

H8 - Cross-fostering



It is crucial that all piglets get a functioning teat.

When you cross-foster, the sow rears as many piglets as possible.

1. The piglets must be assured of colostrum for min. 12 hours before they are moved.
2. Cross-foster to 12-15 piglets/litter depending on the number of functioning teats. Start by utilizing excess teats of sows that have just farrowed and have fewer piglets than they have functioning teats.
3. Make nurse sows for the excess piglets.
4. In as far as possible place small piglets with second parity sows.
5. Cross-fostering must be complete max. 36 hours after farrowing.
6. Primarily move large piglets.
7. Move as few piglets as possible between litters, but move them before they stop growing.
8. Do not move piglets between litters after day 2 post-farrowing. Place piglets older than 2 days with a foster sow.



This sow has more piglets than she can rear, and the roof of the creep is open

If you fail to cross-foster in due time

- The sow can only nurse the number piglets she has teats for.
- The smallest piglets/those last-born lose the struggle for milk.

If you cross-foster too soon

- The piglets may not have received colostrum and may die from lack of antibodies.

If you cross-foster too late

- The teat order is disrupted in the litters to which the piglets are transferred.
- It has been too long since the sow has farrowed and her teats may have dried up.

Additional comments - Cross-fostering	
1.	It is crucial that all the piglets are assured of colostrum before cross-fostering takes place. The smallest piglets may need up to 12 hours before they have had a sufficient colostrum intake. If a small piglet is moved to a sow that is still farrowing or has just finished farrowing, the piglet will get colostrum here. After 12 hours, cross-foster/move the largest piglets to a nurse sow if there are too many piglets in a litter to guarantee sufficient colostrum to the smallest piglets. If the sow has not finished farrowing or you are not ready to cross-foster, keep the largest/first-born piglets in the creep area while the smallest get a place by the udder and the chance for colostrum.
2.	How to handle excess piglets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firstly, move excess piglets to a sow with a newborn litter and with available teats. • If a sow has farrowed within the last 2 days and one of her piglets die, you can move a piglet to this sow. This piglet must be bigger than the other piglets in the litter. • If you move a piglet to a litter in which one or more piglets have died, it important to ensure that the sow is not sick or has more piglets than she has functional teats for. • Assess the body condition of the sow and check in her log how she managed her previous lactation period. • Old sows (older than 5th parity) should not tend to more piglets than she has tended to before.
3.	The second priority for handling of excess piglets is to establish a nursing litter. See H9 - Nurse sows.
4.	2nd and 3rd parity sows are best at accepting new small piglets. Do not use first parity sows as nurse sows as they need the biggest piglets possible to stimulate their udder.
5.	To be certain that all piglets get a functioning teat, cross-fostering must be completed max. 36 hours after farrowing. If you cross-foster later than this, you risk that inactive teats no longer provide any milk.
6.	Many hours may pass (3-6 hours) before piglets take in milk from the new sow. The piglets that are moved must therefore be strong enough to handle the move. It is also important that the piglets moved to the litter are of approximately the same size as the rest of that litter.
7.	As a main rule, piglets manage best with their own mother, which is why you should move as few piglets as possible. Keep an eye out for weak piglets, ie. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small piglets. • Agitated piglets. • Piglets lying passively in our outside the creep area.
8.	See H12 - Foster sow for piglets with reduced growth.