

H4 – Preparation for farrowing

Aim:

A positive farrowing course, few stillborn piglets and a productive lactation period.

1. A good farrowing course requires thorough preparation

- Check the output of the nipple drinker – it should be min. 4 l/min.
 - Set the temperature to 18-20 °C.
 - Check that floor heat is turned on.
 - Place rubber mats in pens for sows at risk of developing shoulder ulcers
 - Transfer the sows to the farrowing pen 3-7 days before expected farrowing
 - Feed gilts 3.3 FUsow/day and sows 3.5 FUsow/day
 - Provide nesting material daily
 - Provide bedding in the creep before farrowing
 - Remove dirt behind the sow daily
 - Adjust the farrowing crate inwards the day before expected farrowing
 - Shut the hind gate
 - Turn on the heat lamp the day before expected farrowing
 - Prepare boards for the creep areas and equipment for obstetric aid and medication
 - Identify 'problem sows' (sows at risk of having a high percentage of stillborn)
 - Leave the water running in the piglets' nipple drinker for a few minutes.
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Fact

Do not perform disturbing tasks near the sows about to farrow. It may stress the sows and prolong/stop farrowing.



Act calmly around sows about to farrow

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1.	<p>The below points presuppose that the pens are clean and ready for the pigs (see H1 - Preparation of the farrowing facility and farrowing pens).</p> <p><u>Check that the floor heat is on:</u> Inlet temperature must be min. 42 °C, to reach the desired temperature in the creep when the first pig is born.</p> <p><u>Transfer the sow to the farrowing pen 3-7 days before expected farrowing:</u> Legislation stipulates that sows and gilts be transferred minimum 3 days and maximum 7 days before expected farrowing. Loose sows must be transferred max. 3 days before expected farrowing.</p> <p><u>Feed gilts 3.3 FUsow/day and sows 3.5 FUsow/day:</u> See H19.</p> <p><u>Provide nesting material daily:</u> Nesting material may be, for instance, straw. Nesting behaviour calms the sow.</p> <p><u>Bedding in the creep before farrowing:</u> 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 in the newborn piglets. It is important that the pen and the creep area are dry before bedding is supplied.</p> <p><u>Remove dirt behind the sow daily:</u> A clean environment at birth lowers the disease frequency among the piglets and it makes obstetric aid easier and more hygienic.</p> <p><u>Adjust the farrowing crate inwards the day before expected farrowing:</u> The crate must always match the size of the sow to allow the sow to get up, lie down and rest without difficulty. Upon transfer to the farrowing facility the sow must have plenty of space. The day before expected farrowing, adjust the crate inwards to minimise the risk of crushing of the piglets. Adjust the crates individually to match the size of each sow.</p> <p><u>Turn on the heat lamp the day before expected farrowing:</u> Newborn piglets need a high temperature in their immediate environment. Turn on the heat lamp the day before expected farrowing to make sure that the temperature in the creep has reached the optimum level when the first pig is born. Keep the entry to creep shut when you turn on the heat lamp.</p> <p><u>Prepare boards for the creep areas and equipment for obstetric aid and medication:</u> When the practical aids are in place, you will not have to spend time looking for them once farrowing starts. Have a list in the entrance room outlining the content of the 'tool box', so that no one is in doubt of what is required. The box must be dust-tight (= you must be able to close the lid), and must as a minimum contain farrowing gloves, gel and water bottle for washing before you initiate obstetric aid.</p> <p><u>Identifying 'problem sows':</u> Identify old sows and sows with a history of stillborn pigs and pay extra attention to these sows during farrowing.</p> <p><u>Piglet nipple drinkers:</u> 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 to flush the pipes thoroughly. The best approach is to let the drinker flow once the first pig is born to ensure that the water is as fresh as possible for the newborn pigs.</p>
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