



BREEDING

Humanising Gilts and Young Boars

Humans are part of the pigs' environment and humanising gilts pre-puberty is an essential part of ensuring they are productive and easy to manage throughout their life. Humanising gilts makes the handling and moving process easier for both the gilt and the stockperson.

Dedicate people on farm to spend time with pre pubescent gilts every day so they become used to humans and don't fear them. Locating gilt accommodation in a busy area helps them to get used to humans and noise. In addition it has been shown that sows and gilts in stalls are easier to handle if people regularly walk in front of them, even without handling them.

Equipment required	Personal safety
Pig boards	Gilts like sows can be unpredictable. Only competent staff should move gilts through the system.

Areas for consideration

Gilts can be very inquisitive and in large groups can overwhelm stockpeople. After a period of familiarising in their own pen you can start to move smaller groups to other pens for further interaction.

- Pat, stroke and rub gilts to reward them
- Make sure the handling is of the same quality every day as inconsistent handling can make gilts wary

Preparation

- Make feeding and humanising a separate activity; ensure the gilts have been fed before humanising or they may associate you with food only.
- Ensure you have time allocated for this important job and do not rush it as negative or poor handling can be detrimental to the process.

Outline of work

- Enter the pen in a calm, unhurried manner
- Allow the gilts to walk to you
- Crouch down as the gilts will come towards you more quickly than if you stand
- Allow the gilts come to you and smell you
- Reach out and gently touch the gilts as they come near you (they may move away initially)
- Repeat the process until they are content for you to rest your hand on them (this may take a few sessions)



Gilts should be content with you resting your hand on their backs by the end of the humanisation process.

Humanising young boars

- Boar performance is enhanced by good positive handling and humanising from an early age
- Testicle size increases and mating ability develops quicker in boars that have been humanised
- The same outline of work applies to boars as it does to gilts however you will probably need to be more patient with boars and aware that they are potentially more unpredictable than gilts

Crouching can encourage gilts to approach you.



Young boars should also have humanisation time. This makes handling and moving the boar easier for his entire life on farm.

