



Key Targets

1

Correctly identify the signs of heat

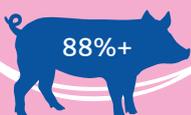


2

Provide optimum environment for accurate heat detection

3

Aim for a farrowing rate of 88%+



Effective heat detection

Accurate heat detection is essential for the correct timing of insemination. However, heat is often missed or misdiagnosed because the signs are overlooked.

Follow the management guidelines below to ensure good timing, successful insemination and improved reproductive performance.

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Take your time and know your pigs:

- Not all signs of heat are exhibited in any one female and response to boar contact can vary
- Knowing your pigs will help you to recognise signs and take appropriate action to detect accurately the onset of oestrus
- Always approach your pigs calmly and avoid interrupting their normal behaviour
- Allow time to observe their true behaviour
- Allow reaction to your presence to subside
- Many females respond instantly to boar presence, while others take a few minutes
- Some females may only exhibit a standing reflex for the boar with which they've had the most contact
- Be patient and don't be afraid to develop a bond.

Look for signs of coming into heat twice daily if possible

- The first signal to watch for is proestrus
- The proestrus period occurs just before oestrus and lasts about one day
- Identifying proestrus helps to predict the timing of standing heat and insemination
- Allow at least seven hours between checks.

Check for some or all of these signs:

- Back end: swollen, red vulva (more notable in gilts than sows), watery discharge from vulva, clitoris flat and pale pink; becoming more prominent
- Activity: restless, climbing up gates and walls, mounting other females but not standing themselves, increasing interest in the boar
- Sounds: high-pitched whining.

Look for signs of being in standing heat

- The oestrus period can last for between one to three days, with ovulation often occurring late on the second day of 'standing heat'
- Standing heat is when the sow/gilt is receptive and will stand for mating/service
- Accurately identifying the start of first standing heat is essential for good timing and successful insemination.

Check for some or all of these signs:

- Back end: vulva appears normal (swelling and redness subsides), sticky discharge from vulva, clitoris red and protruding, tail upright while standing and flicks up and down
- Activity: poor appetite, pricked ears, standing with an arched back, glazed eyes, trembling, attracted to stockperson, seeking boar contact (if allowed), standing rigid if mounted
- Sounds: very vocal with repeated grunts or long growls.





Test for a standing reflex (the best indicator):

- Check twice daily if possible, allowing at least seven hours between checks
- Apply pressure to the back and flanks; do this at the same time as renewed boar presence
- Receptive females will stand rigid and ears often prick up.

USE THE BOAR EFFECTIVELY AND ONLY WHEN THE STOCKPERSON IS THERE TO OBSERVE

- Pheromones (odours) produced by active and chatty boars are the most potent and effective means of inducing the standing reflex in females
- To maintain their libido allow regular services with cull sows
- Females in heat will usually move forwards and assume standing reflex as a boar moves in front of them
- The correct use of a vasectomised boar with breeding females can play an important part in stimulating and detecting heat - discuss with your vet
- Supervised entire boars can also be used for heat detection but must not be left in with a group of sows awaiting AI.

Use a heat detection pen:

- Take females to the boar
- Use a designated pen rather than one where pigs are housed normally
- Pen design should allow observation and physical contact (fenceline and direct).

Check small groups:

- Aim to check only two females at a time
- Apply the back pressure test at the same time as exposure to the boar
- Remove females found to be in heat to allow the boar to concentrate on checking/stimulating heat in others.

Avoid habituation:

- Avoid exposing females to the boar for extended periods
- Rotate boars used for heat detection.



For breeding sows:

- Provide 10-15 mins/day of full boar contact for the first three days after weaning
- Fenceline contact with an entire or vasectomised boar should be sufficient
- It is essential to remove boar contact 24 hours before the start of oestrus detection to heighten sow response from day four
- Mark and record sows in heat to aid timing of insemination.



CHECK FOR RETURNS DAILY USING A BOAR UNTIL CONFIRMED IN PIG

Identifying females that come back into heat is important for highlighting problems and rescheduling inseminations. Pay particular attention to likely returns around the projected return date (18-24 days after service).

Following insemination:

- Watch for restless activity
- Note any females that mount or ride other females
- Provide and observe boar stimulation (10-15 mins/day)
- Mark and record any likely returns.

KEEP RECORDS AND USE A MARKER SYSTEM

- Being organised and efficient is essential for successful heat detection and insemination.
- Clear records and coloured marks make it easy to know what is happening with each female and what needs to be done next.

Record responses: Note tag number, date and time of proestrus, date and time of oestrus and standing heat, plus any comments.

Develop a coloured marker system: Use different coloured spray markers and/or the position, shape or number of marks to show clearly the status of each female.

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