelsey Gray

SAVAGING PIGLETS

- Describes aggressive behaviour of the mother to her piglets. Aggression can be biting, injuring, attacking, and even killing piglets.
- Savaging can result from a combination of hormonal, genetic, physiological, and environmental effects.
- Management involves treating the sow or gilt as well as caring for the piglets:
  - Sows/gilts usually require a sedative to help calm them down to allow nursing. They may also require a painkiller if they are savaging due to some unknown discomfort. You may not want to rebreed this animal if she is predisposed to savaging piglets. Follow your veterinarian's recommendation.
  - Piglets need to be supplemented with an energy source (e.g., milk replacer) if the mother will not allow nursing.
  - Injured piglets need to be cared for appropriately.

LAID ON PIGLETS

- It is not uncommon to have some piglets "laid on" after farrowing.
- The sow/gilt is a large animal and her tiny piglets like to lay near her for warmth. This can be a dangerous place for them as the sow is unaware of how large she is and can sit or lay down on piglets unintentionally.
- There are a few things you can try to reduce the number of laid on piglets:
  - Using farrowing crates, positioning heat lamps away from the sow, and creating warm bedded areas away from the sow.
- Laid on piglets who are not immediately killed from the impact must be assessed and treated and cared for or euthanized depending on the severity of the injuries.

6.6 SOW LACTATION

- This is the most metabolically demanding time for a gilt or sow.
- The feeding goal is to prevent the sow or gilt from losing body condition while lactating.
- Provide a high-quality diet ad libitum (or unlimited access).
- 24/7 access to quality water.
- Piglets will nurse together at the same time periodically.

6.7 PIGLETS DAYS 1 TO 4

KEY POINT CHECKLIST

The first 4 days of life are the most critical and require the most attention. Piglet survivability is highly dependent on the efforts made in these first 4 days. There are some requirements for a piglet at this stage of life that you are responsible for.

COLOSTRUM

- **Colostrum is the single most important thing a pig receives in its life.**
- Colostrum is the initial milk produced by the sow.
- Colostrum is filled with protective proteins, known as colostral antibodies, which provide the building blocks for the newborn's immune system.
- Colostrum consumption provides protection against bacterial infection along the inside of the newborn piglet's digestive system.
- Consuming colostrum is very time sensitive. **Piglets MUST nurse their OWN sow within 6–12 hours** of being born in order to receive this precious milk.
- The earlier and more often a piglet nurses its mother following birth, the better.
- The sow will start producing and releasing colostrum continuously from the start of farrowing and for up to 12 hours afterwards.

IRON

- **Every single pig, whether raised indoors or outdoors, should receive an iron supplement.**
- You may have heard that "outdoor pigs do not need iron because they get it from the soil".
  - This is partially true; however, to ensure that pigs do not experience a deficiency in iron and subsequent anemic symptoms, it is highly recommended that you provide your pigs with an iron supplement.
  - Soil does provide some iron; however, iron intake from normal soil consumption levels would fall far short of meeting the pig's nutrient requirement for this mineral.
  - Certain domesticated breeds may have requirements that differ from a pig living outdoors in the wild.

- Iron is a cheap and effective intervention that is critical for the health of your pigs.
- Iron is administered by giving an injection in the neck muscle.
- Administering iron is time sensitive. **It MUST be given before the piglet is 4 days old.**
- Consult with your veterinarian about getting injectable iron and administering supplies.

PROCESSING

- Processing is a term used to describe the piglet management interventions that take place.
- Processing can involve iron injections, castration of males, tail docking, and ear tagging.
  - Iron Injections. See above.
  - Castration:
    i. Is the surgical removal of testicles.
    ii. Is performed to reduce boar taint and reduce aggression in market animals.
    iii. Is not performed on animals intended for breeding purposes.
    iv. As of July 1, 2016 and for animal welfare reasons, castration performed at any age **MUST** be done with an analgesic to help control post-procedure pain (Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pigs, 2014[2]). In addition, it is recommended that an anesthetic be administered.
  - Tail Docking:
    i. Is the surgical amputation of the tail.
    ii. Is performed to reduce an unwanted behaviour of "tail biting".
    iii. Is rarely performed in outdoor pig production.
    iv. As of July 1, 2016 and for animal welfare reasons, tail-docking performed at any age **MUST** be done with an analgesic to help control post-procedure pain (Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pigs, 2014[2]).

  - Ear Tagging:
    i. Is placing a permanent identification tag in the ear of the desired animal.
    ii. Does not require analgesics (pain control).
    iii. Better to perform early in life.

- Obtain proper training prior to performing any processing procedures. Consult with your veterinarian about training.

PIGLET BEHAVIOUR

- As soon as a piglet is born, within minutes it will open its eyes and start heading towards the udder.
- It is normal for a piglet to be wobbly and disoriented, but they should be active and making attempts at nursing.
- To consume adequate colostrum, ideally a piglet should have 3–4 good suckles within an hour of being born.
- It is normal and beneficial for piglets to suckle on multiple teats.
- Piglets will naturally move toward the heat lamp when they are not nursing.
- Things you can **DO**:
  - Help piglets find the teat by moving them to the udder. This is called teat training.
  - Dry off newborn piglets with a CLEAN towel.
  - Move shivering piglets under the heat lamp.
- Things you should **AVOID**:
  - Handling piglets when it is unnecessary. They may be cute, but it is important that they spend this time with their mother.
- Over the first 4 days, healthy piglets should have received colostrum and iron, and should spend most of their time nursing and sleeping.

FOSTERING

- A litter nursing their own mother is the best possible outcome.
- However, there are situations where a sow cannot nurse her own litter because the sow dies, the sow cannot milk, or where there are too many piglets and not enough teats.
- You may need to foster a piglet or an entire litter to a new mother depending on the situation.
- Sows are very willing to accept new piglets.
- Fostering, if done correctly, can work wonderfully to rear healthy piglets.
- Things you can **DO**:
  - Choose a foster sow who is nursing well and in good body condition to handle another piglet.
  - If fostering piglets onto a new sow, make sure the original piglets and the foster piglets will be around the same age to make the competition equal.
- Things you should **AVOID**:
  - Fostering unless it is necessary.

ENVIRONMENT

- Piglets should be born in a clean, disinfected, dry, freshly bedded area.
- If farrowing outdoors:
  - Increase the amount of bedding for warmth.
  - Make sure bedding is clean and fresh.
  - Make sure there are shelters in the pen.
  - When checking piglets, use extreme caution as the mother may be very protective. If you are going into an open pen, make sure 2 people go and bring a rattle bat or device to help you direct pig movement.
- If farrowing indoors (ideal):
  - Set up additional heat lamps.
  - Make sure bedding is clean and fresh.
  - Eliminate any drafts in the farrowing area. These can be deadly to newborn piglets.
  - When checking piglets, use extreme caution as the mother may be very protective.

6.8 DAYS 4 TO WEANING (AT DAYS 21 TO 50)

The first 4 days are the most critical for setting the piglet up for a healthy start. The next few weeks should involve close observations of your piglets and keeping an eye out for complications.

PIGLET BEHAVIOUR

- Piglets will have established a "teat-order" at this stage and will go back to the same teat each time they nurse.
- Piglets will nurse together as a group.
- Piglets should spend their time nursing, sleeping, and playing.
  - You can add toys (e.g., rubber balls, chains, or pieces of wood) for piglets to play with.
- Piglets will establish a designated soiling area for defecating and urinating.

CREEP FEED

- Creep feed is a specially formulated ration for piglets that is introduced to piglets before weaning to get them accustomed to solid feed.
- Creep feeds for piglets can be purchased from a feed mill.
- Health-wise, it is very important that you purchase a specially formulated creep feed and offer it to piglets by 10–14 days of age.
- Piglets do not have mature digestive tracts, which means that feeding an inappropriate diet that is not a specially formulated creep feed can cause diarrhea if fed to them too early.
- **If you are weaning pigs older than 28 days, it is required by the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pigs that you feed a creep feed in order to maintain the body condition of the sow.**[2]

WEANING

- Weaning is the process of removing piglets from nursing and getting them solely onto solid feed.
- There are two major ways to go about this: natural weaning and controlled weaning.
  - Natural Weaning
    i. Natural weaning will be controlled mostly by the sow.
    ii. Piglets will continue to suckle, but as they get older, the sow will gradually allow them to nurse less and less.
    iii. Piglets will naturally start gravitating to solid feed, but they will nurse occasionally.
    iv. Most sows will fully wean piglets by 10 weeks of age.
  - Controlled Weaning
    i. The industry norm is to wean piglets from the sow around 3 weeks of age.
    ii. Controlled weaning involves collecting piglets and physically removing them from having access to the sow.
- DO NOT wean piglets before 3 weeks of age.

6.9 WEANER TO GROWER

At weaning, pigs are separated from their mother, mixed with other pigs, and put onto solid feed. This can be stressful. The younger the pig, the more stressful it is. Pigs need your help during this transition. Once pigs get through the initial stress of weaning, this next phase should be relatively straight forward: eat, grow, play, and sleep.

PIG BEHAVIOUR

- It is normal for pigs to have a reduced appetite the day of and day after weaning.
- It is normal for pigs to be tired right after weaning.
- It is normal for pigs to fight with one another during the first few weaned days.
- It is normal to see some loose stool when pigs transition onto a new diet.
- Pigs should explore their new environment, interact with other pigs, and explore their access to feed and water.

- Make sure you offer newly weaned pigs FRESH water and FRESH food. You can offer food in the trough, but you can also sprinkle food onto boards laid on the ground to increase their exposure to food. You need to encourage them to consume feed.
- As pigs get older, they will establish a group dynamic and pecking order with each other.
- Normal behaviour during the early grower phase is eating, sleeping, fighting, playing, rooting, and exploring the environment.
- Pigs love chewing on things and will chew on absolutely anything and everything. This is normal behaviour. Do not leave anything in the pen that you do not want destroyed.
- Healthy pigs will practically grow before your eyes. Certain breeds can grow 0.5 kg per day.
- It is not normal if pigs are biting tails, not eating or drinking, fail to get up, have obvious clinical signs, are limping, or are losing weight. If you see these signs, call your veterinarian.

FEEDING

- The creep feed diet discussed above is often used as a first diet after weaning.
  - If weaning at about 21 days old, you can feed this for 1–2 weeks.
  - If weaning older or doing a natural wean, you can feed this for 1–2 days.
- Creep feeds are generally high in milk protein, so after weaning, you can then transition them onto a complete feed or otherwise (see Section 5: NUTRITION & FEEDING MANAGEMENT).
- All pigs should have unlimited (ad lib) access to feed in the growing phase.
- Make sure feed is offered fresh and is highly palatable to encourage consumption.
- 24/7 access to quality water.

ENVIRONMENT

- An outdoor pen for a newly weaned group should follow the housing recommendations in Section 4: HOUSING & MANAGEMENT.
- Younger pigs will be more susceptible to weather challenges so consider the weather when choosing a weaning age and timeframe.

6.10 GROWER TO FINISH

Growing a pig through the finishing phase is a time where we generally see fewer problems, because you have an older pig with a strong immune system. However, when problems do arise, it can be extra troubling because you have put more energy, emotion, and resources into these animals. This is a time where being aware of subtle changes is important. Older pigs are much better at hiding problems than younger animals are.

PIG BEHAVIOUR

- It is normal for pigs to slow down as they get heavier. They spend more time sitting and laying than the lighter growing pigs who are running around.
- It is normal for heavier pigs to spend more time in the shade and more time wallowing.
- It is normal for pigs to eat throughout the day.
- Larger pigs do not grow as rapidly as weaners and growers.
- Larger pigs gain more fat and less lean growth during the latter part of this phase.
- It is not normal if pigs are biting tails, not eating or drinking, fail to get up, have obvious clinical signs, are limping, or are losing weight. If you see these signs, call your veterinarian.

FEEDING

- When finishing a pig, you should have a slaughter timeline in mind and feed accordingly.
  - If you want your hog to grow more before an upcoming slaughter, feed ad lib.
  - If you want to maintain you hog at the current weight, feed a maintenance diet of about 1.5% of body weight per day.
  - You can adjust how you feed in the finisher phase to add more or less back fat. Consult with a feed nutritionist.
- Feeding a less expensive diet is economically beneficial at this time.
- 24/7 access to quality water.

ENVIRONMENT

- An outdoor pen for a grower and finishing group should follow the housing recommendations in Section 4: HOUSING & MANAGEMENT.

6.11 GETTING READY FOR MARKET

Prior to getting ready to send your hog to market, there are a few things you need to do well in advance:

1. Understand desired and achievable body weights.
   - A Kunekune and a Yorkshire pig do not have the same weight potential. Read the literature on your breed to determine what is a common market weight.
   - Understand what is desired by asking the consumer and provincial slaughter plant about the desired weight and back fat.
2. Understand food safety and preparation.
   - See Section 10: MARKETING HOGS.
3. Prepare and Plan the Slaughter Event.
   - See Section 10: MARKETING HOGS.

6.12 RAISING BREEDING ANIMALS

If the weaned animal is being reared as a replacement breeding animal, the behaviour and environment should not be all that different from the market animal descriptions; however, the feeding strategy for a breeding animal can be quite different.

FEEDING

- After the initial grower phase, feed a ration that is designed to meet the nutrient requirements of reproductive animals. Consult with a feed nutritionist to develop a ration.
- Most gilts and boars are fed ad lib until they reach sexual maturity; however, they should then have their feed intake controlled to a maintenance amount of about 1.5% of their body weight.
- Do not allow breeding animals to get over-conditioned and fat. This will reduce libido, create health complications, result in injuries if a boar is too heavy for the female, and prevent cycling in otherwise healthy gilts.

SECTION 6 REFERENCE LIST

1. The Importance of Reproductive Performance. Dr. Gordon King, University of Guelph, Canada (1996)
2. National Farm Animal Care Council. Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pigs (2014)