

H31 – Focus points: Monitoring farrowing of loose sows



Farrowing has started and the sow must be monitored in calm surroundings

Monitor sow and piglets during farrowing

1. The facility must be calm while the sows are farrowing. Perform the same daily routines as before farrowing as far as possible.
2. Follow the recommendations in H5 – Supervision of farrowing.
3. Follow the recommendations in H6 – Obstetric aid.
4. Only walk into the pen if this is absolutely necessary.
5. Follow the recommendations in H7 – Colostrum for all piglets and nurse sow for underweight piglets.
6. The creep must be warm and free of draught at farrowing.



Piglets huddle together along the wall in the pen

Sows that get up and lie down often during farrowing

- Risk of piglets getting crushed.
- The sow may lie down in another part of the pen and the piglets must spend energy locating the udder.

Focus points: Monitoring farrowing of loose sows

1. Sows must be able to farrow as undisturbed as possible. If a sow rolls on to the stomach or gets up, there is a risk of crushing the newborn piglets when it lies back down. The sow may also move to another place in the pen and the newborn piglets will then have to look for it. By following the same routines as before farrowing in terms of feeding, supply of straw and supervision, the sow will be familiar with the routines and will not be disturbed by them.
2. See H5 – Supervision of farrowing.
3. See H6 – Obstetric aid.
4. Keep visits in the pen to a minimum to avoid any negative impact on the farrowing process.
5. Piglets must be assured of antibodies and energy to stay warm and move around. They must be able to get away from the sow and/or be active by the udder and drink more milk. Piglets in pens with loose sows spend more time by the sow than piglets in traditional farrowing pens, and it is therefore particularly important that they get enough milk immediately after birth to have enough energy to stay warm. Research shows that 4 in 5 piglets in pens with loose sows that die on day 0-1 have had little or no milk intake.

See H7 – Colostrum for all piglets and nurse sow for underweight piglets.
6. It is important to teach the piglets to use the creep area to keep loss of heat and energy to a minimum. Piglets in pens with loose sows spend more time by the sow the first days after birth and take longer in using the creep than piglets in traditional farrowing pens.