



HEALTH

Hospital and recovery pen management

The management of sick or injured pigs can be challenging, but also highly rewarding. The care of sick or injured stock requires suitable facilities, appropriate nutrition, good nursing and treatment. Use this guide in conjunction with farm health plans to review hospital/recovery pen management and facilities.



Improved recovery rates and lower mortality

Minimum 75% recovery rate (if there is not a current severe disease outbreak)

Improved staff morale

Management guidelines

- Check stock daily and treat any pigs showing signs of injury or sickness that cannot compete or are compromised
- This will often mean immediate and careful removal of the animal(s) into suitable hospital accommodation
- Identify and address the cause of injury or illness
- The number of hospital and recovery pens required will depend on the individual farm and current health status. A general guide is 6–8 pens per 100 sows, or 2.5–5% of places on all-in all-out grower finisher units
- Separate facilities should be provided for different categories of pig, ie infected pigs should be housed separately from injured pigs, and acutely ill animals separately from recovering pigs
- Stocking and age range: ideally there should be no more than 5 or 6 pigs in a pen and no more than a three-week age range. Provision must also be made dependent on the illness or injury and mobility, to keep stress to a minimum
- Site far enough from the main accommodation to reduce the risk of re-circulation of disease but easily accessible so that staff can frequently check the animals
- Provide biosecurity guidelines (see *Action for Productivity No 13*) for hospital pen hygiene and ensure all staff are familiar with them
- Foot dips and hand washing facilities must be used on entering and leaving the hospital facilities
- Clean, disinfect and dry the pens and feeders when emptied
- Ensure all-in all-out, ie avoid continuous flow
- Regularly clean and disinfect water systems to minimise contamination

What the pig needs:

Facilities

- Provide a comfortable, clean, dry, warm and draught-free environment
- Warmth provided through: infrared lamps, siting the hospital pens within a warm building, use of bedding and the provision of a micro-environment – ie a covered kennel area and plastic flaps over the front
- Flooring: good drainage and footings. Ideally the whole floor, or at least the lying area, should be solid (provide comfort boards in fully slatted pens) and well-bedded with clean straw or shavings
- Adequate space:
 - 0.2 m²/weaner
 - 1 m²/grower-finisher
 - 3 m²/sow



Nutrition and water

- Fresh and appropriate feed for the category of pig must be freely available near to the drinkers (ideally within 1 metre)
- Sick pigs have reduced appetite and should be offered little and often to avoid feed going stale
- As pigs recover they return to normal eating patterns and feed should be available ad lib
- Clean water must be very easily accessible to the sick pig
- Bowl drinkers may be preferable for acutely sick pigs
- Additional water can be provided for weaners using cube drinkers
- Provision of a separate header tank or water line will enable water medication

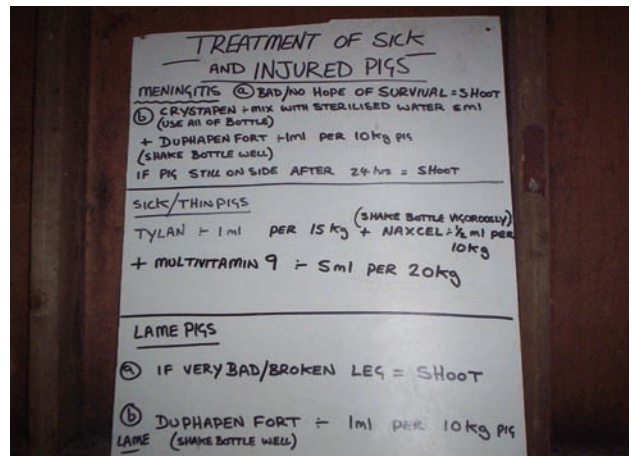


Nursing

- Assess treatment and response on an individual basis
- Treatments must be in accordance with the farm health plans. Veterinary advice should be sought if there are any queries
- If there is no, or only poor, response to treatment, prompt and humane euthanasia should be carried out in line with the farm health plan

Getting organised

- Categorise hospital and recovery pens by stage of pig and maximum capacity
- A full set of equipment should be allocated for use in the "Hospital Area Only" including:
 - Pig ID – Tag or spray marker
 - Pen records – Blackboards and chalk



What the stock person needs:

Facilities

Good visibility is crucial to enable stock people to observe and handle pigs with minimal stress. Lighting and pen design should facilitate this.

Knowledge, time and enthusiasm

- One person should be responsible for the hospital pens and have formal "Vet and Med" training, either from the unit vet or an external course, eg Vet and Med Certificates of Competence
- The responsible stockperson must have sufficient time to check, assess and treat each sick pig twice a day and supporting information should be available from the unit vet or other literature, eg NADIS (www.nadis.org.uk)
- Enthusiasm to want to care for and treat sick pigs, in addition to good pig husbandry skills and knowledge, are required for this position

- Copy of farm health plan – Treatment summary, medicines and withdrawal time lists

It is a legal requirement that all treatments whether injectable, topical, or oral (water or in-feed) are specifically recorded, ie in the medicine book

Recovered pigs

- An up-to-date plan should be available for all pigs coming through the recovery pens; recovered grower-finisher pigs should not be mixed back into the main herd
- Once slaughter weight has been reached recovered pigs can be sent to slaughter with other stock
- Pigs must be fit to travel
- Ensure the required withdrawal period for any treatments have been met and that there are no conditions likely to result in carcase condemnation
- All necessary details in the Food Chain Information: parts 2 and 3 (consignment details and additional information) must be sent with the pigs

© Agricultural and Horticultural Development Board 2010.

While AHDB, operating through its BPEX division, seeks to ensure that the information contained within this document is accurate at the time of printing, no warranty is given in respect thereof and, to the maximum extent permitted by law the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board accepts no liability for loss, damage or injury howsoever caused (including that caused by negligence) or suffered directly or indirectly in relation to information and opinions contained in or omitted from this document.