

## H18 - Milk yield



**Trimmed udder with a litter of large, healthy and well-nourished piglets**

**A large litter of growing piglets require much milk. A high milk yield can be obtained through**

1. Maximum supply of water.
2. Optimum feed intake.
3. Optimum composition of feed.
4. A healthy sow.
5. Large, healthy piglets.
6. Correct temperature in the facility.
7. Calm environment for the sow.
8. Stable teat order.
9. A well-maintained udder.
10. A good pen design.



**A slack udder with piglets searching for the udder**

### **Consequences of a low milk yield**

- Unthrifty piglets.
- Increased mortality rates.
- Low weaning weight.
- Poor utilization of the sows' potential.
- Increased need for foster sows.
- Increased risk of disease among piglets.



**The piglets are hungry and are searching for milk by the sow**

<b>Additional comments - Milk yield</b>	
	Milk yield peaks around three weeks post-farrowing (12-16 litre milk/day) after which it slowly drops. When piglets are three weeks old, they start to eat more dry feed or gruel feed.
1.	An insufficient water intake reduces the sow's feed intake. The water requirement of sows during lactation varies from 35 l a day to 50 l a day when milk yield peaks.
2.	Feed intake during lactation is affected by water intake, temperature in the facility and the animals' general health. For more information on feed intake during lactation, see H19 - Feeding of sows - Liquid feed or H20 - Feeding of sows - Dry feed and H21 - Individual adjustment of the sow's feed dose after farrowing.
3.	Contact your pig feed advisor.
4.	A sow that has had a normal farrowing course has the best prerequisites for an optimum milk yield as she quickly gains energy for milk production. A sick sow may be in pain (for instance, mastitis) that reduce her will to lie down and nurse her piglets. Healthy sows may suffer from udder oedema. See H15 - Disease and treatment of sows. Udder oedema reduces the sow's will to lie down and nurse her piglets. It is important to monitor the sows closely, especially right after farrowing. If a sow becomes sick, treat her immediately to avoid significant reductions in milk yield. The milk yield may drop by up to 20% in the first 6 days if the sow is sick. See H15 - Disease and treatment of sows.
5.	Large, healthy piglets quickly get to the udder and are capable of stimulating the udder to a good milk yield from the beginning. You therefore need to be aware of piglets that are very small at birth and whether they are capable of stimulating the udder to an optimum production. See H11 - Exchange of litters.
6.	The temperature in the facility must not be too high - the correct temperature for the sow is 16-20°C or below. If the temperature is too high, sows will try to cool themselves by wallowing with the water or be passive, eat very little or pant. See H3 - The environment of the sows.
7.	To obtain a maximum milk yield, it is important that you work around the sows in a quiet and calm manner, and that the sows are comfortable with the staff tending to them. Stress around the sows in the form of noise or loud sounds may reduce their desire to nurse and may reduce the piglets' ability to hear sows calling when milk letdown starts. Sows normally lactate with 40-minute intervals. It is important that there is room for all piglets by the udder when milk letdown begins as milk is only available for 8-10 seconds.
8.	It is important to maintain a stable teat order and thereby avoid cross-fostering more than 24-36 hours after farrowing. When you make nurse sows or intermediate nurse sows, you should pick sows that already have a good milk yield.
9.	The udder must be intact with 13-16 well-functioning teats. Sows with many non-functional teats, chronic mastitis or similar defects should be culled at weaning.
10.	The recommended size of farrowing crates is 220-250 cm incl. room above the trough to the back of the gate to the crate (inside measurements). The crate should be approx. 65 cm wide by the trough and be adjustable to approx. 90 cm by the back gate. From the udder to the opposite pen side, there should be a piglet length (56 cm) as this makes the litter more calm and thereby prolongs milk letdown. See H2 - Functional requirements to the farrowing pen.  When you place the crate in the pen, make sure there is plenty of room by the udder regardless of which side the sow nurses.