

H7 - Colostrum



All piglets are getting colostrum

Through colostrum, newborn piglets are assured of antibodies against diseases in the herd and of the first vital energy.

An optimum intake of colostrum

1. The piglets come to the teats.
2. The sow is healthy.
3. The sow is well immunised.
4. The piglets get enough time to get milk.
5. The piglets can manage.
6. The piglets obtain immunity on the basis of colostrum from sows in the herd.
7. If the largest piglets in a litter are isolated for a while, the smallest piglets are assured of milk.

Expressing colostrum for weak piglets

- You can express the milk into the mouth of the piglet.
- You can express the milk into a cup. Pick a calm sow that is farrowing or has just farrowed. Use your hand as you would when milking a cow by hand. You can subsequently give the weakest piglets colostrum with, for instance, a disposable syringe.



This piglet must be assured of colostrum.

Inadequate intake of colostrum:

- The piglets are taken from the sow too soon.
- The smallest piglets are not taken care of.
- The sow is sick.
- The sow was not vaccinated correctly or in due time.

Additional comments - Colostrum	
	Only colostrum produced by sows in the herd protects piglets against pig specific diseases such as necrotising enterocolitis, reddening and other diseases present in that herd.
1.	Sows excrete colostrum during farrowing. The piglets take turns in searching the udder and take in colostrum. Piglets need minimum 12 hours with the sow before you can be certain that they have had a sufficient intake of colostrum. If a piglet fails to get to the udder, you must help it. If the piglet is unable to suckle, destroy it.
2.	A sick sow excretes less milk than a healthy sow. If the sow is exhausted after a difficult farrowing or is showing clear signs of M.M.A. during farrowing, consider alternatives such as letting the piglets get colostrum from another sow or expressing colostrum from a sow that has just farrowed and give this to the piglets. See H15 - Disease and treatment of sows.
3.	A sow is always well immunised against the diseases present in the herd provided she has been vaccinated correctly. Sometimes, gilts fail produce antibodies against the diseases that the piglets need immunisation against, which is typically seen in the form of diarrhoea outbreaks among pigs in gilt litters. The gilts must have had these diseases themselves or be vaccinated against them.
4.	Studies demonstrate that six hours after birth of the individual pig, only 70% (2 out of 3) have taken in sufficient amounts of colostrum. 12 hours after birth, this figure has increased to 95%. It is therefore recommended to let all piglets stay 12 hours with their own mother or with a sow that has just farrowed that produces colostrum.
5.	Regardless of their size, weak piglets are unable to take in sufficient colostrum. Be aware of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Underweight piglets, particularly in large litters. 2. Supercool piglets (cooling causes irreparable damage to the intestines). 3. Piglets born weak. 4. Splaylegs. Help these piglets get colostrum, for instance by expressing colostrum for them.
6.	<p>Colostrum from the piglet's mother: Contains optimum antibodies composition and contains antibodies and mother-offspring specific growth factors that can transmit to the piglet.</p> <p>A colostrum bank (fresh or frozen): The correct amount of colostrum must be assured (see below).</p> <p>Colostrum from another sow in the herd: Has the optimum composition of antibodies.</p> <p>Colostrum from another herd: This is a no go! Contains pig specific antibodies against many diseases, but not against the diseases in the specific herd, such as coli diarrhoea.</p> <p>Colostrum from cows: Contains antibodies, but not against necrotising enterocolitis, reddening, coli diarrhoea etc. This should only be used as a source of energy after the piglet has taken in colostrum from the sow. Cow colostrum protects the intestines just as sow colostrum, but does not provide the right immunity. If given too soon, cow colostrum may prevent absorption of the sow's colostrum and jeopardise the piglet's life.</p>
7.	Experience shows that in very large litters (>15-16 liveborn) and among newborn piglets of differing sizes, there may be a great deal of stir by the udder. The smallest piglets lose the battle for teats, and you can help colostrum intake along by separating the 5-6 largest piglets in the creep area for 1-2 hours while the smallest piglets get colostrum. If farrowing is complete, check whether the sow is still letting milk down after moving the largest piglets, as the smallest will otherwise then get neither warmth nor milk. Instead, cut off all piglets for 45 minutes, and then let the 8-12 smallest out when milk letdown starts. Let the largest piglets out after a futher 30-45 minutes.

<p>Expressed colostrum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A piglet weighing 500 g needs 15 ml colostrum 3 times with min. one hour's interval. • A piglet weighing 1 kg needs 30 ml colostrum 3 times with min. one hour's interval. • Expressed colostrum can keep for 3 days in a refrigerator if cooled immediately and used in portions. • You can freeze colostrum and thaw it in a microwave oven at the lowest frequency. The temperature of the milk must not exceed 35 degrees.
