

BREEDING*Advantages of covered creep areas*

In farrowing houses, lower temperatures are needed for the sow than for the piglets. If the room temperature rises above 16°C the sow's appetite will begin to decrease; a realistic operating temperature is 18–20°C. One frequently-used way to achieve this is to maintain a low room air temperature that is suitable for the sow and to provide a covered creep area for the piglets. There are a number of advantages of covering creep areas, some of which are highlighted below.

Advantages of covered creep areas

- Thermostatic temperature control - optimal environment for piglets
- Piglets can stay warm in their creep area instead of using energy to produce body heat
- Heat conservation - reduced energy consumption
- Fewer draughts
- Farrowing house can be maintained at a lower temperature which is more appropriate for the sow
- Encourages optimum feed intake by lactating sows
- Enables creep training - reduces overlays
- Allows split suckling to be easily managed
- Litter work is easily managed.



Covered creeps enable piglets to stay warm while the farrowing house is maintained at a lower temperature

Disadvantages of covered creep areas

- Piglet observation – not a problem with a creep winch system (as shown in the photo opposite) or if they are hinged or can slide
- Maintenance
- More to wash at the end of the batch.



A winch system facilitates observation

Best practice for covered creeps

- It is important to bed up covered creeps properly, most commonly with paper or shavings; beds should be kept dry during the lactating period
- Make sure there are no holes in creep boxes as they will not only create drafts but allow heat to escape!
- Measure the temperature of the covered creep to ensure optimum benefits from the creep area
- Wooden creep boxes can become damaged so it is important to inspect them during cleaning and disinfection after each weaning and repair any damage
- When cleaning and disinfecting crates make sure creep boxes are thoroughly washed, including the corners which are most likely to harbour residue
- Make sure they are fully dry before adding bedding and are up to temperature at the start of farrowing
- It is advisable to set your heat lamps on a temperature gradient so that as your piglets grow and their the heat requirement decreases, the heat lamps emit less heat and energy costs are also reduced.

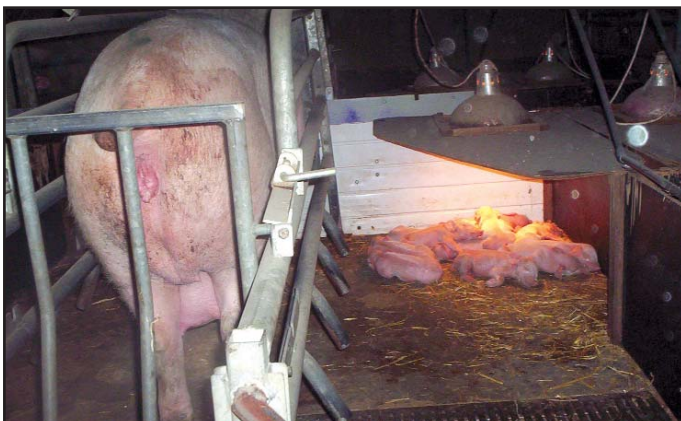
Note piglet lying behaviour during each litter inspection. Piglets lying outside the creep boxes, or away from the lamp inside the creep box, indicates that something is wrong and the temperature is not optimal for the piglets.



Take the temperature of the covered creep to ensure optimum benefits from the creep area



Check boxes and repair any damage after each weaning



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