



Split suckling is a technique which can be used to help provide enough colostrum to all piglets within a large litter.

Split suckling is often used on the first few large litters when fostering options are limited and/or there is large variation in piglet size within one litter.

Equipment/info required	Personal safety
<p>Enclosed creep area</p> <p>Piglet marker eg pen/spray</p> <p>Heat mat or lamp depending on system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bottomless box (if using heat mat) • Box (if using heat lamps) • Board for trapping piglets behind (if using heat mat) <p>Bedding eg shredded paper or wood shavings</p>	<p>All livestock can be unpredictable; only competent staff should handle and restrain pigs</p>

Initial checks

Check fostering options within the farrowing room.

Remember the rules of fostering:

- Foster within the first 24 hours
- Ensure foster piglets get early colostrum, either before fostering or from a very recently farrowed foster mother
- Give the smaller piglets warm colostrum or glucose
- Foster only once, it can be detrimental to keep moving litters around
- Never have more piglets than functioning teats on sows
- Remember, small piglets find suckling from large teats difficult
- Foster within a room (batch of piglets) wherever possible, don't move health problems to other groups
- Foster gilt piglets where possible as they tend to have better survivability.

If there are no fostering options you can split suckle using the following process.

Outline of work

- Check the sow is healthy and milking well with no signs of udder problems
- Split the litter into two groups: large and small, or strongest and weakest
- Mark the bigger group with a piglet marker
- Close the group of heavier, stronger piglets within the creep area, behind a board or in a box; ensure they do not become too warm
- Allow the smaller or less viable piglets to suckle for around an hour, or until you have actually seen them suckle
- Swap the groups over and allow the larger group to do likewise
- Allow all piglets to re-mix after both groups have suckled
- Repeat during the day keeping to the same groups and continue for as long as you feel necessary.

It should only take on average five minutes for each litter requiring extra help. It is an easy task and can be combined with litter work.

