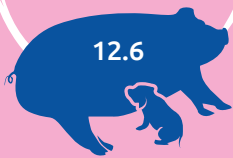




## Key Targets

1

To achieve 12.6 pigs born alive per litter or more



2

To reduce pre-weaning mortality to 11% or less



3

To wean 26.5 pigs per sow per year

(Based on Agrosoft data March 2017 – top 10% UK outdoor breeding herds)

# Farrowing Paddock Management

Outdoor production accounts for **40%** of the English breeding sow herd

Outdoor production accounts for **40%** of the English breeding sow herd and principles can be applied that provide the basis for reducing losses in these systems. When born, piglets are exposed to a drop in environmental temperature and as they dry off lose heat through evaporation resulting in a further reduction in body temperature.

The lower critical temperature for neonatal piglets is approximately 34°C, however, in an outdoor situation it is more difficult to achieve precise temperature control than in indoor systems. The provision of substrates, such as straw, to build a nest and provide insulation and warmth are therefore important considerations for outdoor producers.

Pre-weaning mortality of 10-14% is common on UK units, with about 50% of all piglet losses occurring in the first three days after birth. Piglet crushing (trauma) by sows accounts for about 40% of all pre-weaning mortality and is a leading cause of piglet mortality in both indoor and outdoor farrowing systems. This sheet provides farrowing paddock management guidelines to help you improve productivity on your unit(s).

### IMPORTANCE OF HUT DESIGN

**There are countless farrowing hut designs and the type a producer chooses will be dependent on budget and personal preference. Some key points to help evaluate the choice of farrowing hut design include:**

- Ability of sow to stand up and lie down comfortably (in terms of sow length and width)
- Freedom from injury (both sows and piglets)
- Ability to make full postural adjustments, including turning
- Maintenance of sow body condition e.g. insulated huts help maintain a relatively stable internal temperature and in turn maintain sow appetite
- Ability for sow and piglets to nurse comfortably
- Ability to build a functional nest



Various hut designs are available

If you have different types of hut on the same unit, measure the performance differences from the various designs and use them to make informed decisions. It is also a good idea to share the data with other producers and compare performance.



## IMPORTANCE OF STOCKPEOPLE

The stockperson plays an important role in the productivity of a unit, by completing tasks including:

- Providing a dry, clean, well-bedded farrowing hut
- Interacting with sows, gaining their trust
- Observing around farrowing and addressing any problems
- Carrying out routine 'one stop' tasks quietly and efficiently so as not to stress sows or piglets

## MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

The stockperson plays an important role in the productivity of a Paddock layout

- Farrowing huts should be sited on the best land available, preferably a free-draining and level site
- Make sure each hut has a fender that is in working order
- The direction huts face should be adjusted according to the season and topography of the site
- Never have a hut or fender closer than 1.5m from the fence line; this will leave sufficient room for sows to move around the hut/fender without getting an electric shock
- The base of the huts should be dug-in to reduce draughts
- If curtains are used, they should be placed on the door fronts before farrowing when piglets will be wet and most likely to become chilled
- Ensure all vents or flaps are operational as draughts cause piglets to lie in unfavourable areas, increasing the likelihood of crushing
- Ideally, sows and gilts should be placed in single farrowing paddocks to facilitate management

- Individual farrowing paddocks should ideally be **20m<sup>2</sup>**, preferably weed free
- Place drinkers (troughs) no more than **10m** walking distance from huts and avoid electric fence lines
- See *Action for Productivity 2: Strawing up for further information*



## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Try to keep the spread of farrowing to a minimum within the same row of individual paddocks e.g. seven days maximum, this will create an easier feeding and weaning regime
- At weaning, remove and reposition huts, keeping them in neat straight lines
- Remove soiled bedding and place farrowing huts onto a fresh part of the paddock between every farrowing
- Remember, piglets need to be kept clean, dry, warm, wellbedded, draught free and experience minimal temperature fluctuations. See *Action for Productivity 5: Creep feeding, 9: Establishing the weaned pig and 14: Newborn management for further information*
- A fostering box is an important tool and must be built of a material that is easily cleaned and disinfected after each use
- General appearance and tidiness of the unit is very important as on-farm conditions are an extension to those standards shown from landlords of arable land in terms of hygiene, tidiness and enthusiasm

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