

## H15 - Disease and treatment of sows



**A healthy sow being examined**

### **A healthy sow**

1. Has a sound appetite.
2. Has no signs of flux.
3. Has mammary glands that are not hard or red.
4. Has a normal temperature.
5. Gets up and lies down without problems.
6. Produces enough milk.
7. Urinates clear or light yellow urine.

**Examine the sows daily, particularly the first 4 days after farrowing.**



**This sow is sick - she has not eaten, her piglets are cold and get no milk**

**Observe the sow thoroughly at least once a day 25-35 minutes after feeding. She may be sick if**

- She does not get up.
- She is lying sternally.
- She has not eaten all her food.
- She fails to support evenly on all four legs.
- The piglets are agitated.
- The piglets do not grow.
- The piglets suffer from diarrhoea.



**This sow excretes vast amounts of flux from the uterus**

### Additional comments - Disease and treatment of sows

It is important to check daily whether the sow is healthy or whether she needs treatment of some kind. Farrowing puts a great strain on the sow; the most common disorder post-farrowing is M.M.A. which is triggered by infection in the uterus or the udder. See Appendix 16 - Checklist - treatment aid (example) and Appendix 24 - Statutory hospital pens.

1. The sow should have eaten up 25 minutes after feeding. If the sow does not eat up, check the water supply. See H1 - Preparing the farrowing facility and farrowing pens. If the sow loses weight, she is excreting more energy with the milk than she is getting from the feed. Check the adjustment of the feed box and the composition of the feed. Contact your feed advisor if the settings are not correct. Lack of appetite may be an indication of constipation.
2. Flux is often seen on the rear part and tail of the sow or on the floor. Flux is an indication of infection in the uterus or vagina. However, note that brownish, white or clear flux (without pus) is normal for the first 48 hours. **Treatment must take place according to the instructions from the herd vet.**
3. Hard mammary glands, reddish udder or spots on the udder indicate incipient mastitis. Treat infections according to instructions from your vet. Treatment for mastitis should be supplemented with pain relief. If all mammary glands are equally hard, you probably have a case of oedemas caused by accumulation of fluid in the udder tissue. Antibiotics will have no effect whereas pain relief may help the sow. Pain relief increases the well-being of the sow and increases the chances of her letting the piglets nurse.
4. If the sow's temperature is above 40°C on the day of farrowing and above 39,5°C the remaining days, she has a fever and should be treated according to the vet's instructions. Treatment should include pain relief. It is essential to establish the cause of the fever. The drawback of treating with antibiotics is that antibiotics are excreted with the sow milk and will thereby ruin the bacteria balance in the piglets' intestines. This increases the risk of diarrhoea among the piglets.
5. If the sow does not get up, help her get up and check if she supports evenly on all four legs. Examine her for leg and hoof injuries, and treat according to the vet's instructions - including pain relief.  
Inspect pen conditions. Does the crate need adjustment, is the floor slippery?  
Incorrect leg position and tenderness: Relieve a sow with leg injuries by placing a rubber mat on the floor, moving her to a farrowing pen with deep litter or to a hospital pen. In case of swellings or if the sow does not support on all four legs, you must distinguish between fractures (destruction), sprains (pain relief and relief) and infection (antibiotic treatment, pain relief and relief).
6. If the piglets are agitated or do not thrive, it may be an indication that the sow does not produce enough milk.
7. If a sow drinks too little, the urine turns dark. Compare urine from the sows when they get up in the morning. Note that sows that do **not** urinate are the sows that drink the least, and they need extra attention. Urine must not contain blood, pus or other impurities. Pus or impurities are often found on the pen floor in small lumps as they have been excreted with the urine. Impurities in the urine indicate infections in the urinary tract. Check the sow's water supply - H1 - Preparing the farrowing facility and farrowing pens.