

# FARROWING CHECKLIST

## FACT SHEET



Farrowing is a critical time in the reproductive cycle and requires the right supplies, cleanliness, and warmth for the newborn piglets. Proper planning and preparation are key for a successful farrowing process.

### FEED & WATER

- Feed**
- Provide fresh feed shortly after farrowing.
  - Remove spoiled or stale feed.
  - Sows/gilts should begin eating within one day of farrowing.
  - Feed intake is crucial during lactation for adequate milk production, while not losing body condition.
  - Sows that lose excessive body condition may have difficulty rebreeding in a timely manner and should have piglets weaned early to prevent further health issues.

- Water**
- Provide clean, fresh water at all times. If provided in a bowl or tub that the piglets access, make sure to manage the water depth.

### DAY ONE PIGLET CARE

- Farrowing**
- Check sows every 30 minutes once farrowing starts or, even better, monitor them throughout.
  - Dry off newborn piglets with a CLEAN towel.
  - Assist piglets by moving them to the udder, ensuring they receive colostrum and start suckling immediately.
  - Move shivering piglets under the heat lamp.
  - Sows with piglets can be aggressive and unpredictable. Ensure it is safe to handle the piglets.

- Colostrum**
- Piglets MUST consume colostrum within six to 12 hours after birth.
  - Colostrum provides concentrated energy and antibodies that are essential for immune system development.
  - Colostrum from its mother is preferred; other sows may provide colostrum in cases of necessity.

## WEEK ONE PIGLET CARE

- Iron**
- Piglets are iron deficient at birth. They will become anemic without iron.
  - All piglets **MUST** have an iron injection (regardless of indoor or outdoor production) before four days of age. Research has also shown that repeating the injection 15 days later will improve growth.
  - Iron can be administered orally or via injection in the neck.

- Castration**
- The earlier you can castrate piglets after the farrowing date, the better (e.g. 2 to 3 days of age).
  - Castration performed at any age requires analgesic (pain control) to help control post-procedure pain.
  - Castration after 10 days of age requires anesthetic (numbing or sensation removal) and analgesic (pain control).
  - Access to these products requires a veterinary prescription in some provinces. Contact a veterinarian before farrowing to prepare for this.
  - A scalpel (#10 or #15 blade) is the preferred instrument to perform castration.

- Tail Docking**
- Tail docking is the surgical removal of the tail and is rarely performed in outdoor production.
  - Reduces unwanted behaviours such as tail biting.
  - Analgesics (pain control) are required at any age.
  - If performed, it is better done early in life (e.g. 2 to 3 days of age) because there is less bleeding and the wound heals faster.

- Ear Tagging**
- Ear tagging does not require analgesics.

- Pain Control**
- Analgesics and anesthetics are required for a number of steps in processing your piglets. Consult with your veterinarian regarding products, dosage, and protocols for each. Some provinces require prescriptions to access these products.
  - Ensure you receive proper training prior to performing any of the aforementioned procedures.

- Fostering**
- Required in cases where a sow cannot nurse her own litter (e.g. injury, death, savage behaviour, too many piglets).
  - Foster sows need to be in good condition and nursing well.
  - When fostering piglets, ensure the original piglets and foster piglets are approximately the same age so they can all compete for milk fairly.

- Hand Feeding**
- If a sow cannot nurse and fostering is not an option, hand feeding can be done.
  - Pan or syringe feeding is recommended. Bottle feeding can lead to aspiration and/or aspiration pneumonia.
  - A high-quality bovine colostrum (check the IgG level) can be used in the first days, and swine milk replacer used for continued feeding.
  - The piglet(s) and colostrum or milk replacer must be kept warm for successful digestion.
  - Piglets must be fed frequently for success (1- to 2-hour increments to start).

Source: Canadian Pork Council Small Scale Pig Farming Handbook