

H23 - Feeding of piglets

Feeding of piglets in the farrowing facility is essential to make the weaning process easier on the piglets.

1. Feed

- Until weaning, piglets' need for nutrients is primarily covered by the sow's milk
- The feed should follow the standards for feed for newly weaned pigs
- The feed must be attractive to the piglets

2. Feed intake

- Piglets should start adapting to weaning feed as a supplement to sow milk they are approx. 7 days old
- Feed piglets 2-5 times a day
- The first days, feed piglets on the solid floor and later in a trough
- Daily assess the piglets' feed intake and adjust feed accordingly

3. Feeding of sick/unthriving pigs

- Sick pigs may lack water, energy and minerals and there may be imbalances in the intestinal flora
- Electrolytes contribute fluid, minerals and energy and may be supplied to piglets suffering from diarrhoea
- Dairy products contribute energy, protein and possibly lactic acid bacteria and may benefit piglets that do not get their entire need covered by the sow

4. Feed hygiene

- Empty and clean piglets' troughs minimum once a day
- Milk and gruel feed should not be left in the troughs for more than 6 hrs
- Electrolyte water should be finished within 30 minutes
- Check that drinking valves are accessible, output is correct and disinfect the water system on a regular basis



Feeding of piglets in trough

Feed hygiene and novelty value

As a rule of thumb, pigs must have eaten up before the next feeding.



Unhygienic conditions around the trough

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1.	Pigs should be introduced to feed when they are approx. 7 days old as that will help reduce the percentage of pigs that will require treatment for post-weaning diarrhoea.
2.	<p>In farrowing pens with fully slatted floor, scatter the feed on the heat plate, in the creep area or in the trough. For the first few days, scatter the feed where the sow can reach some of it to increase the piglets' interest in the feed.</p> <p>Feed intake varies greatly from litter to litter; a litter of 24-day-old piglets may eat from 100 g to 1 kg dry feed a day. Gradually increase the feed dose daily based on your assessment of their feed intake. Feed the piglets according to appetite from week 3 to reach optimum feed intake.</p> <p>It is easy to increase feed supply by increasing the number of daily feedings; for instance start with two feedings a day and end with 4-5 feedings, depending on weaning age.</p>
3.	<p>In case of disease or other problems related to the piglets, it may be necessary to give them an electrolyte solution or dairy products as supplement to the sow's milk. Do not give the piglets any supplements before all piglets have had colostrum intake. These supplements cannot replace sow milk.</p> <p>Cow colostrum and energy boosters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May provide a vital energy supply to weak piglets. • Cannot replace sow colostrum as they do not contain the right antibodies. • Administer orally via feed pumps to weak piglets immediately after birth (typically one pump stroke, but do consult the specific recommendations) once the piglets have had sufficient colostrum intake • Can be stored in bottles in a freezer and thawed as needed. Remember to slowly heat the milk to body temperature before giving it to the pigs. <p>Milk replacer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be used as a supplement to litters if the sow does not produce enough milk to meet the piglets' needs. • Dissolve milk replacer in the correct amount of water. The water must have the right temperature; if it is too cold, the milk replacer will not dissolve, if it is too warm the proteins will be destroyed. • Stir the milk replacer until there are no lumps. Lumps will move through the stomach into the intestines. • Milk replacer is used increasingly in milk cup systems where it is supplied consistently from day 1 until weaning as a supplement to the sow's milk. <p>A38 or yoghurt:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A38 or another sour dairy product can be used as a preventive measure against diarrhoea in individual litters as it introduces lactic acid bacteria. • A38 may be suitable for weak litters the first days after farrowing. • A38 can also be used for litters that were exchanged or for piglets by a sick sow that is undergoing treatment. <p>Electrolyte:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps to re-establish the fluid balance in the gut in piglets suffering from diarrhoea. • Make the solution daily. You can buy them ready-mixed or you can mix them according to this recipe: 25 g glucose, 9 g common salt, 2 table spoons fruit juice in 1 l water. • Give max. 1 l per litter twice a day in the first week after farrowing. Make sure the solution is temperate when you use it.
4.	<p>It is essential that the trough/base is clean and dry before you supply the feed as poor levels of hygiene affect piglet health negatively.</p> <p>It is important that the feed is eaten up minimum once a day as old feed loses taste and aroma if it stays in the trough for too long and it thereby becomes less attractive to the pigs. The feed will also have a level of novelty value to the pigs each time feed is supplied – especially if fed into an empty trough.</p> <p>Bacteria develop quicker in electrolytes and stirred dairy products than in dry feed and hygiene is therefore crucial.</p> <p>Electrolyte mixes should be finished within 30 minutes. Milk replacer, A38 or yoghurt products must not be left in troughs for more than six hours. Empty and wash the trough before each feeding. Also wash the equipment used for mixing milk replacer each time.</p> <p>Milk cup systems: clean and disinfect the system 1-2 times a week and clean the milk cups 4-7 times a week.</p>