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# Management of Sow and Litter

Cooperative Extension South Dakota State University

FS 311

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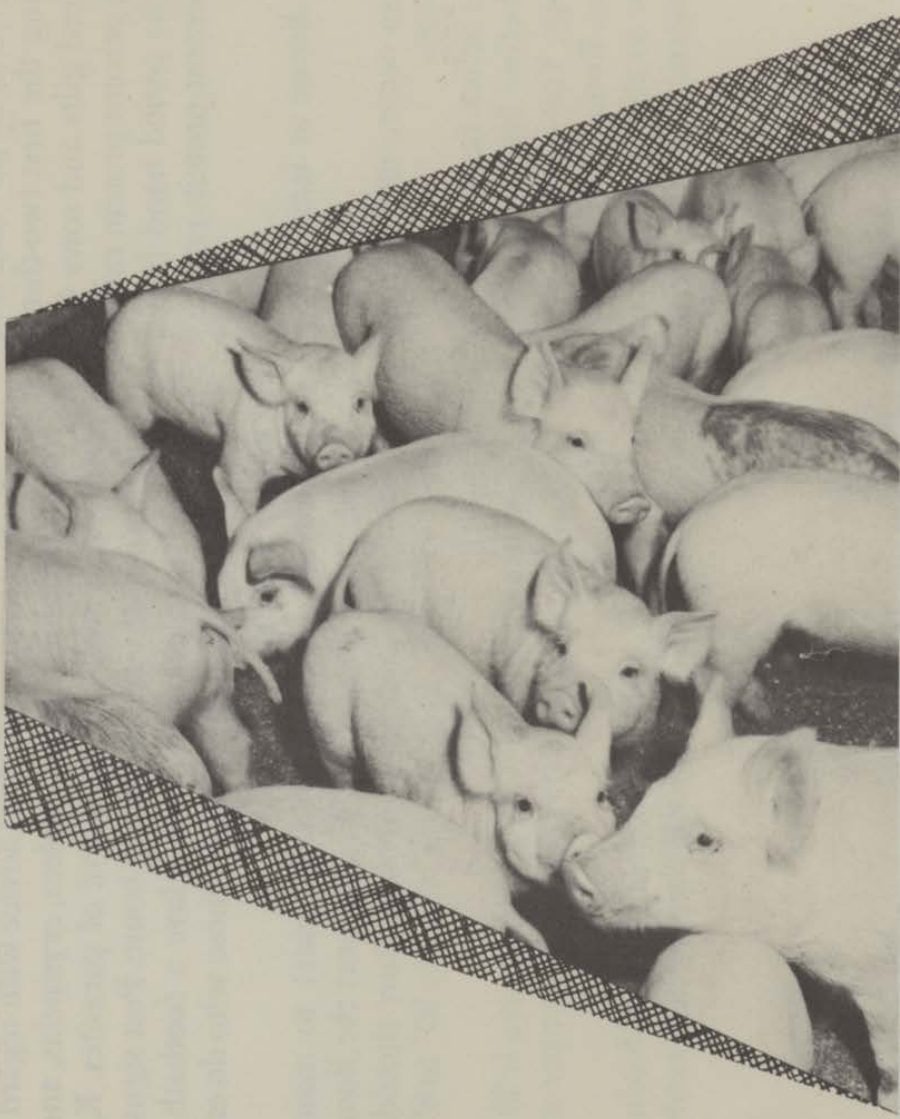

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United States Department of Agriculture

# Management of Sow and Litter

by L. J. Kortan, extension livestock specialist

Saving the largest number of pigs per litter is the first step to greater hog profits. Studies show conclusively that there is as much profit in one litter of 9 pigs as there is in marketing 24 pigs from four 6-pig litters.

The cost of producing pork varies considerably from farm to farm. This is true even on neighboring farms where opportunities appear to be equal. The only explanation that can be offered for much of this variation is the difference in the skill of the producers as managers. Management of sow and litter during gestation, farrowing to weaning, and weaning to market requires skill. The following recommendations can assist the producer during these phases of swine production.

## GESTATION

A balanced ration for a sow during gestation must provide nutrients (proteins, carbohydrates, fats, and minerals) for five different uses: (1) maintain the tissue of her own body in a state of repair and in functioning condition; (2) supply energy she utilizes in her life processes; (3) develop her unborn litter; (4) build up her body reserves of nutrients against the severe drain of lactation; (5) and in case she is not mature, the ration must provide essential nutrients for her own continued growth.

Hand feeding sows and gilts during gestation is generally recommended. Greater utilization of pasture and roughage can be attained, and condition of the sows and gilts can be more closely controlled. However, specially adapted bulky rations can be successfully self-fed. Flush gilts by full feeding or hand feeding six to eight pounds per day two weeks prior to breeding. During the first two-thirds of the gestation period hand feed gilts and sows 4 to 4.5 pounds per day of a 15 to 16 percent protein ration. During the last one-third of the period hand feed 5 to 5.5 pounds per day at a 16 percent protein ration.

### Sanitation and Health

(1) Test sows for Bang's disease at least once a year.

(2) If reproductive problems occur, test for leptospirosis, and vaccinate if necessary.

(3) Worm sows thirty days before farrowing.

Clean up lice and mange before farrowing—you can't when sows are nursing pigs. You can spray safely and effectively with Lindane, Ronnel, Toxaphene, Malathion and Ciodrin. Follow mixture recommendation given in South Dakota Insecticide Recommendations Bulletin. Clean and disinfect pens, stalls, buildings, and equipment at least two to three days before farrowing.

**Clean building or stalls**—Scrape and scrub dirt and manure from floors, walls, and equipment before trying to disinfect. Disinfectants work on organic matter, and if it takes all the power out of a disinfectant to go through dirt it can't kill organisms you are after. Pay particular attention to corners and other hard-to-clean areas when disinfecting.

**Boiling hot lye water** is one of the most effective and cheapest disinfectants (1 lb. lye to 30 gal. hot water).

**Saponated solution of cresol** is a more effective disinfectant than carbolic acid, but its solubility is a serious drawback. Use readily soluble compounds of cresol with soaps. It does not mix well with hard water. Use in a 2 or 3% solution.

**Sodium carbonate** (washing soda, soda ash, soda crystals) is used chiefly as a cleansing agent but also has appreciable disinfecting value.

**Sodium orthophenylphenate** is a proven disinfectant with no objectional odor. It is readily soluble in water and is not highly poisonous. Use hot. It is most often used in a 1% solution.

**Steam** is an effective method of sanitizing buildings and equipment, especially when one of the recommended disinfectants is introduced into steam. When used alone, steam is effective only when applied directly through a nozzle and at close range, the nozzle not more than six to eight inches from the object being cleaned. It takes about seven seconds contact with live steam to kill most organisms.

Seek veterinary medical advice with regard to control of atrophic rhinitis, cholera, erysipelas, and other diseases, as well as the control of parasites. Keep all visitors out of your farrowing house. Post signs. Some hogmen padlock the doors. Have a footbath at the door for disinfecting shoes for those who do enter.

### Proper Equipment

Provide a heat lamp (250 watt) to maintain a temperature of 80° to 85° F. at or near the floor in the pig nest. Farrowing house temperature should not be below 45° to 55° F. in winter or above 80° to 85° F. in summer.

The recommended summer shade area is 50 square feet per gilt and litter and 60 square feet per sow and litter.

Provide 12 to 16 square feet of creep-feeding area per litter. This area should be cleaned easily, well

lighted, and comfortable insofar as temperature, moisture, and drafts are concerned. Provide at least one linear foot of creep-feeder space for each five pigs. The creep-feeder trough should not be more than four inches above the floor. Provisions should be made for supplying plenty of clean, fresh water in the creep area at all times.

**Before Farrowing**

Wash sow thoroughly and place in a clean, disinfected farrowing stall one to three days before farrowing.

The sow should be turned out of the farrowing stall at least twice each day for feed, water, exercise, and elimination. Feed a nutritious bulky ration to help avoid constipation. Reduce ration two or three days before farrowing to about 60 per cent of the normal amount fed. Provide plenty of clean, fresh water at all times. When milk appears in the udder, make final preparations for farrowing.

## FARROWING

**Care of Sow and Litter**

Producers must plan to be with sows during the farrowing period. Careful attention at this time pays well.

Wipe each pig dry, remove mucous from mouth and nostrils, and check respiration. Tie naval cords, clip and disinfect with tincture of iodine. Clip the needle teeth. Make sure each pig gets a nipple. Ear mark each pig within 24 hours after farrowing. Litters may be equalized if transfers are made during the first 24 hours.

Anemia is a major problem with young pigs. Treat each pig at two to three days of age. Iron and copper may be given to pigs in tablet form, as a drench or by injection. Sows and litters may be removed from crates when the pigs are about a week old. Male pigs should be castrated before two weeks of age.

The pigs may be weaned at any time from four to eight weeks depending upon the manager's ability, facilities, and plan of swine production.

**Feeding**

Hand feed sows for the first week after farrowing. Sows nursing six or more pigs should be self-fed a complete ration after the first week. Provide a complete, high-energy, well-balanced ration containing 15 to 16 percent protein.

A high quality pre-starter creep ration should be offered the pigs daily when seven to ten days old. Sprinkle fresh uncontaminated soil on top of creep ration. Creep rations should be fortified with iron and copper for pigs fed in confinement.

## WEANING AND REBREEDING

Reduce the feed allowance to 50 to 60 percent of full-feed beginning two days before and continue three or four days after weaning, or until the sow's udder shows distinct signs of shrinking. The principal reason for reducing feed intake is to prevent damage to the udder. Severe restriction of feed intake may have a harmful effect on ovulation; therefore, a compromise must be reached between reduced ovulation rate and "udder troubles."

Sows will generally come in heat within the first week after the pigs are weaned. Sows whose pigs were removed within four weeks after farrowing should be allowed to pass the first heat period. Sows whose litters are weaned after five weeks of lactation may be bred at the first heat period following weaning.

Farrowing dates for the next litters may be bunched by weaning pigs from several sows at the same time, even though the present litters may vary considerably in age.

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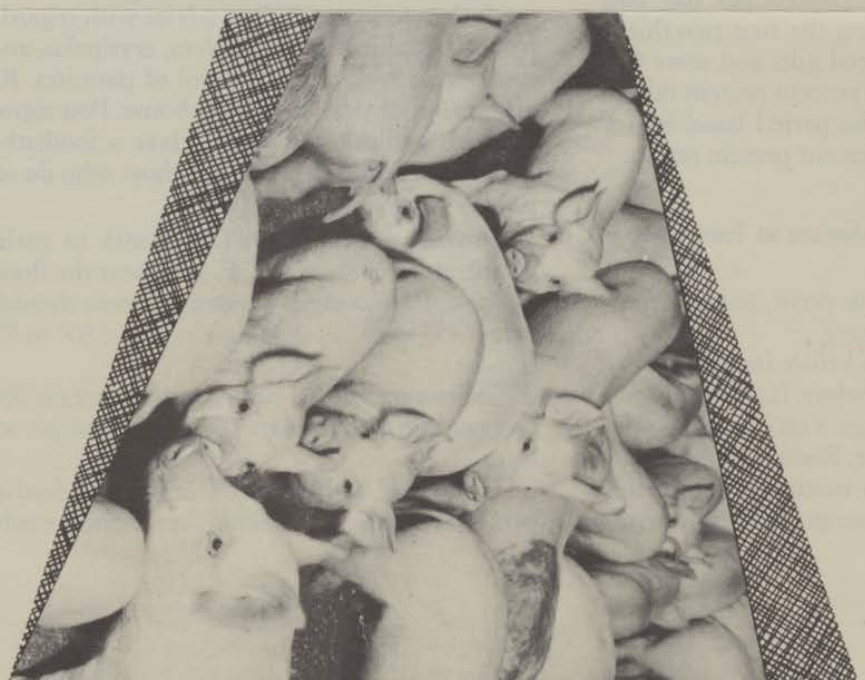

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