H18 – Milk yield

A high milk yield is essential to piglet growth and enhances the sow's ability to wean heavy pigs.

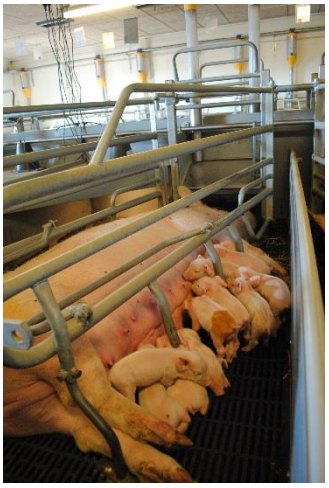
1. Before farrowing

- During gestation, feed the sow to medium body condition and a backfat thickness of 14-17 mm (at P2) upon transfer to the farrowing facility
- Check all water valves before sows are transferred. Minimum output is 4 l per minute. Check output when water usage peaks.
- Transfer sows to clean, dry and warm farrowing pens
- Sufficient amounts of nesting material help the sow to an optimum farrowing and thereby also an optimum start to lactation
- After transfer, the sow must be assured of a regular supply of energy throughout the day.

Nesting material before farrowing calms the sow and leads to a better farrowing

2. After farrowing

- Is the sow fit after farrowing? A sow with a fever (above 39.5°C), that does not eat normally and has a hard udder/glands is not well.
- Pay special attention to sows with prolonged farrowing where obstetric aid was repeatedly required
- A sow that is not deemed fit must be treated according to the vet's instructions
- Sows undergoing antibiotic treatment must at crossfostering be given piglets heavier than the average in the herd
- A high number of suckling piglets is key to a high milk yield (see H8)
- Room temperature (see H3)
- The farrowing crate must be angle-set to allow free access to the udder from both sides
- Adjust the farrowing crate outwards on day 3 after farrowing.



Tilted farrowing rail providing max access to the udder from both sides.

3. Feeding

- Follow the recommendations in H19.

4. The piglets

The piglets' size determines how much milk they can drink.

- Exchange of piglets within the first 48 hrs after birth does not affect milk yield
- Exchange of piglets after 48 hrs reduces milk yield
  - If the litter stops growing, exchange with an entire litter of strong piglets from another sow (see H11)
  - If individual piglets in a litter stop growing, collect them with a foster sow.

Palpate the glands thoroughly when assessing the sow's fitness after farrowing. The udder must be soft and attractive.

Up to 20 kg in weight loss during lactation is acceptable, ie. a moderate weight loss of up to 20 kg must be expected in sows with a high milk yield.

H18 – Milk yield

1.	Lactating sows drink 35-50 l water a day and produce a total of 230-340 kg milk during 4 weeks of lactation. Sows will not get enough water if the water pressure is low or if the filters in the water valves are blocked. This will lower feed intake and affect milk yield negatively. Check the water pressure before sows are transferred to the farrowing facility; do this in connection with feeding in one of the other farrowing sections when water usage peaks. You may also experience challenges with water pressure during intake of water to the liquid feeding system or when the wash robot is active.
1.	Minimum three feedings at even intervals during the day give an even energy intake during the day and will accelerate farrowing and increase the sow's milk yield. Feed the sows at 07.00 o'clock, 14.00 o'clock and 21.00 o'clock; in warm periods, avoid feeding in the middle of the day by instead feeding at, for instance, 05.00 o'clock, 11.00 o'clock and 21.00 o'clock.
2.	A healthy sow has a higher milk yield than a sick sow. It is therefore crucial that sick sows are treated as soon as possible. Sows undergoing antibiotic treatment need a high degree of udder stimulation to reach max milk yield, and at crossfostering they must therefore be given piglets heavier than the average of the herd. One of the most important factors to a high milk yield is the number of piglets by the sow: the more piglets a sow rears, the more milk it produces. Sows with ruined and non-functional teats, chronical mastitis and oedema have a low milk yield and should be culled at weaning.
2.	A low housing temperature is desirable to the sow but may negatively affect the piglets. By following the recommendations in H3 and H13 it is possible to reach a temperature in the farrowing facility of 18 ^{o}C without jeopardizing the wellbeing of the piglets.
2.	Room for the piglets makes massage of the udder possible and this will increase the milk production.
4.	Exchange of individual piglets in a litter later than 48 hrs after birth leads to agitation and fight for the teats. The result is interrupted lactation and inadequate massage of the udder, and subsequent reduced milk yield.