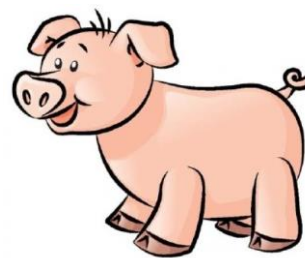


H8 – Crossfostering and nurse sows

When you crossfoster litters, you ensure that all sows rear as many piglets as possible and that piglets are nursed by the right sows.



1. Crossfostering

- Count the newborn piglets by the sows
- Move the smallest piglets (below 700 g) to a nurse sow for underweight piglets
- Start crossfostering when the piglets have had sufficient colostrum intake
- Count the sows' functioning teats – ideally, do this before farrowing to know how many piglets the sow can nurse *)
- Move the largest excess piglets to nurse sows
- Move as few piglets between litters.

*) If you use a **milk cup system**, crossfoster to 2 more piglets than the number of functioning teats.

Fact

For up to 48 hrs post-farrowing, you can add piglets to available teats without risking the teat drying up.

2. Nurse sow

Pig producers are advised to use two-step nurse sows. It is an advantage to identify potential nurse sows and intermediate nurse sows the day before you expect to use them.

The nurse sow:

- Receives excess newborn piglets
- Is a young sow in medium body condition that nursed its own piglets well
- Finished farrowing 4-8 days ago
- Does not receive more piglets than it has given up
- Is moved to the piglets' section if sectioned management is practised.



The 4-8-day-old piglets are moved to an **intermediate nurse sow** that has nursed for min. 21 days.

3. 'Intermediate nurse sow'

The intermediate nurse sow weans piglets that are min. 21 days old and receives 4-8-day-old piglets from the nurse sow.

The intermediate nurse sow:

- Is in medium body condition with teats accessible to the piglets
 - Nursed its own piglets well
 - Does not receive more piglets than it has given up
 - Is moved to the piglets' section if sectioned management is practised.
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H8 – Crossfostering and nurse sows

| | |
|-------|---|
| 0. | Provided that piglets are assured of colostrum, their survival or growth are not affected whether they are reared by their own mother or another sow. |
| 0. | Keep workload to a minimum by leaving as many piglets as possible with their own mother. |
| 1. | Crossfostering Up to 3-8 hours may pass before piglets take in milk from the new sow. The piglets that are moved must therefore be viable enough to manage the move. |
| 1. | Generally, piglets have had sufficient colostrum intake if the umbilical cord is dry all the way up to the umbilicus. |
| 1. | Large and old sows need a large degree of stimulation of the udder to nurse optimally. Consequently, at crossfostering they must always be given large piglets. This is also the case with sick sows that have recently farrowed. |
| 1. | Do not exchange piglets that are more than 48 hrs old as this increases the transmission of infection and causes disruption in the litter leading to a drop in daily gain. |
| 2. | The nurse sow If the nurse sow lies sternally 3-5 hrs after receiving a new litter of piglets, and milk let-down is not observed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administer pain relief according to vet's instructions before placing the piglets by the sow • Supply straw, hay or similar material. If, after 8 hrs, the sow has not accepted the piglets, move the piglets to another nurse sow. Give the nurse sow piglets of the same size and age as the ones it handed over to the intermediate nurse sow. |
| 2. | If you generally experience problems with nurse sows failing to accept the piglets, try leaving the newborn piglets and the sow's own piglets in the farrowing pen for 1 hour before separating the litters. <u>Do not:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave the nurse sow without piglets for 1-2 hrs – this will not make the nurse sow accept the new piglets any faster. • Leave 2 of the nurse sow's own piglets with the new piglets for 12 hrs as that will cause unrest in the litter because there are too many piglets by the udder for too long. It may possibly work if the number of teats correspond with the number of piglets it is nursing. |
| 3. | The intermediate nurse sow Intermediate sows may come in heat on the farrowing facility if, for a period of time, they have no piglets to nurse. Identify these sows to be able to pay extra attention to them in the last week before weaning and in the service facility. |
| 2.+3. | The nurse sow and the intermediate nurse sow In sectioned systems, move the nurse sow and the intermediate nurse sow to a pen in the section where the piglets are born, as nurse sows transmit fewer pathogen bacteria than piglets. Once the piglets are ready for weaning, this happens concurrently with the rest of the piglets in the section. |