

H5 - Supervision of farrowing



Newborn piglet found in due time

In due time, take care of sows and piglets that encounter problems.

1. Check for milk in the udder, swollen labia and mucus from the vagina as indications of impending farrowing.
2. Inspect the sow every ½ hour, as a minimum, during farrowing.
3. Note the number of piglets born at the time of inspection.
4. There should be max. 2 hours between the first 4 piglets and max. ½ hour between the next piglets. Perform obstetric aid if all piglets in the litter are dry and the sow seems to be expecting more piglets.
5. Help small or weak piglets get to the udder and ensure they start taking in colostrum. If necessary, place them under the heat lamp to warm them.
6. Assess whether the farrowing process is complete. If in doubt, examine the birth canal.
7. Examine the condition of the sow. Feel for hard mammary glands and observe the behaviour of the sow in terms of appetite and willingness to nurse.



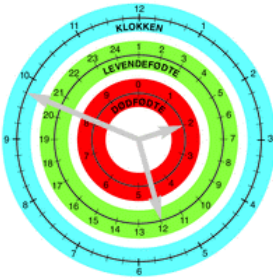
Failure to detect a bad farrowing course

For the sow, inadequate supervision during farrowing means that

- A poor farrowing course is not recognized.
- The sow is weakened and will have difficulty starting the subsequent lactation.

For the piglets, inadequate supervision during farrowing means that

- Increasingly more piglets die from lack of oxygen.
- Weak piglets die as they get no colostrum and are cold.

Additional comments - Supervision of farrowing	
1.	1-3 days prior to farrowing, the sow's vagina swells and becomes red. From 24 hrs before farrowing, you can milk clear liquid from the teats. When farrowing is approx. 12 hours away, colostrum can be milked from the teats, and clear mucus is observed in the vagina.
2.	If no piglets have been born within the last hour, assess whether the litter is smaller than expected. If, at the same time, if only few placentas are observed or the sow is restless, perform obstetric aid (see H6 - Obstetric aid). Obstetric aid stresses the sow, and contractions will often be weak for the following hour, which delays farrowing. Therefore, only perform obstetric aid when a problem is suspected.
3.	On the sow card, write the number of piglets at the time of inspection. At the next inspection, check if more piglets have been born. If necessary, note the time for each inspection. Use, for instance, an F disc or the LISA system from VengSystem A/S.
	
4.	There must be no more than two hours between the first 4 piglets, and max. ½ hour between the next. If only dry piglets are observed at the inspection, the sow has not delivered piglets for the last ½ hour. A normal farrowing course lasts approx. 6 hours. This means that when litter size is low, a long time passes between the piglets, while at a high litter size, little time passes between the piglets. Generally, 10 minutes pass between the piglets, but there may be pauses of up to an hour. Pauses that long are often caused by the farrowing having stopped, and obstetric aid should be performed as the risk of stillborn piglets will otherwise increase. If many stillborn piglets are generally observed, night supervision is recommended.
5.	It is difficult for small and weak piglets to get to the udder. They must be assured of colostrum. If necessary, warm them under the heat lamp or in an incubator. Cold and hunger destroys the intestinal surface of newborn piglets. Colostrum is ensured by expressing colostrum into the mouth of the piglet or by having a colostrum bank (see below).
6.	When the sow is no longer delivering piglets, assess whether farrowing is complete or whether there may still be fetuses in the womb. If the sow is calm and tends to the piglets, is eating and there are many placentas behind the sow (one per piglet), the sow has finished. If in doubt, provide obstetric aid (see H6 - Obstetric aid).
7.	Farrowing is hard on the sow. If the sow is sick after farrowing, it must be treated to ensure that both sow and piglets survive.

Expressing colostrum for weak piglets:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can express the milk into the mouth of the piglet.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. Subsequently, give colostrum to weak piglets using, for instance, a disposable syringe. 10 ml colostrum is enough to assure a small piglet of antibodies, but it must subsequently be assured of enough colostrum or milk to survive the first 24 hrs – typically a piglet weighing 800 g requires 150 g milk to survive the first 24 hrs.