

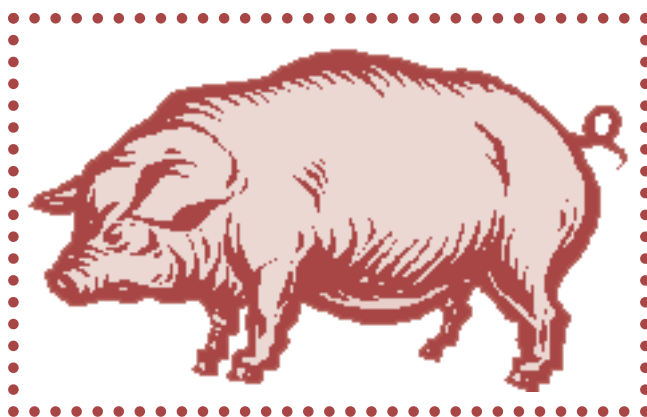


DEPARTMENT: AGRICULTURE  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

# Care of sow and piglets

— farrowing to weaning —

Phillip Majane



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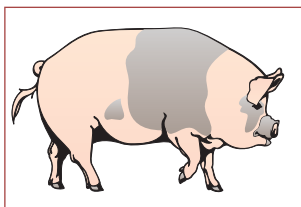
Private Bag X02, Irene 0062

Tel. (012) 672 9295

The most critical period in the life cycle of a pig is from birth to weaning. On average about two pigs per litter are lost during this period. Poor management is the major contributing factor, although the actual cause may be crushing, bleeding from the navel, anaemia, starvation or disease.

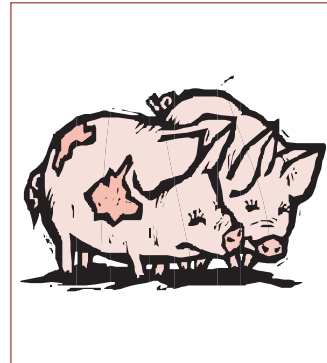
### The sow

- ✧ The average gestation period for sows is 114 days (3 months, 3 weeks and 3 days).
- ✧ The sow should be washed and disinfected before she is removed to the farrowing pen (preferably 4 to 5 days prior to farrowing).
- ✧ A sow due to farrow can be moved to the farrowing pen once a week, so she gets used to the farrowing crate to reduce stress.
- ✧ The udder should be properly checked for hard spots or lumps.
- ✧ Lumps can be treated with an antibiotic.
- ✧ Constipation often occurs but can be prevented by feeding sows green feed such as lucerne or high fibre (bran or pollard).



## Preparation for farrowing

- ✧ The farrowing pen should be erected at some distance from the other pens.
- ✧ Strict hygiene should be maintained at all times.
- ✧ It is very important to wash the farrowing pen properly after the sow and her litter have been removed.
- ✧ All dirt should be removed by using a high-pressure spray, scrubbing-brush or hard broom.
- ✧ The pen should be cleaned using an effective disinfectant such as a 4 % formalin solution. It should then left unoccupied for 2 to 3 days.
- ✧ Soiled and wet bedding should be removed daily and replaced by dry bedding.



## Farrowing

It is very important to supervise the farrowing process

The newborn piglets have three basic requirements, namely:

- ✧ A suitable environment.



- ✧ Adequate and regular nutrition.
- ✧ Absence of disease and crushing.

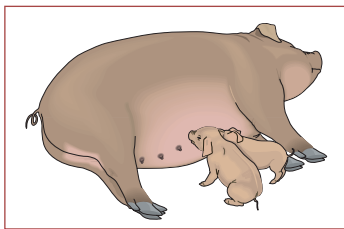
The following factors should be considered after the sow has farrowed:

- ✧ Watch out for constipation in the sow.
- ✧ The afterbirth must be discharged.
- ✧ Check the sow for fever as a result of infection.
- ✧ The sow must have enough milk—agalactia may cause the litter to die from hunger.
- ✧ Agalactia and mastitis require immediate treatment and a specialist should be called immediately.



## Management after farrowing

### Navel cord



- ✧ The navel (umbilical cord) should be cut as soon as possible, a few days after the piglets' birth.
- ✧ The length of navel cord is about 12 cm and a section of 2 cm should be left. Use disinfected scissors.

- ✧ The navel should be disinfected by using an iodine solution to prevent bacterial infection.

### Teeth clipping

- ✧ It prevents injuries during fighting among piglets and it also prevents biting and scratching of the sows' teats.
- ✧ Take care when clipping teeth to avoid damage to the gums.
- ✧ It is safe and effective to leave about half of the tooth.
- ✧ It is also advisable to clip teeth using a suitable tusk clipper.

### Iron injection

- ✧ Piglets are born with limited iron reserves and the sow's milk does not provide the iron requirements of the piglets that are reared on concrete floors.
- ✧ Iron deficiency causes anaemia, which results in poor appetite and growth.
- ✧ Iron supplements should be administered as soon as possible after birth (3 to 7 days) by means of an injection in the neck.

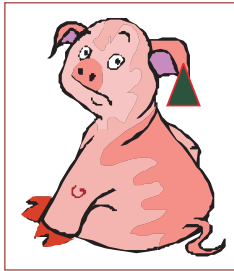


### Tail docking

- ✦ It reduces tail biting and infection when the piglets are older.
- ✦ Leave a stub on the tail about 80 mm long.

Tails and teeth should be clipped before the piglets reach three days of age.

### Ear marking



- ✦ Piglets should be earmarked for identification purposes.
- ✦ There are various types of ear tags which can be attached to the ears.
- ✦ The ear number system of the SA Pedigree Association should be used for pedigree purposes.

For further information contact the  
ARC-Animal Nutrition and Animal Products Institute  
Private Bag X02, Irene 0062  
Tel. (012) 672 9295  
or  
Resource Centre, Department of Agriculture  
Tel. (012) 319 7141/7085