CARE OF NEWBORN PIGS AND POST-FARROWING SOWS
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Healthy pigs start with a healthy sow!

- Good maternal line genetics
- Careful attention to nutrition
- Parasite control
- Manage the environment
  - Reduce stress by acclimating sows to human contact
  - Move to farrowing pen 3-4 days before expected farrowing
  - Temperature and humidity control
    - ventilation
  - Provide nest material and place cover over crate before and after farrowing
Why do the good die young?

- 65% of all post-farrowing deaths occur in the first 4 days of life
  - 42% of these are from crushing
- Baby pigs are born immunologically ‘naked’
  - Disinfect farrowing area
  - Make sure they get colostrum
- Baby pigs have very little body fat
  - Provide heat, eliminate drafts
The newborn pig has three basic requirements:

- A good environment;
- Adequate and regular nutrition
- Safety from disease and crushing

Individual attention pays off!
Care of newborn pigs

- Weak pigs get crushed so move them away until they are stronger.
- Creep areas on both sides of the sow keeps pig out of the ‘danger zone’. Use a 175W radiant heat lamp. Check temp at pig level.
  - Newborns need 90°F
- Lighter, smaller pigs need extra attention
  - Heated creep boxes, carpet, deep shavings
Evaluation of newborn baby pigs

- Was gestation full term?
- Is the amniotic fluid clear or meconium stained?
- Is the pig trying to breathe?
- Is the pig moving with good strength?

If you answered **YES** to all 4 questions, leave the piglet alone!
Resuscitation of baby pigs

- Provide warmth, clear airway, stimulate, dry off
- Ventilation, oxygen
  - Manually compress chest
  - Put mouth over snout and blow- yum!
  - Provide oxygen
  - Administer respiratory stimulants – dopram
- Stop bleeding from navel cord – tie off 2” from body wall and dip
Resuscitation of baby pigs

- Revaluate every 30 sec.
  - Respiration
  - Heart rate and strength
  - Mucous membrane color
  - Temperature
Resuscitation of baby pigs

- How to warm a chilled piglet
  - Dry pig thoroughly
  - Heat lamp
  - Heat pad
  - Wrap in towels
  - Hold close to your body
  - Wrap in Saran wrap (not face!) and place under heat lamp
  - DO NOT OVERHEAT!
Resuscitation of baby pigs

- **Respiratory assistance**
  - Required for a gasping or non-breathing piglet
  - Supplement oxygen if gums are purple but piglet is breathing
  - Give mouth-to-snout if not breathing
  - Administer Dopram – V (about 5 drops)
    - Topical under tongue
    - Inject into base of tongue
  - Stimulate breathing by placing 20g needle into base of snout (G25) until it hits bone then ‘peck’ with it.
Resuscitation of baby pigs

- Low heart rate but breathing
  - Apply chest compressions (90/min) to chest behind elbows
  - Mouth-to-snout every 2-3 seconds
Tube feeding pigs

- It is easy – learn how to do it!
- Equipment
  - Colostrum (any species but pig is best)
  - Rubber tube (12-14 Fr red rubber)
  - Syringe (20 ml)
- Procedure
  - Draw up about 10-15 ml ‘milk’ in a 20 ml syringe
  - Lubricate tube and push end over base of tongue and allow pig to swallow
  - Verify placement
  - Attach syringe and slowly inject ‘milk’
  - Pinch tube as it is withdrawn
First procedures for piglets

- The navel should be disinfected the day pigs are born using tincture of iodine.
- If possible, equalize litter size.
  - If several sows are farrowing within a 24-hour period, pigs can be transferred successfully from one sow to another.
  - Transfer bigger pigs in the litter, not the runts.
  - Best results occur if pigs are transferred the first 3 days of life and have received colostrum before transfer.
- Pig less than 2 lbs are at risk of death
Cross fostering

- Piglet weight variability contributes to mortality
- Foster litters according to piglet weights not just number of pigs in the litter
- Fostering has its downside
  - May not suckle
  - Piglets fight more
  - Increase sow aggression
  - Inhibits sow milk let-down
Cross fostering

Guidelines

- Even out weights of pigs in litters
- Foster piglets weighing less than 2# to a litter of all small pigs (preferable gilt mothers)
- Try to do it on the first day after birth
- Only fill available teat spaces
- Do not put poor doing pigs back with younger aged pigs
- If a foster mother is not available consider removing largest pigs from the sow for up to 4h/day for 2-3 days
Heat for pigs

- Heat lamps
  - Attracts pigs to light and warmth
  - Hover
  - Mats
  - Heated floor
- Needs to be 85-90°F
- No drafts—solid walls or pens
What’s normal piglet behavior?

- Nurse about 15 times in first 24 hours of life
- Consume 15 mL /feeding
  - $15 \times 15 = 225$ mL (1/2 pint!)
- Cold or a delay to first nursing contribute to death and disease losses
What’s NOT normal piglet behavior?

- Lethargic- does not get up to nurse with rest of litter
- Isolated away from sow or heat source
- Moving from nipple to nipple looking for milk
- Cold, flat, purple
- Vomiting or diarrhea
Processing baby pigs

- Usually done between 1 and 14 days old
- Less stressful when done at a young age
- Castration, teeth clipping, tail amputation, ear notching, iron injection
Processing baby pigs

- Castration
  - To make management easier and prevent boar taint
  - Castration at 14 days results in less negative behavior change (reduced nursing, increased lying) and heavier pigs at weaning with better subsequent weight gain compared with pigs castrated at 1 day of age
Processing baby pigs

- Clipping needle teeth
  - Done because the sharp teeth can damage the sow’s udder and other pigs and prevention of greasy pig disease
    - Pigs fight to establish ‘ownership’ of a teat
    - Can cause broken teeth, jaw infections, joint infections, poor doing pigs
  - Many producers have stopped clipping teeth with no untoward effects – give it a try!
    - Expect more facial injury but usually of no concern
    - Many depend on aggressiveness of your line of genetics
Processing baby pigs

- Tail amputation
  - Done to prevent tail biting in growing-finishing pigs especially in confinement
  - Tail removed $\frac{1}{2} - \frac{3}{4}$” from base of tail
    - Emasculator, wire cutters, scalpel, hot docking iron (less stress response)
  - Do NOT do on day of birth – wait until pigs have ingested colostrum (do on day 3 with iron shot)
Processing baby pigs

- **Iron injections**
  - An important and essential procedure for confinement raised swine
  - Not giving iron and result in anemia, scours, poor health
  - Most important for fast growing pigs
  - Give 1 cc on day 2-3 and another at day 14 OR give 1.5 cc on day 2-3. Avoid injection on day of birth.
  - Oral iron is OK also
Care of the sow after farrowing

- Begins with good care before farrowing
  - Comfortable, good feed, plentiful water
  - Sow/gilt vaccinations to protect pig from diarrhea
  - Parasite control
  - 3-4 day adaption period to farrowing facility
  - Too bad we lost gestation crates!

- Good care at farrowing
  - Comfort is a top priority
Care of the sow after farrowing

- When sow stops straining and shows interest in her litter you can assume she is done.
- Placentae are passed shortly after last pig or up to 12 h later.
  - If you do not see placentae in 12 h there may be another pig so check her.
  - If she continues to strain or has a smelly discharge check for another pig.
Care of the sow after farrowing

- Most sows eat very little for up to 48h post farrowing - this is normal
  - Provide no or very little feed the day of farrowing
  - By the day after farrowing increase feed up to 10-12#
  - Expect sow to drink 4-5 gallons/day – check waterer
Piglet savaging

- More in first litter gilts
- Usually firstborn pig they try to kill
- Separating pigs from sow until farrowing is complete is helpful
  - Check sow’s udder for swelling, redness, pain
  - Provide nesting material
  - Sedation (acepromazine, alcohol)
- By 24 h sow should be encouraging pigs to nurse
Questions???

We have competition!