

H14 - Supervision of the farrowing facility - of sows, piglets, facility and pen



Staff member inspecting piglets in a farrowing pen

Inspect all farrowing pens every day.

Before inspecting each individual pen, note the climate (warm/cold/draught). Do not step into the pen if all pigs are up and walking.

1. Stand in front of the farrowing pen and form a general impression of the piglets' lying behaviour and the sow's behaviour.
2. Assess the sow's health.
3. Check feed and water supply for sows and piglets.
4. Check the environment of the creep area
5. Lift the roof off the creep area.
6. Make all piglets stand up.
7. Assess the health of the piglets and initiate treatment if necessary.
8. Decide what to do with piglets that are not thriving.
9. Check whether the farrowing crate needs adjustment.



Piglets that should have been treated

Inadequate inspection in the farrowing facility may result in

- An increase in piglet mortality due to arthritis or other disease.
- An increase in dead and non-uniform piglets due to failure to move piglets with reduced growth in time.
- Insufficient knowledge of where and when to intervene against sick and weak piglets.
- Sick sows not being treated.

	Additional comments - Supervision of the farrowing facility
	It is important to inspect all piglets every day. Start with the youngest piglets to avoid transmitting infection to the older piglets. 0-7-day old piglets can quickly fall behind, and they must be moved within ½-1 day to survive. The remaining days up to weaning are also important. A piglet with an acute disease must be treated in time and a piglet with incipient arthritis can only be cured if treated in the early stages.
1.	The first impression of the situation in the pen is often fairly accurate. Non-uniform piglets, piglets searching by the sow's udder, piglets "huddling together" or sows lying sternally are among the indications that something is wrong.
2.	Examine the sows for reddening on the udder, leg problems, scapula, shoulder lesions, body condition etc. and initiate treatment if necessary. See H25 - Prevention and handling of shoulder lesions and H15 - Disease and treatment of sows.
3.	Every day, check if the piglets' trough is empty. Adjust the feed dose - see H23 - Feeding of piglets. Also check the function of the sow's feeder.
4.	Observe the pen without disturbing the piglets. The piglets must lie in one layer.
5.	If there are piglets that do not get up at the time of the inspection, make them stand up and examine them. Inspection is considerably easier using a central opening device in several creep areas at a time. Check whether the creep area is dry, warm, humid or wet. Also check if there is a draught in the pen. See H13 - The environment of the piglets
6.	Even though the piglets lie in one layer under the cover in the creep area and look healthy, it is still important to make all piglets stand up and walk around to see if they have leg problems etc. and to treat them. Remember: When the piglets lie down, you can see them, but you cannot see if anything is wrong with them.
7.	If piglet mortality rates are high, record causes of death for a period of time. When a piglet has received the recommended number of treatments and does not seem to be responding to the treatment, assess whether to continue the treatment or whether to destroy the piglet (see also H16 - Disease and treatment of piglets).
8.	Piglets that are sharp across the back and hollow around the flanks eat too little and should be moved to a foster sow as quickly as possible. See H12 - Foster sow for piglets with reduced growth. If the sow has stopped, i.e. an entire litter is not growing, find another sow with the same number of viable piglets, and let the two litters switch sows. Thereby the "weak" piglets are placed with a sow that is doing well, and the viable piglets are placed with a sow that has stopped. This may help stimulate the sow that had stopped. See H11 - Exchange of litters.
9.	Widen the sides of the crate as soon as the piglets are mobile (3-5 days). Sufficient space by the udder during suckling increases milk letdown by 25 %.