

## H4 - Preparation for farrowing



A farrowing pen, ready for farrowing to start

### A good farrowing process requires thorough preparation:

1. Transfer the sow to the farrowing pen min. 1 week before farrowing.
2. Supply 2.8 - 3.0 FU<sub>sow</sub>/day the day before expected farrowing and until farrowing.
3. Remove all dirt behind the sow the last 2 days before expected farrowing until farrowing is complete.
4. Flush the piglets' water supply before farrowing starts. For instance, put a clothes-peg on the drinker for a few minutes.
5. Supply extra water to the sow if required.
6. Provide bedding material in the creep area before farrowing.
7. Adjust the farrowing crate inwards.
8. Supply nesting material once a day a week before farrowing.
9. Install a heat lamp and turn it on the day before farrowing.
10. Prepare boards for the creep areas, equipment for obstetric aid and medication.
11. Act calmly around sows about to farrow.



The heat lamp is missing and the board in front of the creep area is not in place

### Inadequate preparation may result in:

#### Incorrect feeding

- Restless and stressed sows and prolonged farrowings.

#### Poor environment for the piglets

- Cold piglets are weakened and have high mortality rates

#### Poor hygiene

- Increased risk of the piglets becoming sick.
- Weak piglets.

#### Insufficient time for obstetric aid

- More stillborn piglets
- Weakened sows
- Piglets born weak.

<b>Additional comments - Preparation for farrowing</b>	
	The below points presuppose that the pens are clean and ready (see H1 - Preparation of the farrowing facility and farrowing pens).
1.	If you transfer the sows to the farrowing facility one week before farrowing, they will be calm and have adapted to their new surroundings and feed. It will be easier to inspect the individual sow in the farrowing pen and to make individual adjustments. Legislation stipulates that sows and gilts must be transferred to the farrowing facility minimum 3 days before expected farrowing.
2.	<p>Reduce the feed dose the day before expected farrowing and no later than two days before. It is essential to feed the sows the correct amount of feed up to farrowing.</p> <p><b>Too little feed, i.e. less than 2 FUsow a day, before expected farrowing increases the risk of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of energy for farrowing and thereby more stillborn piglets</li> <li>• Hungry sows</li> <li>• Stressed sows</li> <li>• Too low birth weight</li> </ul> <p><b>Too much feed, ie. more than 3.5 FUsow a day, before expected farrowing increases the risk of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M.M.A.</li> <li>• Prolonged farrowings and problems at farrowing</li> <li>• Constipation</li> <li>• Need for obstetric aid</li> <li>• Reduced feed intake and milking capacity after farrowing</li> </ul>
3.	A clean environment at birth reduces the disease frequency among the piglets. Obstetric aid is furthermore made easier and more hygienic.
4.	The water for the piglets has been stagnant in the pipes since the last weaning. It is therefore important to let each drinker flow for a couple of minutes until the pipes have been flushed.
5.	Farrowing is a feat of strength; blood that usually supplies the intestinal tract with oxygen now supplies the uterus, and the sow does therefore not need to eat during farrowing. However, it must be able to drink as it wishes. It is an advantage to have a clean water surface in the trough up to and immediately after farrowing as this will guarantee the water intake even for exhausted sows. Post-watering is preferable to pre-watering to avoid mess. <b>Note</b> that pens and creep areas may become wet if water is supplied manually, for instance with a hose. It is recommended to use a water system with the least possible water waste.
6.	Bedding provides a warm and accommodating creep area for the piglets. Use, for instance, wood flour. Do not use woodchips as this increases the risk of umbilical infections and umbilical hernia. It is important that the pen and the creep area are dry before bedding is supplied.
7.	Adjust the farrowing crate to reduce the risk of the sow crushing the piglets during and after farrowing. This increases the chances of a good farrowing process and as few crushed piglets as possible. <b>Remember</b> , the sows have generally become bigger and therefore need room for farrowing and to get up and lie down without problems. It is essential to carefully adjust each crate according to the size of each sow.
8.	Straw may constitute nesting material. The farrowing process must be as close as possible to the natural needs of the sow. The possibility for displaying nesting behaviour calms the sow. Remember to check that the manure system is capable of handling the bedding material.
9.	<p>Newborn piglets need heat. Turn on the heat lamp before the first piglet is born. If floor heating is not sufficient, keep in mind that it takes several hours before the lamp has heated the floor of the creep area. When the lamp is ready before farrowing starts, you will not need to interrupt other tasks to go and get it.</p> <p><b>Recommended location of the heat lamp (depends on the pen design):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If there is a hole for the heat lamp in the roof of the creep area, place the lamp here. Make sure there are no leaks between the cover and the lamp.</li> <li>• If there is no hole for the heat lamp, open the roof of the creep area and place the heat lamp by the entrance of the area. This is not an optimum solution as it increases the risk of a draught.</li> </ul>
10.	When the practical aids are in place, it will not need be necessary to spend time looking for them once farrowing starts. Have a list in the entrance room on which the tools required for obstetric aid are listed, so that nobody is in doubt what is needed. This could be a water bottle for washing before performing obstetric aid, farrowing gloves and farrowing gloves with a string (obstetric snare) and uterus mucus.
11.	Do not perform disturbing work processes near the sows prior to farrowing as that may stress the sows and prolong/stop the farrowing process.