

RARE BREED



PIG KEEPING

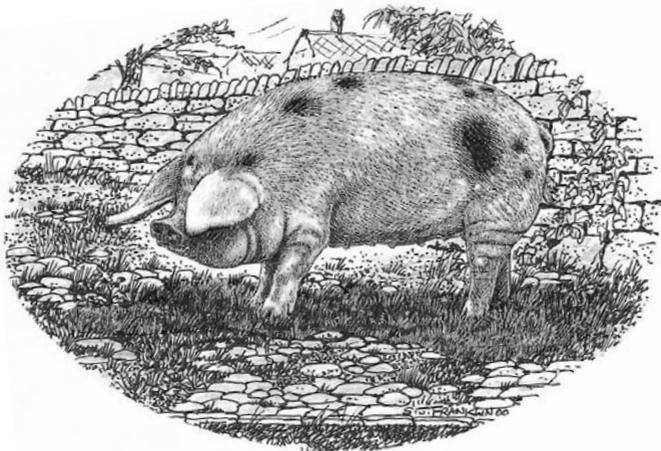
edited by Richard Lutwyche

Rare Breed Pig Keeping

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From features in *Spot Press*, the newsletter of the
Gloucestershire Old Spots Pig Breeders' Club

Illustrations by Sue Franklin



Published by
Gloucestershire Old Spots Pig Breeders' Club
2, St Johns Road, Stansted, Essex, CM24 8JP

The production and publishing of this book was made possible by the generosity of Tillie Brown of New York, a long-standing member of the Gloucestershire Old Spots Pig Breeders' Club.

**Tillie Brown, in honour of her husband, Hunter, who loves
Gloucestershire Old Spots pigs as much as she does.**

Rare Breed Pig Keeping

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Produced by Printco, South Woodchester, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL5 5ET 01453 873030

Cover photo Gloucestershire Old Spots sow enjoying a wallow *(Mrs E J Crowe)*

ISBN 0-9545172-0-2 2003

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Preface

The following gems of porcine wisdom have been taken from *Spot Press*, the newsletter of the Gloucestershire Old Spots Pig Breeders' Club, since 1990. They all relate to high welfare, non-intensive husbandry but whilst they were written for keepers of Gloucestershire Old Spots pigs, they are almost entirely adaptable to any of the other rare and minority breeds.

The people who have contributed have, between them, a unique and hard-earned knowledge of such pig management and we are grateful to everyone mentioned herein for their contributions. You may find small contradictions in some of the advice given. This is quite understandable as pig-keeping is not an exact science and both opinions will be equally valid so that you can make your own choice. You will also find some joyous pearls of wisdom.

The reason for assembling all this wonderful knowledge is that there is little written specifically for the small-scale or novice pig keeper and if it helps more people come into the satisfying world of keeping pigs and thus increases the numbers of our rare breeds, then a small contribution will have been made to their conservation. It is not totally comprehensive but will give the aspiring keeper of rare breed pigs a good grounding in much of their management.

Unlike most such text books, the inclusion of individual 'essays' interspersed with questions and answers from our '*Dr Spot*' page makes this an easy book to dip in and out of.

I hope you enjoy learning about pig management but especially that you enjoy keeping your pigs. Pigs are the most wonderful animals and it is no surprise that those who start keeping them get hooked for life. This applies to our rare breeds especially. Whichever breed you choose, and I would recommend each and every one of our rare breeds, I do urge that you join not only the Rare Breeds Survival Trust but also the breeders' club or society dedicated to that breed. There you will find helpful people with a wide knowledge and the sense of not being isolated in your chosen activity.

In closing, I must express the Club's heartfelt thanks to Tillie Brown of New York whose generosity made this book possible.

Richard Lutwyche
South Cerney, Gloucestershire
June 2003

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Lament of a HOG Farmer

In the present climate, this seems entirely appropriate. GOSPBC Committee Member, Gabriel Dudley, found it among her late mother's effects.

Out in the rain, that threatens to flood,
Wading through acres and acres of mud,
You lug tons of food for hungry swine,
Who trip you and nip you and won't stand in line.

They follow you round for scratching and such,
And lay on your feet, if you dawdle too much,
They won't breed when you want, but do when you don't.
A more obstinate creature you never have seen
If you don't treat them right, they can really be mean.

They'll run through your fences and hide under trees,
Then slyly watch while you crawl round on your knees
You can call their names sweetly,
Then names I won't mention,
But they won't come out, till THEY want YOUR attention.

You try to house them when the weather is raw
So the piglets can be born in nice clean straw.
They balk and they blunder, refusing to heed
Both your gentle coaxing or buckets of feed.

Finally exhausted, and with a tired reproof,
You bodily shove them under any old roof.
You go to bed, cursing the hog farmer's state
Then rise up, determined, to sell ALL-CUT rate.

So out to the hog pen your hot rage to vent.
You watch with delight, while they suckle and play,
And forget all the problems you had yesterday.
In the face of such beauty, irrational to see,
And you know why a hog farmer, you'll always be!

Anon.

Chapter 1 - Beginning

FOUNDING A HERD

by George Styles

For the purposes of this article I am making certain assumptions. Firstly, that you know something about pigs, secondly that you have the basic facilities for pig breeding or are prepared to get them and finally, and most importantly, that you have a deep interest in and love for the breed you choose. This being so, how best to become a pedigree breeder?

First of all, join the relevant pig breeders' club or society and you will meet many delightful people with similar interests. Then read all you can about them. Next, visit the shows, watch the judging, listen to the comments of other breeders and ask questions. You will find that the breed enthusiasts will be only too ready to help you and you will learn in this way an enormous amount about your chosen breed from practical people, many of great experience. By these means you will come to know what you want to aim for in your future herd.

By the end of the show season, you will be ready to start but do not rush out and buy the first ones you see, still less the cheapest!



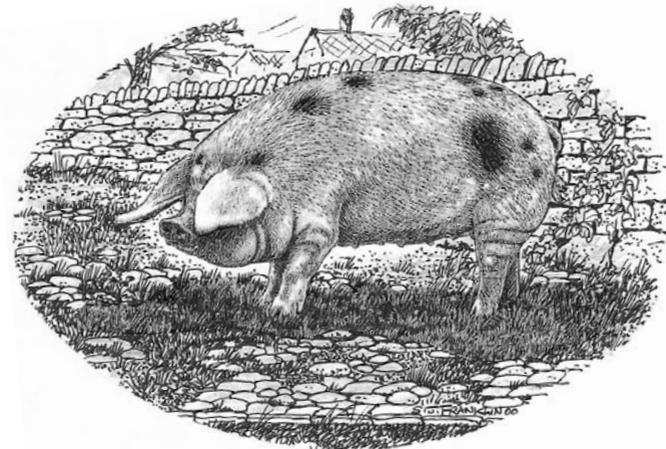
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The best place these days to buy your foundation is at the Rare Breeds Show & Sale in early September*, or, if you decide upon Gloucestershire Old Spots, their spring Show & Sale but before you go, decide how much you are prepared to spend, ideally how many pigs you want and what sort. I would suggest that your starting foundation stock should be in-pig gilts; you can buy your stock boar or arrange your services later.

Go to the show, watch the judging and make up your mind which pigs you like best and in what order. Then, next day at the sale, buy the best whatever she may cost up to your limit. It is better to have one good one that really fills your eye than several of poorer quality. You are, after all, laying the foundation of your herd which you want to be one of the leaders in future years. Having got this one, then if you can afford it, by all means have others. Maiden gilts too if they are what you like. Despite what I said about boars above, you may get the chance of a suitable, good young boar. By all means buy him if you do.

The main thing to remember is to get the BEST. They cost no more to keep and you will develop a herd to be proud of. Take it slowly and build up from the sound basis you have started with. In future years you can expand and add other bloodlines but do it in the same way that you started. Good luck and welcome to the world of pedigree pigs; you will find us a happy band of brothers. And sisters.

* *Now the BPA Pedigree Pig Sale*



"Like a pig needs a hip pocket."

THE IMPORTANCE OF SELECTION

by Richard Lutwyche

George Styles has hit the nail on the head when he urges people to look for quality and insist on buying the best and I would commend his article FOUNDING A HERD to everyone - even those who have an established herd and are looking to expand it with fresh blood.

The following is a direct quotation from the NPBA (now BPA) Journal in 1953:

Spring each year is dominated by the series of Shows and Sales which the Association organises in various centres. They are as usual, fully reported elsewhere, but reference must be made to a new function, the Gloucestershire Old Spot (sic) Breeder Members' Luncheon. This was very well attended and looks like becoming a prominent feature in our Diary. Incidentally, the G.O.S. breed seems to be going from strength to strength. Many members are probably not aware the breed was one of the most popular in the country 30 years ago, but that the indiscriminate retention of practically every pig for breeding resulted in a quick loss of popularity. There is a lesson for every breed to be learnt from G.O.S. history which is that however good trade may be culling should still be rigorously practised. It has only been during the last years that pig keepers have begun to appreciate that the G.O.S. has still a definite contribution to make.

* * *

This last year (1996) has seen an unprecedented demand for breeding stock. Weaners have changed hands for as much as a £100 a head. Breeders' 'phones have been ringing night and day with people pleading for stock.

In such circumstances, who could blame anyone for selling everything that lived to eight weeks? Is it surprising that a leading breeder at this year's Show & Sale should say *caveat emptor* - buyer beware - with the clear implication that it was the duty of the buyer - however novice - to ensure the suitability of stock on offer?

And yet the mistakes of our forefathers are there for everyone to see. From being the most popular breed in 1921, the Gloucestershire Old Spots crashed to near extinction in just 10 years and despite the optimism expressed in the 1950s, had not recovered any semblance of popularity until the RBST came along in

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1973. Even now, the total breeding herd is numbered in hundreds not thousands and we have a very delicate and precious seedling to nurture.

The age for a revival is upon us. The public are revolting against intensive farming methods. There has never been more interest in matters such as smallholding and organic farming since the last war. The GOS pig has caught the public's attention through BBC Radio 4's *The Archers*, articles and features in the national and local press and in 'country' magazines. It has derived respectability by being kept by HRH The Princess Royal. Today, there is more opportunity for a hardy outdoor breed with character than for generations. But if we repeat the mistakes of the 1920s, then we shall not get another chance.

There are in place tools to help this from happening. The Traditional Breeds Meat Marketing Scheme means that there is a viable alternative market for stock not good enough for breeding. It does not reach all of you yet and it will not pay anything like £100 a weaner but it does pay a very fair and reasonable price and is the only system in memory to reward pure bred GOS pigs, black spots and all, with a price the same, if not better, as can be achieved for the most highly bred, high powered commercial hybrid. And not even on the same terms. The scheme recognises that GOS have extra back fat and that is where eating quality lies and rewards sensibly finished pigs accordingly.

The GOSPBC endorses and carries out Card Grading at the RBST Show & Sale. In the teeth of some high powered opposition, the Club has continued to do this for the good of the breed. Buyers at the Show & Sale can see immediately the worth of pigs on offer as judged by the breeders' peers.

But away from the Show & Sale, it is indeed *caveat emptor*. It shouldn't be. Sell your best gilts for breeding and reap a good and just reward. But if you are making a long term commitment to pig breeding - and to a breed which has come close to extinction in the past and could again - be honest and strong. Anything but the best should not be kept for anything other than the meat trade. And by operating through the Meat Marketing Scheme, you will achieve a good return for well produced stock.

So, it's short term or long term thinking. The future of the breed is as much in your hands today as anyone's. Please, don't be greedy, just fair.



Chapter 2 - Sex

REGULAR BREEDING and why it's so important

by Dave Overton

Having a small herd of GOS with boars at stud, I get a regular flow of telephone calls from keepers of just one sow to arrange for a visit to the boar.

Asking about their previous litters and when they were born, I sometimes get the reply, "Oh, I have decided to breed one litter from my sow a year". In asking "why?", I get many varied reasons but the most frequent include the following:

"I can't cope with more than one litter a year whether it's selling for pork or bacon."

"It won't harm the sow."

"She's more of a pet than a breeding machine."

Now, I'm sure there are breeders out there reading this who'll say, "I only breed once a year from my sow". All I can say in reply is congratulations and I'm glad you haven't had any problems!

REGULAR BREEDING

When we talk of regular breeding from our sows, we are thinking of serving the sow at the first heat after weaning - usually 4-7 days - whatever the age of the piglets when they are weaned - which will give you roughly two litters a year. (Commercial pig farmers wean early and endeavour to get 2.5 litters a year or five litters every two years).

The exception to this rule is when the sow, at weaning, is in poor condition in which case you can delay the service for 3 or possibly even 6 weeks to enable her to put back some body weight.

Having said that, if you really can't cope with two litters a year, with careful management you can extend the period to two litters every 18 months by keeping the sow on a maintenance ration with plenty of exercise while she is empty but to achieve this, your sow management must be of the top quality or problems will arise.

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THE PROBLEMS

One of the biggest and most common problems to arise from leaving a sow empty for too long is that she will get overweight, not only her body condition but internally too when her ovaries become encased in fat which can lead to atrophy of the follicles. Although she will continue to come on heat regularly and the service is seen to take place, the fact that no eggs are being shed from the ovaries means that she cannot conceive.

One of the main conditions which takes place when the ovaries are too fat is that cysts form on them. This also occurs in cattle which, being larger, can be treated by the vet manually rupturing them allowing the ovaries to function - an option not available in the smaller internal organs of the pig resulting in the sow becoming barren.

As with over feeding, so under feeding too can lead to fertility problems. Because the ovaries are being starved of nutrients, the eggs are not shed and due to the resulting unhealthy state of the uterus, cysts can then develop on the ovaries.

A REGULAR LITTER BREEDER

So, as you can gather, you can ruin a breeding sow with kindness as well as with cruelty. In my opinion, it is therefore a great deal easier to keep your sow breeding regularly. This, in turn, reduces the cost of each pig reared as the costs of keeping the sow will be spread over so many more pigs.

With the increasing demand for GOS pork and bacon, through the Meat Marketing Scheme Finishing Units, I am sure outlets can be found for these extra pigs. Just apply a little market research.

In summary, I recommend that you aim for your sow to have two litters a year to keep her ***A REGULAR LITTER BREEDER!***



PIG BREEDING CYCLE - HELPFUL HINTS FOR BEGINNERS

by Anne Petch

Separate gilts selected for breeding from boars by 16 weeks of age. Gilts are best reared in pairs. If this is not possible, house a single gilt on a public part of the farm or holding so that she can see and hear people and animals.

She will come on heat at about 5 months old and can be mated at 6, but it is best to wait until 8-10 months as she is still growing; indeed, she will not have reached her mature weight until her second litter.

Swill is Unsuitable and Illegal

At this time she should be receiving 4-5 lbs of good quality 14-16% protein meal per day, or equivalent. Swill is both unsuitable and illegal for breeding pigs. We have found that by increasing the ration by 2 lbs a day, (6-7 lbs given a day), for 14 days during the service period, helps to improve the conception rate. The gilt should be wormed a couple of weeks before mating, be well, fit and in 'comfortable' condition. Grossly overfat or very thin 'under done' gilts often will not breed until the correct condition is reached.

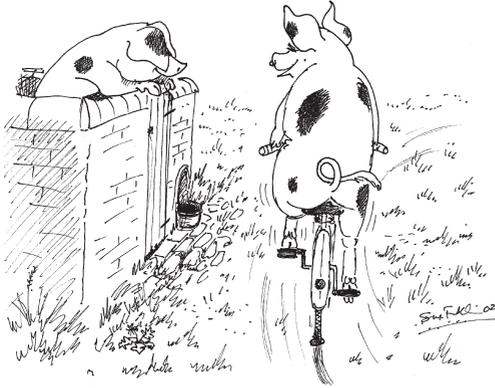
The selection of a suitable boar is important, a young boar should be paired with gilts, older boars are usually used only on sows. A large, heavy boar can damage a small gilt's back and legs and may easily damage her internally; this is particularly nasty as it may not be obvious straight away.

Rather Like a Leap-Frog!

Pigs come on heat every 21 days and stay on for between one and three days. The changes during heat are various. the vulva swells and becomes very pink, she will stand to back pressure, (both hands spread out halfway along her back and weight applied, rather like a leap-frog!). At this test, if ready for service, she will stand rigid, her ears half way up! Temperament may also change. Placid sows can become agitated and rather fidgety; rather flighty sows can be quiet and tractable. Gilts which have been kept on their own may not be so obvious but after a few days near a boar, or even penned next to a sow who is cycling regularly, will soon do the right things.

She will be at the height of her heat a few days after the reddening begins. When standing to back pressure she should be 'introduced' to the boar who will 'talk'

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"... or even penned next to a sow who is cycling regularly..."

to her, chase her around a bit and prod her in the tummy with his snout. If properly on heat, she will stand still and allow the boar to proceed. If not, she will keep on the move or even try and bite him, in which case take her out and try again half a day later.

If standing, the boar will mount her. Care must be taken to see if she is served in the correct place, the boar may aim too high or too low. The

service will take 10-20 minutes. Once the boar is in position he may appear to go to sleep, but things will be happening! He will deliver approximately 200cc of seminal fluid, (compared with 5cc from a bull and 1cc from a ram), followed by a tablespoon of 'bumpy' jelly which blocks the passage to retain the fluid. After serving, leave the gilt in a quiet pen alone and re-serve 6-9 hours later - two services per heat will usually suffice. I try to give an extra one for luck! Repeat the tests 21 days later for a couple of days. If all is as before, repeat the mating. If nothing happens, she is pregnant. Some people adopt a 'help yourself' system of running the boar out in a field or big pen with his gilts. This can be a very hit or miss method of operating and where a bunch of sows come on heat together, the boar may stick to one favourite, or try and spread himself around all of them, resulting in a lot of small litters or returns, or go off the idea altogether! Avoid mixing strange pigs or any other stressful situations during the early stages of pregnancy as pigs can re-absorb their litter or part of it if badly upset. Deep mud, crowding, being chased by silly dogs or children, scrambling up or down steep banks, kicks from ponies or cows, bad feeding, certain drugs, low flying hot air balloons, fireworks and 'man handling' can all induce abortions during the last few weeks.

Usually, none of these happen and everybody is happy and settles down to wait for the arrival of the litter 115 days after service or, put another way, 3 months, 3 weeks and 3 days (see page 61). They can be a few days either side of the farrowing date, old sows tending to be later each time.



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Q. How hard should I allow my boar to be used?

A. Figures issued by the Cotswold Pig Development Company seem to be sensible so are reproduced here as a useful guide:

<i>Age of Boar</i>	<i>Matings per Week</i>
Under 7 months	Do not use
7-8 months	1 mating per week
8-12 months	2 matings per week
12-14 months	3 matings per week
14+ months	4 matings per week

If the boar ejaculates, count it as a mating. Allow no more than two matings in 24 hours and do not use older boars on more than two consecutive days.

Dr Spot



SERVING SUGGESTIONS

When a sow is served, whether naturally or by AI, it is inevitable that some bacteria normally present in the vagina, will be carried through the cervix into the uterus, according to the Cotswold Pig Development Co.

In the early part of oestrus, oestrogen levels are high which stimulates standing heat, and these render the uterus very hostile to bacteria and colonisation by bacteria is therefore restricted.

However, later in oestrus the uterus becomes less hostile and sows mated later are more likely to suffer bacterial colonisation with subsequent pregnancy failure associated with vulval discharge.

The company suggests that if a herd suffers from discharge associated with infertility, service procedures should be reviewed to avoid serving late in the heat period, because on some farms three or four matings can give poorer results than just two.



A GUIDE TO ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION

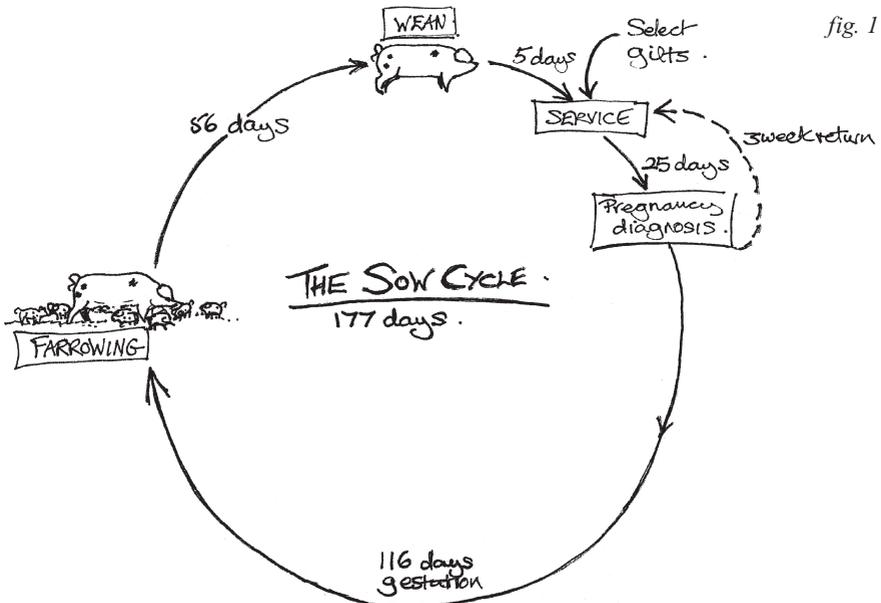
by Guy Kiddy

Introduction

Artificial Insemination (AI) is an excellent means of introducing new blood into your herd, or as an alternative to owning a boar. It is cost effective compared to natural service, with a success rate that should be almost equal to that of the boar, with the added bonus that disease will be unlikely to enter your unit which could happen if you are sharing a boar with someone else.

Heat Detection

This is obviously vital to successful AI. A typical sow cycle is shown in fig. 1. If inseminating a gilt watch out for her first heat, record it and watch for the second 21 days later. Keep recording heats until she is ready to be inseminated at about 9 months. With a sow, heat detection is usually much easier because she will normally come on heat about 5 days after weaning.



The cycle varies according to how long the piglets remain with the sow.

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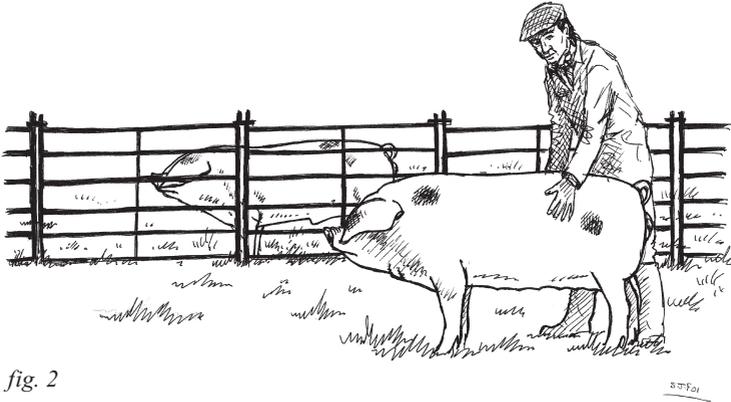


fig. 2

Heat detection needs to be carried out twice a day to ensure it is not missed. The usual sign is a swelling and reddening of the vulva although this is more pronounced in some animals than others. She should also stand when pressure is applied to her back, (fig. 2). Insemination should be performed about 24 hours after the sow stands to the 'back pressure' test.

Method

When your sow or gilt shows signs of heat, order your semen - it will take 24 hours to arrive. The semen will be delivered in a polystyrene box and it should be left in this container and stored at room temperature of around 20°C until needed. Each tube or bottle of semen will contain about 1 - 1.5 billion sperm.

There will be three bottles or tubes so that the sow or gilt can be inseminated three times in total. This should help to ensure successful insemination (fig. 3).

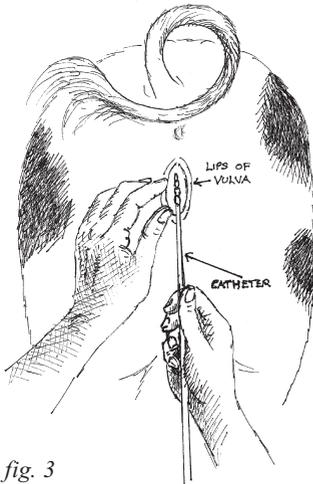
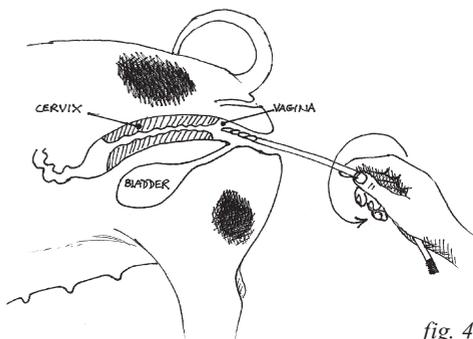


fig. 3

If the semen is in a tube, it will be ready to use. However, if it is in a bottle then it will need mixing with the diluent supplied before use. Mixing should be carried out by gently shaking the semen (small bottle) and then mixing with the diluent (clear fluid). Replace the cap and check for leaks around the thread. Only mix just before insemination. With either type of semen container, place it in your pocket to warm the semen just before use. Cut the end off the bottle or tube ready to place it on the end of the catheter.

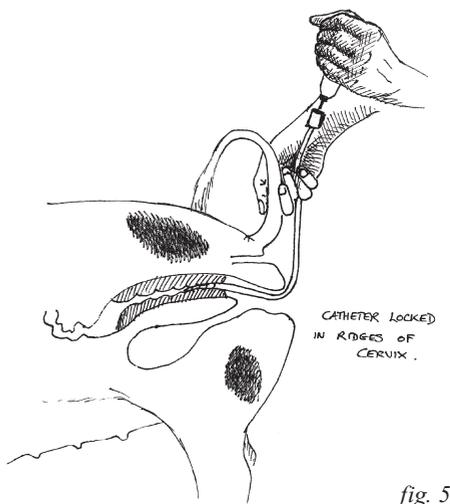
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Apply a little liquid paraffin or KY jelly to the spiral end of a new catheter. Hold the catheter in the middle with a bend, so that when it is pushed into the sow, the tendency is for it to travel upward and so miss the bladder entrance (fig. 4).



Clean the sow's vulva with tissue paper. Hold the sow's tail with the middle, fourth, and little fingers, using the thumb and index finger to open the vulva. Insert the catheter firmly, but with care. It is necessary to maintain an upward angle as the catheter enters the vagina. This ensures that the catheter misses the bladder (figs. 3 & 4).

When the catheter reaches the entrance to the cervix an obstruction will be felt. Using the thumb and index finger to control the catheter, turn it an anti-clockwise direction (towards the left side of the sow) until it is locked into the cervix (fig. 5).



This means that if you let go of the catheter it would spring back. If you cannot gain a lock, gently remove the catheter by turning clockwise, and try again.

Hold catheter with thumb and index finger making sure that it is well locked into the cervix. This **lock** provides a seal, preventing the semen from flowing back to the vulva. Take the disposable insemination bottle from your pocket and place on the catheter. Apply **GENTLE** finger pressure until all the semen is discharged into the uterus. It might be necessary to remove the bottle and allow it to fill with air once or twice during insemination.

When both the bottle and catheter are empty, first remove the bottle from the catheter, then wait a few seconds before removing the catheter from the sow.

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Remove it by turning it in a clockwise direction. A suitable method of environmentally-friendly disposal should be adopted for the discarded disposable catheters and plastic insemination bottles.

Never use disinfectant, soap or detergent to lubricate the catheter before insertion into the sow as this may affect the fertility of the semen. Remember to watch the sow for return of service 21 days after insemination. If this does not happen, you may assume that the insemination was successful.

Any unused semen should be disposed of by washing it down the drain; it should not be kept for the next sow that needs serving. The shelf life at room temperature is about 5 days; refrigeration does not extend this.

Remember to get the registration details of the boar in question from the AI station so that you can successfully register your pigs when the time comes.



Chapter 3 - Pregnancy and Farrowing

THE MANAGEMENT OF SOWS DURING PREGNANCY & FARROWING - HINTS FOR BEGINNERS

by Anne Petch

There are several systems of management for farrowing sows; to describe them and their relative merits would nearly fill a book. So I will describe our system; it does not mean that this system is better or worse than another but it fits our pigs, our buildings and ourselves!

Our pregnant sows are kept in small groups, grazing outside with arks in summer and in large pens in winter. One week before farrowing they are individually housed in smaller grass paddocks, or insulated pens with heat lamps and outside runs in winter. During the summer in an ark or well insulated pen with plenty of straw a sow will generate enough heat to keep the piglets warm. We put 2" of polystyrene under 1½" of concrete on the floors and 1" under corrugated iron on the roofs, the headroom is low to retain heat but there is also ventilation. Not all of our sow pens have farrowing rails, these are mainly used for first time gilts and very large sows. At the time of individual penning sows are treated for worms, which ensures that baby pigs are immune for eight weeks. They are scrubbed with a lice and mange wash, and their feed increased to 6lbs/day. Half a bale of straw is put into the sleeping area. This advance preparation gives them a few days to settle in before farrowing.

Test For The Presence Of Milk

The udder will develop a few days before farrowing, milk being present anything from 24 hours to immediately before birth. The teats stand out, get bright pink and the udder will feel warmer than usual when the milk is coming in. To test for the presence of milk, gently rub the udder with the palm of the hand, then squeeze the base of the teat with finger and thumb drawing them down the end of the teat, repeat a couple of times. If the sow is in milk, two small white spots will appear, if she has a great deal, you may even get a jet!

The next signs are much nearer farrowing, the ligaments either side of the tail get slack and the vulva becomes pink and swells. One of the most delightful things about farrowing is watching the sow make a nest for her litter. She will

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break up and carefully arrange all her straw bedding carrying it in her mouth. If outside, some spend nearly all day collecting grass and anything they can get hold of. Sometimes I do not agree with their choice and have to retrieve horse rugs, small logs and, from one particularly enthusiastic gilt, nearly a dozen bundles of pea sticks! Occasionally sows do not make nests so do not rely on this happening.

I do not like them to farrow under a hedge and if they are intent on so doing we persuade them to get into the tractor transport box and take them to an enclosed sow pen.

For pig breeders who have many sows, attending every farrowing is impractical, but worth looking in from time to time is advisable. If you have only one or two sows it is worth sitting up with them, we find very often that we save several piglets by doing so. It is usually during late afternoon, evening or night when all is quiet. If the signs mentioned so far are present the sow is looked at every couple of hours. She should be lying quietly and it is most important that she should not be disturbed. It is usually easy to see her from an adjoining pen or going very quietly to the entrance of the ark. Sows do not show a water bag as do cows or ewes. The first you see is a small amount of dark red liquid as she strains. At this stage one can go in with her and sit quietly by her rear end taking two towels, one to help remove mucus from pigs not breathing properly, the other to dry off the sow. Eventually the first pig is born. Very occasionally the sow may resent the presence of a 'midwife', in which case it is better to leave her alone and keep an eye on her from a distance.

Knowing When It's Over

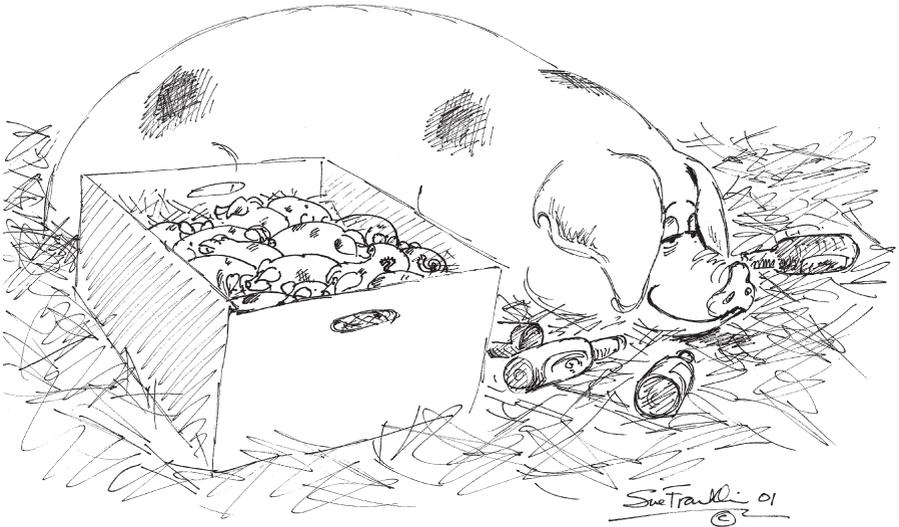
Sows take anything from two to six hours to farrow, often pausing in the middle and turning over, sometimes there is a small amount of afterbirth expelled at this point. The sow's uterus has two parts, rather like the finger and thumb of a glove. When all the piglets are born the remainder of the afterbirth is expelled; it will half fill a two gallon bucket and should be removed and buried in the muck heap. Replace any wet straw with dry and leave the family quiet for a few hours. Later, the sow can have a warm, sloppy meal feed. Make sure she dungs within 12 hours of farrowing - taking her out for a short walk will often do the trick if she has not.

Nine times out of ten everything runs smoothly, but if a sow has been straining for 30 minutes or so with no result, it is better for the inexperienced to get

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veterinary help. A very long farrowing, say over 18 hours, often means dead pigs, the sow's uterus may get fatigued half way through and may need starting up again with drugs.

If the sow is upset by the new pigs I put them into a large cardboard box with hay to keep them warm, placed in a corner of the pen until she has settled down. It very often means that she will have a large litter and will quieten down when she gets going properly. Very occasionally they do not settle, so are treated to a Guinness mash, approximately 4 pints with 1lb meal, which sends them to sleep without stopping the milk as drugs are inclined to do!



It is normal for pigs to be born backwards as well as forwards and stillborn pigs are not unusual, as long as there are not too many of them and they appear normal, the most likely reason is that the cord has broken off too soon. Sows will split a little during the birth of the first couple of piglets but this is not serious as long as it is kept clean until healed, and any bruising will disappear in a few days. Of course, heavy bleeding or any smelly discharge should get veterinary attention.

Make Provision For The Little Pigs

The little pigs are very adventurous and care must be taken to ensure that if they

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can get out of the pen or ark, they can climb back in again. A small ramp of well trodden down earth or straw will take care of low steps.

The sow feed is gradually increased over the next few days, we calculate it at 3-4lbs for the sow and 1lb for each piglet, so a sow with ten piglets will receive 13-14lbs per day. If she is out on plenty of good young grass this amount can be reduced, but not below half the indoor ration.

Creep feed is offered from 10 days but is not taken in any quantity until about 3 weeks. It must be changed every few days as it goes stale. We use a lamb creep for outdoor litters, one feeder will do for about 8 litters provided it is positioned centrally where all the pigs can find it. Sows are suckled individually or in pairs, when they must have one ark each. We wean at 8 weeks when the little pigs are put into fattening pens and the sows moved near the boar pens where they will be served when they come on heat approximately 4-7 days after weaning. Pigs stay on heat for a short time so must be checked with the boar every day. During the waiting time they and the weaners are wormed.

Then the whole cycle starts again!

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Q. What is the opinion of the gurus on allowing sows to eat afterbirth if they want? I have been told it encourages cannibalism, in which case in the wild very few piglets would have survived to carry on the breed. Some sows I find are enthusiastic 'hooverers' (to guard against possible wolves?) and the only trouble I have is ladies in the same enclosure being careless with their teeth when collecting it from New Mum and taking a slice out of her, by mistake, necessitating stitches. But it does avoid the trouble of new born piglets being drowned under the afterbirth. I have seen it being collected with the speed of a jet-propelled ferret.

A. *I have never heard that allowing sows to eat afterbirth causes cannibalism and do not believe it does. At one time, the given wisdom was to remove it as soon as possible but it is now suggested that sows get valuable nutrients from it. I have never known any traceable problems from this practice or benefits either. The type of problem mentioned is new to me but I feel that sows about to farrow should have their own private quarters - I know that they sometimes surprise you though*

George Styles

PREGNANCY AND FARROWING PROBLEMS

by **George Styles**

In order to get litters of good quality pigs in sufficient numbers, there are certain methods which will help to ensure success. In no natural process can success be guaranteed but the odds against failure can be shortened.

Sows can be weaned at any litter age to suit your system, from three weeks to eight; but whatever age is used then they should be got back into pig as soon as possible. It is a great mistake to miss a heat as it is then often difficult to get them back in pig. We prefer to wean on a Thursday or a Friday then they will usually come on heat the following Tuesday or Wednesday - in either case before the weekend with obvious advantages.

Move the Sow from the Pigs

As soon as they are weaned - always move the sows from the pigs, NEVER *vice versa* - there is then far less check to the pigs. Give no food or water to the sow for 24 hours, then limited water and only 2 lbs (1kg) of food, stepping it up over the next three days to 8 lbs (3.6kgs). This should ensure that the milk dries up quickly and minimises udder problems and distress to the sow. If possible, serve the sow two or three times on successive days and then reduce the level of feed to about 5 lbs (2.25kgs) for the next three weeks. There is some evidence to suggest that this policy reduces the number of embryos that are re-absorbed.



-always move the sow from the pigs

Plenty of exercise for the next two or three months is important as is feeding to condition. She should not be too fat, nor too thin either.

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Move her to her farrowing quarters about 10-14 days before she is due to farrow. Step up her feed a little to ensure that the pigs are well grown at birth and strong. Weakly, undernourished pigs are very vulnerable. For the last two or three days before farrowing, cut the food back a little and watch for any signs of constipation. Should this happen - and it is a dangerous state - give her a warm bran mash with molasses mixed in. Put about two double handfuls of bran in a bucket, add enough hot water to make a thin paste, stir in 2 or 3 tablespoons of molasses, cover and leave to cool and thicken. Add some of her usual food and serve. In my experience this will usually do the trick but you may have to repeat the process next day. Never use laxatives.

A Firm Believer in Rails

I do not personally believe in farrowing crates but am a firm believer in rails and they are worth using whatever type of farrowing quarters you have. When a sow lies down, she likes to steady herself against the wall of the pen. The rails make sure she lies down away from the walls and gives the little pigs a refuge.

Farrowing for a gilt is a much more traumatic and, indeed, painful experience than it is for a sow. For the latter it is, as I once heard it described, like shelling peas. In fact, I once saw a sow farrow while eating her breakfast producing nine pigs standing up before returning to her bed to produce the other four. None was any the worse for the experience.

As far as possible, leave her to get on with the job on her own. When she has finished, you can take further interest. Do move quietly and talk to her; if she seems at all uneasy, leave her alone otherwise she might get up and tread on the pigs. It might even be worse for you; I have had to get out quickly before now although most Gloucesters are not like this. (The Primrose line is the exception and needs special care).

Do not give her any food, only water, over the next 12 hours or so UNLESS SHE WANTS IT. If she does, then a light meal is in order and take a few days to build her feed level back up to appetite. Give her all she wants and plenty of water. I like a sow to be able to drink her food, since, to produce milk, she needs water in quantity. We are told that a six gallon dairy cow needs 15 gallons of water so you can see that a sow needs a considerable amount - all she will drink, in fact.

Get the Vet in

If a sow has difficulty in farrowing and it can happen now and again, do not attempt to deal with it yourself - get the vet in. Not all vets are good with pigs

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but he or she will at least know what he or she is dealing with and have at least theoretical knowledge. If you do have a good pig vet as we do, then you have a treasure indeed.

There are one or two other problems which you may meet. One is False Pregnancy. Everything happens as usual; dropped belly and drills, sometimes even milk but no pigs. Very frustrating and annoying but there is nothing to be done except get rid of her as she will be unlikely to breed again.

Then there is the sow or gilt who, usually after her first litter, never comes into season again whatever you do. Again, the best solution is to scrap her. Another is the gilt who attacks and kills her litter. I have known one who did this who was quite normal the next time but this is not usually the case and again, I would recommend the same solution. I am incidentally not referring here to the gilt who does not realise what a little pig is when he first comes round to the front to say 'hello' and gets chewed. This is usually a 'one-off' occurrence and she will settle and farrow normally afterwards. All these problems are uncommon but I have experienced them and they are annoying and I hope you don't get them.

I realise that all this is very much a council of perfection and you may not be able in practice to carry it all out. We cannot always. But it is a good guide and is what I have learned from my own experience of some fifty years together with discussions with other pig breeders. You have, however, the advantage of having a breed that will co-operate with you and has the temperament to be an excellent and caring mother.



Q. I have referred to several books on pig keeping and am confused as to what age I should wean my piglets. Do you have any advice?

A. *I can understand the confusion as few books seem to discriminate between intensively-reared pigs and others. Some commentators recommend early weaning from about three and a half weeks but this is a waste of all the inherent values in Spots. The sows are prolific milkers and whilst you might decide to supplement the piglets' milk with a creep feed from 3 weeks or so, (by no means absolutely necessary), you are wasting the benefit of the sow's own rich resources by taking the piglets away so soon. Also, GOS pigs weaned early can show signs of problems later on, so unless there is a good health reason for early weaning, leave them on the sow for as long as possible.*

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At six weeks, the sow will be receptive to the boar again, so there is some logic in weaning then if you want to put her in pig straight away. Although you cannot always tell from the usual swelling of the vulva that the sow is on heat when she has a litter on her, you will often notice that her milk changes for a day or two and that the piglets start scouring as a result. Most people with just a few pigs are happy to let the piglets stay with the sow until they reach 8 weeks when they are easily weaned. The only thing to watch out for is if the sow is getting unduly fed up with their attentions or her teats are over-sore in which case, a few days earlier weaning is fully justified.

Dr Spot



Q. Is it always necessary to give young pigs iron injections?

A. *The injecting of new born pigs with iron is usually recommended by vets and in the pages of pig keeping journals. When we first began our pig breeding operation, we followed this advice until we experienced a severe scour attack which caused heavy piglet losses.*

We changed our vet to a pig specialist who asked that we take any dead piglets straight to the surgery in order for him to carry out a post mortem. His conclusion was that the scouring could well have been brought on by the shock of the iron injection and that we should revert to the old method by throwing a turf into the creep - known in this part of Somerset by the old adage "Throw a sod in or let the sods out!"

So, we have practised this method for the last 20 years with excellent results. But I realise that some breeders have to keep pigs on concrete without access to rough grazing. To me, there is no finer sight than to open a yard gate and watch a sow run out into a field with a loud 'woof' with her litter trying hard to keep up with her.

Ray Sims

The question of iron injections raised has brought forth the following correspondence from Mrs Pamela Treadgold:

The Nu-Wave Iron Plus paste goes in very easily into the front end (mouth) of a new born piglet and causes no trouble. It is also not half as messy as the injectable iron and it doesn't drip.

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This is useful to know but George Styles, like Ray Sims in his advice above, does not recommend spending money unnecessarily:

Regarding iron injections or paste, if pigs are outside this should be unnecessary. If inside, a shovelful of soil in the creep area is just as effective and probably more so. It is also cheaper.



Q. I am new to pig keeping and have read that I should clip the teeth of my piglets. Why? Is it really necessary?

A. Tooth clipping of newborn piglets is common practice in intensive pig units. Piglets have few distractions so most of their time is taken up with feeding. Tooth clipping becomes necessary to protect the sow's udder and other piglets from biting. It is done by snipping off, down to gum level, with a pair of dog nail clippers or similar, the corner incisors and little tusks which are to be found one third of the way along the jaw, sticking out at an angle of about 45 degrees. Piglets can inflict, during the feeding scrumage, a surprising amount of damage with these sharp little teeth, both to their mother's udder and to their litter mates' faces.

Mother gets sore and so spends more time lying on her udder to protect it from the piglets, the injured piglets are more easily pushed away from the udder, leaving more for the voracious feeders who have inflicted the damage in the first place. The milk supply tends to diminish and the litter becomes uneven in size with the smaller piglets getting more and more depressed. There is also the possibility of infection and fly damage.

Tooth clipping is not usually necessary in situations where the piglets have straw to play with, room to roam around and a mother who milks generously. Keep an eye on new litters, if you notice scratches on the sides of the piglets' faces this could be the start of a spate of biting. Make sure that your sow is receiving enough food of the right nutritional quality to help her to milk well, small teated sows are more prone to udder damage generally and blind teats get bitten in frustration when no milk comes out. Provide the piglets with an interesting environment so that they are not bothering the sow all the time, give them plenty of bedding to play with, a clean container of baby pig food in the creep area, (the problem may stem from the piglets being hungry), and try placing a fresh turf in the corner of the pen every day, or a little log of wood. Outdoor litters rarely give problems of this sort, they find other scrapes to get into!

Anne Petch



HAND REARING PIGLETS

by Liz Crowe and Mary Cook

At the beginning of December 1995, I had a friend's sow to farrow on my premises. She farrowed in the evening of 8th December with 4 live piglets and 4 stillborn. The next day she was up but not too keen to eat but by the second day, she was obviously not well. She wasn't keen to move; when she did get up she was very lame on one of her front legs, she had no appetite and she was refusing to feed the piglets and her milk was obviously rapidly drying up.

The vet came, checked that there were no dead piglets left in her, took her temperature which was extremely low and injected her with antibiotics and steroids. She had lain on one of the piglets and it was obvious the other three were going to need hand rearing. We bought a 5 kg drum of Denkavit Lamb Milk Powder from our local feed mill and found some baby's bottles and teats.

The vet's wife, Mary Cook, had come with her husband on his first visit and kindly offered to start the piglets off for me as she had hand reared one before. I was very relieved as the sow was going to take a lot of looking after and couldn't go back to her owner as the weather was very cold and she only had an outside pen for her. Mary's account follows as to how she tackled hand rearing the piglets:-

Mary's Account

A couple of weeks before Christmas I was drafted in to drive my husband on his rounds as he was suffering with a bad back. I met Liz Crowe who was struggling to look after a very sick sow who had given birth to 4 piglets but who was very lame with a low temperature.

Three of the porkers had survived so far but the sow had little interest in them and, with her severe lameness, it was thought that she was likely to lay on them. Since her milk was also drying up, I offered to lend a hand in an attempt to hand rear them. I had done this years ago with the runt of a litter which was returned to the farmer a month later.

We brought the piglets home in a cat box, armed with bottles, teats and Denkavit milk powder. I put them in our dog's travelling cage with a hot water bottle under a fleecy blanket, with an oil radiator near by and they settled well. Feeding didn't go so well, as they had already had some sow's milk from their

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mother and greatly resented the rubber teat being forced into their mouths. They wouldn't suck and although I enlarged the teats' holes and kept squirting milk in with my thumb and forefinger, it was a screaming match and I was worried they weren't getting enough milk.

Something Else in Desperation

After waking the whole house trying to feed the pigs twice during the night, I decided to try something else in desperation in the morning. I had hand-reared a baby parrot on a mixture of Milupa baby cereal and we try and always keep some in the house in case my husband brings home any sick parrots as they will usually accept hand spoon-feeding with this when they are ill. I made some up with cooled boiled water and gave them a little on a teaspoon into the side of the mouth. They quietened down and seemed to enjoy the taste! So I put more onto a flattish plate and held it on the floor and tapped it with a spoon repeatedly to get their attention. After a bit of sniffing, one came over and put his nose in and sucked some up but after snorting about a bit, he did get some onto and around his mouth and obviously enjoyed it.

I still kept persevering with the milk every two hours as before but each time would put down a dish of Milupa which they walked in so I tried to hold it off the ground a bit and soon they would all make a dive for the plate and it was gone in seconds. So, I took the dog's deep pottery water bowl and put that down and it stayed in place much better. After 2 more days on Milupa, they were lapping so well, with no diarrhoea, that I decided to try again with the Denkavit lamb milk but making it around half strength - a very large heaped tablespoonful to a pint of boiled water. They showed no interest in just milk so I added a crumbled Weetabix which they then accepted. There was always the dogs' water around which they would lap after each feed. Their motions were always firm and they settled well after each feed and became playful and more lively when awake. After a week, they went back to Liz's as we were due to go away for Christmas.

Feeding regime

Initially Denkavit lamb by bottle 2 hourly - not successful.

Then Milupa baby cereal - breakfast cereal flavour - made to a thin porridge consistency, 2 hourly - started lapping.

After 3 days 1 heaped tablespoon Denkavit in 1 pint of boiled water cooled - add 1 Weetabix crumbled.

Can reduce to 3-hourly feeds.

Water as required.

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Back to Liz

After a further week, they returned to me. The weather was bitterly cold so I had them in our utility area which, luckily, has an enclosed part. I used loads of newspaper on the floor and continued feeding them 2-3 hourly in a very large dog bowl. I mixed the Denkavit slightly stronger (2 heaped tablespoons in 1¹/₂ pints of water with 1 Weetabix) as they always seemed so hungry. Care has to be taken not to over feed them as this can cause scouring so any increase has to be gradual. They do have a different shape from pigs reared on the sow; they have pot bellies and not much muscle on their legs and after a feed they look as if they might explode. They always had access to clean water in a large, heavy, shallow roasting dish as even at that age, they can lift a fairly heavy dish.

I had them under a heat lamp on towels initially but once the sow was able to return to her owner I put them out in the farrowing quarters on straw under a heat lamp. Although it was easier initially to have them in the house, as it only meant mixing the feed and giving it to them which was much easier at night, I stopped the night feeds at around 10 days so that they had their last feed at about 11 pm and the first of the morning at around 7 o'clock. The milk must be tested for temperature on the back of the hand and the feeding bowl kept very clean as milk quickly goes off. At about 2 weeks, I started putting down a few creep pellets, very gradually at first and then replaced the Weetabix at 4 weeks with a bit of sow and weaner meal gradually making it thicker until they were five weeks.

Fortunately, they had the colostrum and a good start on the sow's milk for the first couple of days. According to one of my textbooks, (*The Sow - Improving Her Efficiency*), newly born piglets will obtain on average 20ml of milk at each hourly suckling or about 500ml a day. Thus, to cater for a litter of 10, sows should be producing 5 litres of milk daily at the start. This peaks to 10 litres at 3 weeks and then gradually declines.

I used 2 x 5kg drums of Denkavit altogether and several packets of Weetabix. It was extremely time consuming and all other activities have to be worked round the feeds but it's all worth it in the end and I could not have managed without Mary's invaluable help.



SELECTING BREEDING PIGS FROM A LITTER

by Anne Petch

Selection is best done early or left as long as possible. If fattening the whole litter for pork or bacon choose when they have reached the desired killing weight. If this is not possible it will have to be done at weaning, although 3 weeks of age is a good time if the little pigs can be inspected without upsetting them or their mother.

A large, well-lit loose box or yard is the best place for sorting them out. Have a pen for rejects, and put them in there as soon as faults are spotted. You must be able to see them walk from a distance of at least 15-20 feet away to see any bad movements.



Process of Elimination

Start by a process of elimination - chuck out any with bad underlines (superficial or very unevenly spaced teats). There should be 14 evenly spaced, well developed teats in GOS, 12 in other rare breeds. Crooked legs, uneven feet, crooked jaws, mismarked pigs, runty, slow growing pigs, and those that show genetic defects (extra toes, etc.,) must all go into the reject pen.

Of the pigs left, single out those most evenly fleshed, (no hollow backs or dips behind the shoulders), with well filled hams and conforming well to the BPA 'Standard of Excellence' (see p. 58).

A gilt being kept for breeding must be able to stand up to having many litters. She needs a strong, level back, depth and good "spring" of rib to provide heart and lung room, well developed bone and neat, even feet. The underline is most important, the best milking sows are those with well-developed teats starting

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well forward. A small teated sow will probably lose teats with each litter. She must be of a calm but bold disposition, not shy or nervy.

A boar should be masculine but not snappy or bad tempered. He also should have good teats as teat size and spacing is heritable, a badly teated boar can leave bad underlines in a herd which may take years to breed out. Legs are important, especially the hind ones, a little spring on the pasterns is desirable, too much may mean a weakness later. Again good depth of heart and lungs, good fleshing, and lastly, but by no means least, his testicles must be firm and of roughly even size. Pulpy, soft ones often mean infertility.

Ingredient X

The final point we are looking for is "Ingredient X", an extra quality or "presence" which the best animals have. A mixture of character and conformation, the look of having been neatly put together with perfectly matching parts to make a "tidy" whole.

If you have any left after this ruthless selection and are having difficulty in deciding between them, go for the one that "fills your eye" - your favourite. Do not, however, be tempted to forgive bad faults, as the animal will be around for some time and it may stop you from showing it or selling it on to another breeder.

Feeding and rearing from now on are important. It is as easy to spoil good young stock by over-feeding and putting too much weight on young developing joints and bones as it is to impoverish them with underfeeding. At 18 weeks both sexes should be receiving approximately 4-5 lbs (1.8 - 2.25 kg) of good quality sow feed per day, to be increased by a pound or two before service or starting work. No pig is totally perfect, if you do find one then shoot it and stuff it as you may never find another!

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Q. Why are heavily spotted GOS pigs considered less desirable?

A. By spotty GOS, I presume the questioner means pigs with more than 20% colour. The answer hopefully covers both commercial considerations as well as the show ring.

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It is an unfortunate fact that the prejudice against all coloured pig breeds continues, for no good reason. The GOS would appear to have carried far more black in the early years of the herd book and this was gradually reduced. As pig production moved away from coloured sows - particularly Saddlebacks and Large Blacks - it would seem that GOS breeders produced pigs with a smaller number of spots. The result of this was that many of the noted show champions had only two or three spots as recorded in the publications of the GOS Breed Society and later the NPBA (now BPA). In the December 1992 edition of a national pig magazine, there is a note to the effect that a large abattoir is deducting 20p/kg for all coloured pigs - all the profit gone! If a breed is to be financially penalised solely on colour rather than considerations of carcase/meat quality, there is very little a breeder can do except crossbreed or, in the case of the GOS, become a coloured breed with the colour bred out!

The show ring brings different considerations; the main one being that each judge has a different opinion. My own objection to heavily marked pigs, particularly if they have a large number of very small spots, is that as the pig grows older, the spots tend to fade, leaving a blue skin undertone rather than a clear black spot. This is clearly listed as a fault on the breed standard (see p. 58). Pigs with a small number of large, clear spots, do not seem to develop this fault.

Over the last few years, the amount of colour on the breed would appear to have increased, possibly because of the large number of breeders keeping pigs without the commercial market as their first consideration. I have also noticed that some families are more likely to produce heavily marked pigs (40%+ black); i.e. Princess Freda, Ellen and Dolly, whereas others, in particular Bluebell, very rarely produce pigs with more than three or four spots.

Andrew Robinson



Q. I was keen to help rare breeds and I bought a GOS in-pig gilt and advertised the piglets but all I got was replies from people who wanted them for meat. What is the point of keeping them if no one wants them for breeding?

A. If you put pigs in the context of species and understand that just to stand still in terms of numbers, each sow needs only to reproduce one gilt and one

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boar in her lifetime for ongoing breeding. With a potential to produce 200+ offspring, there is obviously a requirement to select only the very best for breeding from. The pig, after all, is a meat bearing animal and if we didn't eat them, they would have no place in modern life, so do not despair when people want them for fattening. With rare breeds especially, it is absolutely vital that we only breed from the very best stock and are ruthless in culling anything that does not totally measure up to the breed standards. It will not help this or any other breed to use poor quality stock as our next generation of parents. I appreciate that for the novice, full of enthusiasm, there is a desire to try and preserve everything for breeding but it is much better for the breed to wait until you are knowledgeable enough to recognise a strong breed type and in the meantime, sell the rest for meat production. Bear in mind, for instance, that there are 60-70 working stock boars in the breed at any one time, each with a working life of 3 - 4 years and that the national herd would need to expand significantly before many more were justified. Yet there are literally hundreds of pure bred boars produced in this country every year. Be ruthless and think of the good of the breed.

Dr Spot



Q. I seem to get quite a few pigs born with hernias. What is causing this?

A. *Most of the data gleaned appears to indicate that hernias are the result of an inherited problem and that if you are seeing pigs with hernias regularly, think seriously about culling your boar and buying in an unrelated one. Of course, it could equally be one or more sows carrying the gene so try to keep records over a period of time on all litters born which should help you to identify the culprit. There is no evidence to suggest that a hernia retards development significantly but there is always the danger that the problem may worsen during play or fighting and thus any pig with a hernia should be taken up to pork weight and slaughtered.*

Dr Spot



Chapter 4 - Pedigree Matters

Litter Notifications

It seems that at least once a week, a call comes in from someone who has bought a pig and now has decided that they want to breed from it. Has it been tattooed? NO! Was it birth notified? NO! And now there is another disappointed customer and another dead end in breeding terms. OK, so they may have known when they bought it that it couldn't be registered but you know what 'enthusiasts' such people can be. It costs next to nothing to notify your litters and little effort to tattoo young piglets, actions which could prevent the sorts of situations that arise all too frequently. And it could just end up helping to expand the breeding herd. HELP PEDIGREE PIGS AND NOTIFY ALL YOUR PURE-BRED LITTERS.



HERD BOOK REGISTRATION - A GUIDE

by **Ken Harris,**

Former Pedigree Secretary of the British Pig Association

Your Editor has suggested that some guidance on the pedigree recording system operated for Herd Book purposes by the BPA might be helpful to those who have become pedigree pig breeders in the more recent past. It is not a complicated or involved procedure. It is fully explained in the literature issued by BPA to those who join.

What follows is written on the basis that the reader is a member of BPA and has foundation stock which either are entered in the relevant Herd Book or are eligible to be entered. Please spare time to read through the information:

Registration is often a mis-used word, perhaps arising from knowledge of pedigree terminology associated with other species of farm or domestic animals. With BPA breeds there are two distinct and different steps for recognition of pedigree status. The first of these is birth (or litter) notification, which should always be described in this way.

Birth notification consists of lodging a special form with BPA. This form is obtainable from BPA on application, accompanied by a fee payment. The BPA will be pleased to supply details of cost.

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The submission of the form is an essential preliminary to eligibility for future Herd Book entry. One birth notification form covers one litter of pigs. The form asks for details about the litter, i.e., when born, number of pigs born/reared, sex of each pig and the ear number allocated to it, the ear number and name of both parents together with herd letters of their breeder(s). The form must reach the BPA not later than 10 weeks after the birth. Once the form is accepted all pigs on it are regarded as eligible for Herd Book entry at any future time.

Ear-marking is by tattooing in the case of the Gloucestershire Old Spots breed. (Also Middle White, Tamworth and British Lop, the last of which does NOT come under the control of the BPA). You will have been informed of your Herd Designation Letters (a three letter combination unique to you). These are tattooed in association with the numbering. Physical marking must be carried out and is the only official method of identification. It is not sufficient to allocate numbers on paper-work only. An ear tag can be used only as a complementary identification. Marking must be completed **before weaning or mixing with other animals**.

Ear numbers are allocated separately and individually to every pig reared. Male pigs should be marked first. Numbering starts at '1' and continues in sequence through the litter. If there are eight pigs, the next litter will be numbered from nine, assuming this contains ten pigs, then the last number will be eighteen. The third litter would then commence from nineteen and so on.

All males likely to be used for breeding must also be marked with your herd letters (HDLs), either in the right ear, looking over the head of the pig, with the consecutive number in the left ear, or, both marks in the left ear, leaving the right ear blank.

In practice, it may be simpler to mark HDLs on every male, since selecting as breeding pigs will not be feasible until later maturity.

Females must be marked with their consecutive number in both ears. Inside one and outside the other. Use of HDLs is optional unless an animal is to be exported.

Herd Book entry is the step alternatively known as registration in pedigree pig recording. It requires the submission of an application form identifying the pig for which a Herd Book number is required. Again, the form must be ordered through BPA by pre-payment or a fee - one form, one pig, in this instance.

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A Herd Book number is necessary for any pig that is retained in a herd for pedigree breeding purposes, or which is sold to another breeder for that purpose. If either parent or a litter does not have a Herd Book number when a birth form is checked by BPA, the form cannot be accepted until this has been rectified.

Responsibility for Herd Book application is that of the breeder in relation to pigs he retains in his herd. Where pigs are sold for pedigree breeding, submission of the Herd Book application is a matter of agreement between Vendor and Purchaser. The form must be signed by the breeder and the pig must be named with his prefix and the appropriate family name, and name numeral.

Naming of pigs should not take place until a Herd Book entry application is made. The name consists of the breeder's herd prefix, the strain (or family) name and a numeral, i.e., 2nd, 3rd, 4th etc. In the case of numerals, 1st is not used.

The strain/family name follows that of the sire in the case of a boar, (except in cases where the breeder has selected to use the cyclic breeding system and has notified the BPA accordingly - GOS breed ONLY), or that of the dam in the case of a gilt. Name numerals should be sequential as shown above, or, the ear number of the pig can be adopted for this purpose. In the latter case, No. 1. would equate to 1st and would not be used. The breeder chooses to use one or the other of these methods. It must then be retained permanently.

Naming of pigs sold privately should not take place unless a Herd Book application has been made. It could be mis-leading, creating an impression of Herd Book entry before an official BPA certificate has been issued. Such a certificate will only become available by application as already described.

If you want to emphasise for a Purchaser the genuine Herd Book status of an animal you have sold, and you are issuing a private pedigree certificate, simply describe the pig as "eligible for the Herd Book". Ensure before doing so that you did notify the birth to BPA. The pedigree details on your certificate will automatically show the strain/family to which the pig belongs.

I hope any of you who were not fully familiar with some of the points covered would have found this article helpful. Needless to say, the BPA office staff will be only too pleased to clarify anything about which you remain uncertain.



TATTOOING TECHNIQUES

by Richard Lutwyche

All pigs kept for future breeding must be litter notified and tattooed in both ears by eight weeks old. Tattooing techniques are quite easy once you have overcome the initial fear of hurting or damaging the piglet. It is much easier to handle a piglet which is three weeks or so old than one of 8 weeks (weighing around 20kgs) and the earlier you can do this after 21 days after birth, the better.

You will need a pair of tattooing pliers or forceps plus the requisite numbers and letters and some antiseptic tattooing paste in black or green. The BPA demands that the ear number allocated to that pig is tattooed on the outside of the right ear and the inside of the left one (looking from behind the pig). In addition, for any gilt being sold for export and every boar kept or sold for breeding, you must also tattoo your Herd Designation Letters (HDLs) which will have been notified to you when registering your herd prefix details. Some breeders find it easier to add their HDLs in every case allowing for the subsequent export of older pigs and ensuring that every pig can be traced back to them.

Distract the Sow

The operation can be carried out by one person but it is preferable for someone else to hold the piglet while you do the tattooing. Separate the sow and distract her by giving her her feed. Make sure that she cannot gain access to the area where you are handling the piglets as she will become excited by any squeals made by the piglets. Lift the piglet carefully by the hind leg or legs as this produces least noise. Hold the piglet firmly against the chest supporting its body with your arm and holding the front legs and snout.

The BPA demands that the numbering of each litter is carried out on all boars in that litter before going on to the females. You do not have to tattoo all the pigs which appear on the notification form but for the sake of a changed mind later, it is often better to. There is a misbelief that if you sell a tattooed pig at market or to the Traditional Breeds Meat Marketing Scheme, some miscreant can register that pig. The BPA rightly demand that all registration documents are signed by the breeder which safeguards against this.

Have a copy of the notification form with you when you tattoo. Allocate the numbers according to the sexes in the litter so that if your first litter is five boars and four gilts, the boars will be numbered 1 - 5 and the gilts 6 - 9. Thus, according

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to the sex of the pig picked, allocate an appropriate number, load the pliers accordingly, lock the characters in place and double check that the number is correct, (tattoo a piece of card first to check - once an ear is tattooed it cannot be undone). Cover the area to be tattooed with the antiseptic paste then confidently and with a steady, firm action, imprint the tattoo into one ear through the paste, release the pressure and repeat the process in the second ear but turning the pliers so that the inside of one ear is tattooed and the outside of the other. If there is a black spot in one or other ear, try and place the tattoo somewhere outside the black area if possible. Still hold the pig, whose protests should subside quickly after the initial shock. Apply plenty of tattoo paste to the punctures made by the pins and rub the paste well into the wounds, using either your fingers or an old toothbrush. The paste is antiseptic and no further treatment should be necessary. Place the piglet gently back with the sow who will turn her attention to it while you carry on with the next patient. Often, when you release the pliers, the pins remain in the ear and you will need to ease the ear gently off them.

Letter Height

The numbering is concurrent so your second litter will start with number 10 and continue on *ad infinitum*, remembering boars first, gilts next. The letter height really depends on how large the piglets are when the operation is carried out. If you are tattooing at three weeks, 7 or 8 mm digits are perfectly large enough whilst if you leave them to 8 weeks, you will need 12 mm characters to make a worthwhile impression.

Remember too that if the tattoo is illegible when the pig is older, you cannot simply do the operation again as you might be tempted to when the pig is due to go to a show or is sold. Apply to the BPA and only when you have permission in writing can you proceed. In a mature pig, small characters will be useless and you may need to source much larger equipment.



Q. How can I tattoo a GOS pig which has two black ears?

A. To the best of my knowledge there is no paste/ink which will provide a permanent satisfactory tattoo mark on wholly black ears. However, I understand that whilst the GOS ear can be all black on occasion, usually this would be on the outside uppermost surface, but there is a reasonable chance that the inside under surface will be mainly pink. If this were the case, BPA would certainly accept tattooing on the inside of the ear only.

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A breeder having two different fully coloured breeds recently telephoned. He had used a white paste/ink produced in Germany. He indicated that despite being experienced in tattooing procedures, including putting ink on both the ear and the tattooing needles, then rubbing more ink after impressing the tattoo, the marks did not hold.

Ken Harris, BPA.



Q. I understand that all pedigree GOS pigs have to be tattooed now and not ear notched. The cost of tattooing pliers is £120+ from my local farm suppliers which I cannot justify with just a few pigs. Can you tell me where I can get such equipment at a more realistic price?

A. *I know of three suppliers with tattoo forceps on offer from about £60 upwards. They are: 1) Ritchey Tagg Ltd., Masham, Ripon, North Yorks HG4 4ES Tel: 01765 689541; 2) Ketchum Manufacturing Co., Tadworth, Surrey KT20 5RE Tel: 01737 812218; 3) Mail Order - Peasridge, Stonelink, Stubb Lane, Brede, Rye, East Sussex TN31 6BL Tel: 01424 882900*

Remember, that you will need a set of numbers and that as your herd grows, you will need to extend the numbers to be able to make up numbers 33, 111, etc. All boars retained for breeding and all pigs for export must also have the herd designation letters tattooed in their ears and you should have a set of those three applicable to your herd, as advised by BPA. In such circumstances, the herd designation letters should be tattooed in the right ear, (looking over the head of the pig), and the numbers in the left ear. When tattooing numbers only, tattoo them on the inside of the right ear and the outside of the left one. To effectively make the tattoo, impress the numbers into the ear through a block of tattoo paste then rub in the antiseptic paste (black or green) into the wound, either with your fingers or an old toothbrush. The wound quickly heals and the tattoo should then be permanent. Use 8 or 10mm characters and remember that you must have the tattooing finished before the pigs are 8 weeks old.

The Gloucestershire Old Spots Pig Breeders' Club hires out tattooing kits of pliers and numbers to its members, subject to availability.

Dr Spot



Chapter 5 - Management of Outdoor Pigs

PIG RINGING - THE NOISIEST JOB IN THE WORLD

by Lewis Barnfield

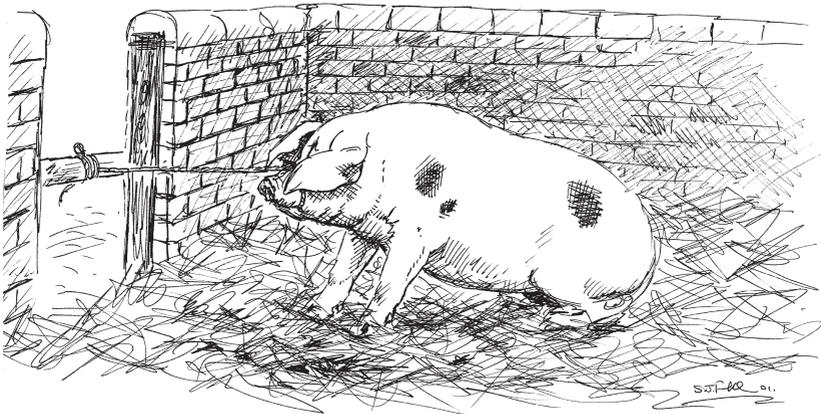
Putting rings into pigs' noses is to stop them rooting, (digging up the ground), and if you live on deep clay as I do you will most definitely see the need, especially when it is wet.

There are two types of ring in use; the self-piercing copper ring, about 1" in diameter, inserted into the skin between and above the nostrils with a special pair of pliers. These pliers can be purchased from the suppliers of the rings and most farm shops will stock this type or can get them for you.

The second type is the "Bull" ring. To fit these, a hole must be pierced in the gristle part of the nose between the nostrils, the self-locking ring is then inserted and locked.

I'm not in complete favour of the bull type because I have on occasions noticed that with certain types of feeding troughs they have caused the pigs some discomfort when feeding, but this is only a very personal observation.

Now to the actual process of ringing.



Getting a good strong piece of rope, not too thick, tie a slip knot in one end and then thread the noose into the pig's mouth, ensuring that it is behind the

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incisor teeth and over the nostrils, pull the rope tight and tie the free end to something firm; I find a stake placed across the door of the pen is ideal for this.

The pig will continually pull backwards so ensure that it cannot get its back to the wall so as to keep the rope tight at all times.

I usually put in two rings and while the operation is taking place, the noise will be deafening. A little bleeding will occur but this will very quickly cease and once the pig is released, it resumes normal life with no apparent discomfort, except, of course, when it starts digging again. If you are concerned about the wound, apply a little disinfectant before release.

Small rings can be obtained for smaller pigs. Rings do get lost from time to time but I have never found a pig with any serious damage to its nose and therefore have had no problem with replacements.

Pigs can be rung at any time; sows, boars or younger pigs except for in-pig females. It is not advisable to ring pigs within one month of farrowing but at any other time, no problem.



Q. I am thinking of moving pigs onto a bank but the area is renowned for a basking place for adders. Will my pigs be in danger?

A. *Pigs are known as a very efficient disposer of snakes and pigs over six months old should have no real problems. The thick skin and layer of fat makes adult pigs almost immune to snake bites and snakes are a tasty snack to most pigs - an instinct that still survives from their forebears, the wild boar, to whom snakes can be a major food source.*

In the West Indies, pigs are recognised as being far more efficient snake killers than mongooses and in regions of Spain, they claim that pigs which feed largely on vipers, have a certain tang to their hams which is considered a greater treat than pigs fed on peaches.

Dr Spot



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Q. Is there any way I can mix sows together without their fighting to establish a pecking order?

A. The only way I mix sows together is in at least an acre of ground because the residents of that area will fight with whatever is introduced. Mixing at feeding time gives the new sows a short time to look around the field. GOS can give each other some nasty ear injuries.

I have never tried spraying them with anything.

Gabriel Dudley



Bubble Bath for peaceful pigs

I was interested in Gabriel Dudley's answer about mixing sows. As a very new GOS keeper I was told that in the past both sows should be covered in sump oil!

In a Young Farmer's Club booklet it is suggested that both snouts should be rubbed with a paraffin rag, and you can buy a spray.

In the absence of either, we used Imperial Leather Bubble Bath - and it worked a treat! The system has one great advantage that after bathing both we smelt wonderful as well.

Basil Jaques



Chapter 6 - Feeding

FEEDING THE BREEDING STOCK

by George Styles

The feeding of breeding stock is similar in principle to that of feeding fattening pigs but quite different in detail.

Again, we must remember that pigs have a digestive system similar to our own and similar basic needs. Having said that, however, they can with advantage be given much rougher foods which they will appreciate and turn to good use. They must, however, be given sufficient protein and minerals in some form or other.

The simplest system for sows is to turn them out onto good pasture and give them a basic ration of 2½lbs a day of a good quality, (16% protein), sow ration, preferably in a nut form as this saves waste. The pasture should contain a large proportion of clover as this provides extra protein and minerals. From April - in most years - to October this will be quite sufficient for the first three months of pregnancy when they will need to be brought in to their farrowing quarters and given extra nuts up until a day or two prior to farrowing. Just before this, it is advisable to cut back a little to avoid over-stocking of the udder.

After farrowing, give water and a little food only, increasing as the appetite returns. They should then be fed to appetite and above all see that they have enough water. They have, after all, to produce milk and the dairyman tells us that cows need three gallons of water for every gallon of milk produced. Whether you run your sows and litters out or keep them in, it is essential to feed them well at this time. A good creep feed or a suitable sow-proof creep is a big help but few litters will do much eating before three weeks of age.

Precautions Against Udder Trouble

When weaning takes place, it is advisable to take precautions against udder trouble. Take the sow from the pigs, not the other way round. If the sow has a pressure of milk the next day, then put her back for half an hour or so; this can be repeated twenty four hours later if necessary but in my experience, rarely is.

In any case, if at all possible, the weaned sow should receive neither food nor water for twenty four hours. This may seem unkind but it is better than an inflamed udder. Then increase the food by about two pounds a day up to eight pounds by which time she should be coming into season. Again, if possible,

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serve her two or three times and then cut the food back for about a fortnight. There is some evidence that this practice results in larger litters by cutting down the re-absorption that can otherwise occur. And this is where we came in.

During the winter months there is, in my view, no case for running dry sows outside unless on very light land. It is no benefit to a sow to be up to her belly in mud trying to dig her food out of the mire. No, if at all possible, and it is worth making some effort to do it, house her in a yard with plenty of litter and a warm, dry place to sleep. Feed her meal in a trough and her roughage too, if you can; there will then be much less waste.

An Old Tyre

One very good method I have used, when feeding potatoes, fodder beet or other roots is to put an old tyre, (the larger the better), in the yard or other enclosure and place the roots in it. The sows will have a glorious time, digging them out. All the time one must remember to see that dry sows have sufficient protein and minerals but do not get too fat.

I have said nothing so far about feeding boars. They are frequently run with the dry sows and in this case can share the same diet. If kept separately, then the main concern is to see that they do not get too fat. Adjust their feed, be it concentrate or roughage accordingly. One tip I was given by an eminent Large White breeder nearly fifty years ago is to run a very small pig, indeed, a runt, with the boar for company. Contrary to what one might expect, they both seem to benefit from this regime. I have seen runts that looked to have only days to live, be transformed - often seen asleep on the old boar's side while he sleeps contentedly. He seems to enjoy the company and is much more contented and easier to handle.

The main thing to remember is that breeding stock, while they will enjoy roughage of many kinds and indeed prosper on it, need to have a balanced diet with sufficient proteins, minerals and vitamins. They will then do their job for you.



FEEDING PIGS FOR THE BUTCHER

by George Styles

With the Meat Marketing Scheme for pork, and especially for Gloucestershire Old Spots, now well established and running successfully, it seems an appropriate time to consider how best to feed pigs for it. Assuming that you have provided your pigs with the main essentials of good husbandry, warm, dry beds, restricted but adequate pen space and a good water supply, then the next consideration is how and with what to feed them.

Getting the right balance

We should remember that pigs are omniverous and not, repeat not, herbivorous. Their digestive system is almost identical to our own, so do not expect them to thrive on anything but a balanced diet, by which I mean one that supplies not only carbohydrates, but proteins, vitamins and minerals. This is particularly important with young pigs and pork pigs are young pigs. If they do not have enough of these vital ingredients in their food, then you will not produce well-grown porkers with a high proportion of lean meat in their carcasses. What we are aiming to produce is a relatively lean pork pig but with enough fat - not too much - to make it succulent and tender and unlike the so-called pork - but more like cardboard - that the supermarkets sell. We are selling a premium product and must treat it like one.

Feeding from a hopper

When the pigs are weaned they can, with advantage, be put on to a suitable self-feeding hopper, i.e. one that they can get at and one they can operate. It is often advisable to tie the lids up for a few days so that they can find where the food is. They can be left to look after themselves for several weeks but should not be left on the feeder after about 40 kgs or 80-90 lbs liveweight. They should then be put on to a twice-a-day restricted feeding from a trough.

Restricted feeding from 40 kgs

Give them what they will clear up in about twenty minutes. They should lick the troughs clean in that time. If they polish it, then give them a bit more next time; if they leave any, then cut them back at the next meal. I always prefer to put the meal in dry and add water. It is a matter of trial and error to get it right, and

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every pen of pigs is different, but you will soon find out their little ways and it is well worth doing so to get the best results.

As they get bigger, they will obviously want more; give it to them but only up to 5 lbs per day unless you are taking them on to bacon. Then you can go on to six pounds but no more. We are, however, considering porkers here.

Home mixing - the pros and cons

Now, the main point - what do you feed them on? I believe that home mixing, while the cheapest, is of questionable value unless you have your own cereals on hand. It is better to buy in a good balanced, commercial ration which has been properly formulated and mixed. While a perfectly suitable ration can be mixed on a concrete floor with a shovel, it is a laborious and far from pleasant job and a time consuming one too.

If, however, you have your own barley and wheat on hand, then that is different. You can then either purchase suitable milling and mixing equipment or employ a mill and mix contractor to do the job for you. He will do this to your own requirements and either bag it up for you, or better still, blow it into a bulk bin. This has the advantage that, not only is it cheaper, but also safe from vermin. You will still have to purchase the other ingredients. These can either be as a concentrate containing the protein, minerals and vitamins for mixing with the cereal meals, usually at 10-15% proportion, or you can buy the straight mineral mix and soya meal or fish meal. If you do decide to go down this road, it is a matter for you to work out the economics of it and well worth while getting some expert advice on the spot. This also applies if you are intending using skim milk or whey - excellent products - but ones that have problems as well as advantages. In general, apart from these by-products, swill and waste food must be kept away from Quality Porkers.

Proprietary feeds

If you are using a proprietary food for your pigs, then I suggest that you use a good Sow & Weaner ration of around 16% protein. Use one that is properly mineralised and vitaminised but not - repeat NOT - one with antibiotics added. Their advantage is minimal and, in my opinion, antibiotics should be reserved for the treatment of actual illness or injury. Pigs kept under low stress conditions and in sensible, warm housing should not need them except for treatment of

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illnesses. For the production of porkers, this type of ration should be satisfactory right through.

There is one other system that a late friend of mine used to use. He kept one food truck full of good pig grower-type meal and another full of barley meal, not too finely ground as it can get pasty in the pigs' mouths. He had scoops in each truck which held known weights of that particular meal. He would then go along his piggery giving each pig up to two and a half pounds of grower meal. He would then add the appropriate amount of water. Next, he would follow up with the barley meal giving each the extra weight of food required, finally, any extra water needed. Although a bit more time consuming, this system had several advantages. The pigs, in effect, did their own mixing; he knew that each lot were getting the right amount of minerals, vitamins etc.; finally, changes in the food were taking place gradually and the risk of stomach upsets was virtually eliminated. For many years he produced high grade bacon pigs on this system. If it could suit your system, I commend it to you.

Feeding in the creep?

What about pig creep pellets? Well, this again depends on your system. If you have a creep to feed them in where the food will not be wasted - it is after all, expensive - fine. You will certainly get good results if the piglets eat them but not all do. But do remember to change over onto the succeeding ration gradually, preferably over a week or ten days when the pigs are about 25-30lbs. Later can result in digestive upsets, scouring etc. With this sort of supplementary feed, the rule is 'start it early - finish it early'.

Find a local compounder

Finally, it is not necessary to patronise the big feed companies. Often, the smaller, local compounder can supply what you want and usually as cheap, if not cheaper. You will probably also get better service since, even if you are small, you will be more important to him than to the big boys.

A Quality Animal

We now, as GOS breeders, have an excellent opportunity to place our breed firmly on the map as a quality animal capable of producing a quality product. Few other breeds have this potential and certainly, none of the hybrids. Our pigs

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have a high proportion of lean meat and good conformation; they have good growth rates and their meat is flavoursome and succulent. It is now up to us to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity as discerning people are fed up with being served cardboard and want the sort of pork that Gloucestershire Old Spots are capable of producing.



Does it Work?

Found in *The Book of the Pig* the following. Can anyone tell Dr Spot if it works or not?

'A rough calculation of the weight of pigs can be made as follows: Measure right around the chest, just behind the shoulders, in inches, and also the length from the ears to the root of the tail. Multiply the first measurement by the second, and divide by 13, 12 or 11 according to whether the pig is lean, medium or fat. The answer gives the pig's weight in pounds. This is not accurate, but will give an indication of whether the pig is ready for slaughter or not.'

Dr Spot

With regard to Dr Spot's question Does it Work?, a friend who bought a couple of weaners from me used the calculations outlined to gain an idea of the weight of her pigs. I went over and checked them with my trusty Weighband when she felt they were ready and according to that the maths system came out slightly lighter but it worked well enough to give a useful indication of weight, as does the Weighband, and both depend upon how fast you can run whilst holding the tape around the pig and trying to read the figures.

Anne Rogers



Chapter 7 - Showing

SHOWING PIGS

by Guy Kiddy

Why Show Pigs?

Showing of all species of animals was started to enable the pedigree breeder to show off his stock and therefore increase sales to other breeders. This is still very often the case with sheep and cattle, but showing within the pig industry has lost much of its popularity because so much of the breeding for commercial pig units has moved into the hands of the large pig breeding companies, leaving just a few pedigree breeders and enthusiasts to bring their stock to agricultural shows. Having said this, those breeders who do still show pigs do a valuable service to the whole pig industry, allowing the general public to see many different breeds in one place which would otherwise be very difficult to achieve. With so many disease precautions, most breeders do not welcome visitors to their commercial units.

Anybody who keeps pigs and thinks they may like to show them should first of all visit several shows, talk to breeders who are already showing and watch the judging to see what the judges are looking for. The judges will be the pig breeders who also show, or have shown pigs and, at the larger shows, will have been drawn from the *British Pig Association's* list of judges. At the larger shows, there will be individual judges for each breed but at the smaller shows, one judge will probably do all of the different classes.

Once you have decided you wish to show pigs, decide which classes you want to enter and select stock accordingly. The majority of shows have classes for gilts born in July and September of the previous year and January of the current year. There are also classes for sows and at some shows for boars, commonly those born in January. Start selecting stock early; I always pick out 3 or 4 July born gilts when I am tattooing at about 3 weeks of age, then watch them grow and select the best two at about 5 months of age. The same procedure is adopted for September and January pigs.

The pigs will be judged according to breed standards and so it is essential to obtain a copy of these from the *British Pig Association* or other breed society. The pigs will need to have 12 or 14 evenly spaced teats, depending upon the

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breed, good strong legs they walk well on, well filled hams and a long straight back. They should also look bright and alert.

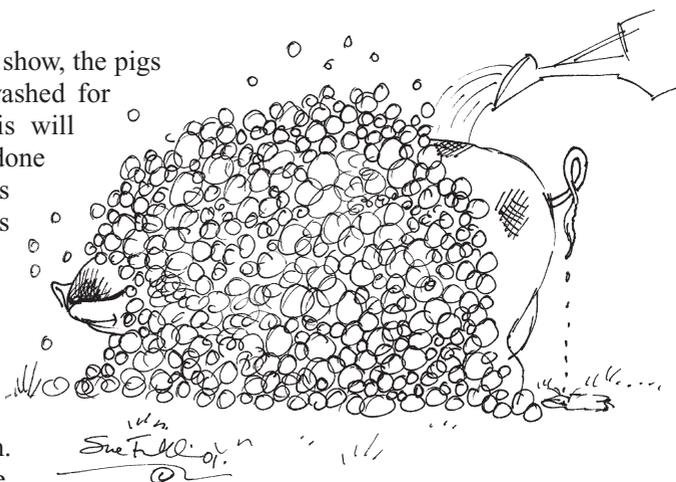
As the show season draws near, obtain the schedules of classes from the show societies and decide which classes you wish to enter. Read the schedule carefully to make sure the correct classes are being entered. As well as age, the classes will be split either by breed or colour. In many shows, splitting by colour is common with classes for white breeds and coloured breeds. If show societies have good entries of a particular breed, they may be subdivided just prior to the show. Make sure your entries are sent back to the show society well before the closing date. All pedigree pigs entered at shows must have been registered with the relevant breed society.

As the date of the show approaches, the pigs will need to be trained. If possible, show pigs should be kept in individual pens or in pairs. This allows close observation and individual feeding as well as making it easy to keep the pens clean. The pigs need to be trained to walk with a stick and a board. This should be done in a fenced off area in case they decide to run. Start off doing this twice a week, then daily and then twice daily.

Pigs usually enjoy walking once they get used to it, but can sometimes move faster than you. The walking not only allows you and the pig to get used to each other, but makes the pig fitter and strengthens their legs. It will also increase the handler's confidence and ability to handle the pig.

Washing

A week before the show, the pigs will need to be washed for the first time; this will then need to be done on a regular basis until the show. Pigs can be washed with washing up liquid or *Lux* flakes - avoid scented soaps as this can cause an allergic reaction. The pigs can be



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scrubbed using a stiff bristled brush, but beware of making the skin sore; some breeds of pigs have softer skin than others. The pigs need to be washed all over using liberal amounts of soapy water; remember to wash the insides of the legs. Once they have been thoroughly washed, use clean water to rinse all the soap off. It is best to use warm water to wash the pig, but do not make it too hot. Once washing is complete, white breeds (including GOS) should have wood flour rubbed all over them. This will help dry them out and improve the whiteness of the pig when it is brushed out. Although GOS need wood flour, in mixed classes, they are classified as a coloured breed and must be entered accordingly.

Make sure the pig pen you return them to is clean, and deeply littered with straw. It is a waste of all that hard work to get a pig nice and clean for it then to have a roll in a dirty pen. Always wash the pigs just before going to the show, it will make preparation much easier once you get there.



The day of the show

On the day of the show allow plenty of time to prepare both the pigs and yourself. The pigs need to be washed and the white pigs covered in wood flour. If the pigs have been in the pens overnight, these will want all dung removed before returning the pigs to the pen. Make sure you know what time the pig classes start - remember the classes will not wait for you.

Just before going into the show ring, the wood flour will need to be brushed out of the pigs, or if they are black pigs, pig oil will need to be applied. This emphasises the blackness of their skin.

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The pigs are paraded around the ring using a board and stick (the board is usually white and should not have your name or herd name on it). Watch the judge at all times, try and avoid getting yourself between the pig and the judge and make sure the pig is walking when he looks in your direction. You will also need to know the date of birth of the pig you are showing, when it is due to farrow and, if relevant, how many litters it has had. Wear a clean white coat when showing pigs and pin your number on it where the judge can easily see it.



Many shows have commercial pig classes as well as those for breeding stock. These are normally split into pork pigs (50-65 kgs), cutter pigs (66-80 kgs) and bacon pigs (81-90 kgs), although the weight can vary slightly from show to show. These pigs are normally entered as pairs and are judged as suitable for slaughter. They should be long, lean and have large firm hams. It is best to have your pigs at the top of the weight range because there can be weight loss on the journey to the show. They are usually shown in pens, but be prepared to take them out if the judge requests it.

This is a brief guide to showing pigs. Should you decide to have a go, talk to the other more experienced hands at the many shows around the country. ‘Pig People’ are always very helpful and will give you many useful tips. Most of all, have fun and enjoy yourself.

Useful addresses:

Pig Breeders Supply Co Ltd.
Checkendon, Reading, Berks., 01491 680446
[Suppliers of wood flour]

College of West Anglia, Landbeach Road, Milton, Cambridge, CB4 6DB
[Courses on showing pigs]

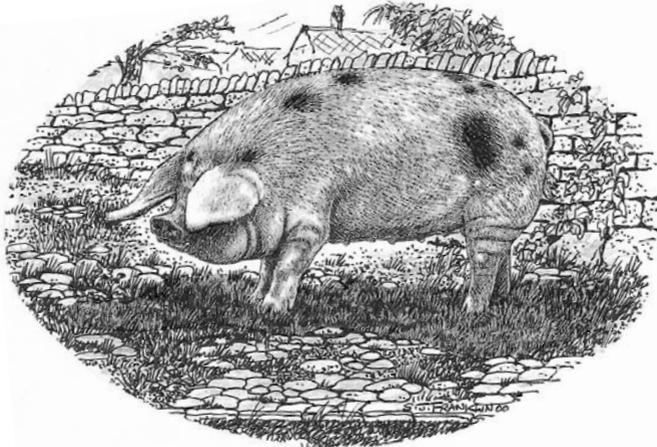
GLOSSARY

NAMES GIVEN TO PIGS

- Baconer** - a pig of 83-101 kgs liveweight suitable for the production of bacon
- Barrow (U.S.)** - a male pig castrated young for meat production
- Boar** - an uncastrated male pig of sexual maturity. Also applied to the male of the badger, bear and weasel.
- Brawn** - an old name for a young boar
- Browner** - a boar castrated after having been used for service
- Brimming** - a term applied to a female pig during her heat
- Cut Sow** - a spayed female, once common for fattening
- Cutter** - a pig weighing 68-82 kgs liveweight
- Dam** - the mother pig, used in pedigree recording. Also 'grand-dam' etc.
- Doylt** - a tame swine
- Dryft** - a collective noun for a group or herd of domestic pigs rarely used today
- Farrow** - to give birth. From Old English *feorh* meaning a young pig
- Gilt** - a young female up to the rearing of her first litter. (Dialect variations include: Barrow, Elt, Gelt, Helt, Hilt, Yelt, Yilt)
- Herd** - the collective noun for a group of domesticated pigs
- Hog** - a castrated male pig raised for meat. Also in the USA the more general term for pig, usually having reached 100 lbs in weight.
- In-pig** - pregnant. (Lined is an obsolete term)
- Litter** - the group of piglets from a single birth up to the point of weaning
- Piglet/Pigling** - the newly born pigs in a litter up to the point of weaning.
- Porker** - a pig weighing 50-67 kgs liveweight
- Rig** - a boar with only one testicle visible
- Runt** - the smallest pig in the litter. (Dialect variations on this include: Bonham, Bonneen, Bonnine, Cad, Cadma, Cadman, Creek, Crink, Crut, Darling, Dawlin, Derlin, Dilling, Dillon, Doll, Dolling, Dorling, Harry-pig, Nestle-tripe, Niscal, Nisgo, Nisgull, Niskral, Nistledriff, Parson's Pig, Peppermint Pig, Piggywhidden, Pitman, Ratlin, Ratling, Reckling, Rickling, Rit, Ritling, Shargar, Squeaker, Tantony pig, Water-droger, Wossett, Wreckling, Wreg)

Rare Breed Pig Keeping

- Service** - the act of mating
- Shoat** - a newly weaned pig
- Shot** - a pig of 9-12 months old which was considered fit to kill for pork (17th c). By the early 19th c the age of a shot had reduced to 6-8 months. Today, it would be just over 4 months to six.
- Sire** - the father pig, used in pedigree recording. Also ‘grand-sire’ etc.
- Sounder** - the name given to a group of wild boar
- Sow** - a female which has produced a litter of pigs
- Stag (U.S.)** - a male pig castrated late for meat production
- Stores** - the term for young pigs between being weaners and porkers
- Swine** - a collective name for pigs
- Teats** - the pig’s mammary glands of which there should be at least 12 evenly spaced (14 for Gloucestershire Old Spots) and preferably more. (Dialect variations: Dills, Drills)
- Weaner** - the young pig after weaning. (Dialect variations: Shoat, Slip)
- Wilgil/Wildew** - a hermaphrodite pig having both sets of sex organs but being invariably sterile



*“If you would live well for a week, kill a hog;
if you would live well for a month, marry;
if you would live well all your life, turn priest.”*

Appendix 1

Traditional Breeds Meat Marketing Scheme

Nearly everyone who breeds pigs must face up to the disposal of surplus numbers at some stage. Pigs are not suitable for producing milk or wool and their only true agricultural use is as meat producers which they do most effectively and efficiently. The fact that a single sow can produce 20+ piglets a year for maybe 5 years shows that you must face facts and plan your marketing accordingly.

The Rare Breeds Survival Trust recognised this problem in 1994 when they established their Traditional Breeds' Meat Marketing Scheme through a chain of specially selected independent Accredited Butchers throughout most of the country. The mainstream market was increasingly being dominated by the supermarkets who wanted only a narrow range of carcasses to suit their requirements which did not include any of the rare breeds. Thus people taking rare breed stock to cattle markets were humiliated when their animals failed to attract worthwhile bids and were often forced to give up.

The Scheme then is a godsend for many breeders. It only accommodates pure bred stock which is eligible for registration (ie birth notified and ear-marked) and offered into the Scheme by fully paid-up members of the RBST. The reasons for this are simple. The Trust is dedicated to conservation and these rules encourage pure breeding. There is no point in its encouraging the proliferation of unregistered stock as this does conservation no good at all.

The Scheme is structured in such a way that there is a network of dedicated Finishing Units supporting nearly all the Accredited Butchers. They buy in weaned stock and fatten it to their butchers' requirements in a planned way so that the butchers are kept stocked week in, week out throughout the year with good quality produce. Thus there are only limited opportunities to supply pork or bacon weight pigs direct to the butchers at times when the finishing units cannot meet demand.

Therefore, you are encouraged to sell weaned pigs to your local Finishing Units. Select the best using the Standard of Excellence to keep or offer to sell for breeding and contact the Finishing Unit about the others. Be aware that they will not take substandard stock and get your young pigs into the very best condition before wasting the Finishing Unit's (and your) time. The pigs must be

Rare Breed Pig Keeping

well-grown, fit and healthy. Make sure they have been wormed properly and are free of lice. If they are coughing, the chances are they will be infectious and the unit will not want them anywhere near their other stock.

To make sure they are in peak condition, refer to the chapters on the care of the sow during pregnancy and farrowing making sure she gets enough food to enable her to feed her litter until they are weaned. Help her out by giving them creep feed from about three weeks until they start sharing her food. That way, you will be able to get the best return for your pigs and will always be welcomed back by the Finishing Units.

There are, of course, other ways to sell your weaned pigs. Cattle markets are an obvious choice but prices are generally much lower than the scheme pays (current guide price 90p/kg liveweight at 8-10 weeks). You can fatten them yourself and have them slaughtered and butchered for your own use but with the prolificacy of the pig, your freezer will always be full to overflowing.

In this scenario, it is tempting to sell the delicious pork you have produced to friends, family and neighbours. As soon as you start doing this, you leave yourself open to the laws of the land concerning health and food retailing. The same applies strictly to those who supply a Farmer's Market and you will need to acquaint yourself with all the rules and regulations and be equipped with chilled cabinets and a refrigerated vehicle to take and store stock in. This is always a possibility but the easier and cheaper method is to offer stock into the Scheme.

The list of Accredited Butchers and Finishing Units is always changing so they are not included here. To get up to date information, contact the Meat Marketing Office as follows:

**Traditional Breeds Meat Marketing Co. Ltd.,
Freepost (GL442), Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 5BR**

Tel/fax: 01285 869666

E-mail: greatmeat@aol.com

Appendix 2

Gloucestershire Old Spots

Standard of Excellence

BRITISH PIG ASSOCIATION

Scotsbridge House, Scots Hill, Rickmansworth, Herts., WD3 3BB

STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE

(Revised 1983)

GLOUCESTERSHIRE OLD SPOTS BREED

HEAD	Medium length
NOSE	Medium length and slightly dished
EARS	Well set apart, dropping forward to nose, not at the sides, not thick nor coarse, not longer than the nose
NECK	Medium length with jowl little pronounced
SHOULDERS	Fine but not raised
BACK	Long and level; should not drop behind shoulders
RIBS	Deep, well sprung
LOIN	Very broad
SIDES	Deep, presenting straight bottom line. Belly and flank, full thick. Well-filled line from ribs to hams
QUARTERS	Long and wide with thick tail set well up
HAMS	Large and well filled to hocks
LEGS	Straight and strong
SKIN	Must not show coarseness or wrinkles
COAT	Silky and not curly. No mane bristles. Not less than one clean decisive spot
TEATS	At least fourteen well-placed sound teats.

OBJECTIONS:

EARS	Short, thick and elevated
COAT	A rose disqualifies. A line of mane bristles is objectionable. Sandy colour may disqualify
SKIN	Serious wrinkles. Blue undertone not associated with a spot
LEGS	Crooked
NECK	Heavy jowl objectionable

Appendix 3 Useful Contacts

Gloucestershire Old Spots Pig Breeders' Club

Secretary: Mrs Carol Knights

2, St Johns Road, Stansted, Essex, CM24 8JP

Tel: 01279 812019 / 07768 368053

E-mail: kernights@hotmail.com Website: www.oldspots.com

Berkshire Breeders Club

Secretary: Mr David Webb

Orchardleigh, Station Road, Chipping Camden, Glos., GL55 6LB

Tel: 01386 840375

British Lop Pig Society

Secretary: Mr Guy Kiddy

9, Bluebell Close, Biggleswade, Beds., SG18 8SL

Tel/Fax: 01767 315926

British Pig Association

Chief Executive: Mr Marcus Bates

Scotsbridge House, Scots Hill, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire, WD3 3BB

Tel: 01923 695295 Fax: 01923 695347 E-mail: bpa@farmline.com

Website: www.britishpigs.org.uk

British Saddleback Pig Breeders Club

Secretary: Mrs Carole Muddiman

2, Biddlesden, Brackley, Northamptonshire, NN13 5TR

Tel: 01280 850677

Large Black Pig Breeders Club

Secretary: Mrs Sue Barker

West Farm, Ruckley, Shropshire, SY5 7HR

Tel: 01694 731318 Fax: 01694 731768

E-mail: sue@barkermedia.freemove.co.uk

Middle White Pig Breeders Club

Secretary: Mrs Miranda Squire

Benson Lodge, 50, Old Slade Lane, Iver, Buckinghamshire, SL0 9DR

Tel: 01753 654166

Rare Breed Pig Keeping

Rare Breeds Survival Trust

Chief Executive: Miss Rosemary Mansbridge

National Agricultural Centre, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire, CV8 2LG

Tel: 024 7669 6551 Fax: 024 7669 6706

E-mail: enquiries@rbst.org.uk

Website: www.rbst.org.uk

Tamworth Breeders' Group

Secretary: Mrs Kathleen Pile

Hill Farm, Rugby Road, Princethorpe, Warwickshire CV23 9QJ

Tel: 01926 632493

For dates and contact details of all the shows in Britain, refer to the *Showman's Directory* published by:

Lance Publications, Park House, Park Road, Petersfield, Hants., GU32 3DL

Tel: 01730 266624 Fax: 01730 260117

E-mail: info@showmans-directory.co.uk

Appendix 4 Pig Gestation Chart

SERVICE DATE	DUE TO FARROW										
Jan 1	Apr 26	Feb 2	May 28	Mar 4	Jun 25	Apr 1	Jul 25	May 1	Aug 31	Jun 2	Sep 25
3	28	4	30	3	27	3	27	3	26	4	27
5	30	6	Jun 1	5	29	5	29	5	28	6	29
7	May 2	8	3	8	Jul 1	7	31	7	30	8	Oct 1
9	4	10	5	10	3	9	Aug 2	9	Sep 1	10	3
11	6	12	7	12	5	11	4	11	3	12	5
13	8	14	9	14	7	13	6	13	5	14	7
15	10	16	11	16	9	15	8	15	7	16	9
17	12	18	13	18	11	17	10	17	9	18	11
19	14	20	15	20	13	19	12	19	11	20	13
21	16	22	17	22	15	21	14	21	13	22	15
23	18	24	19	24	17	23	16	23	15	24	17
25	20	26	21	26	19	25	18	25	17	26	19
27	22	28	23	28	21	27	20	27	19	28	21
29	24			30	23	29	22	29	21	30	23
31	26							31	23		

SERVICE DATE	DUE TO FARROW										
Jul 2	Oct 25	Aug 1	Nov 24	Sep 2	Dec 26	Oct 2	Jan 25	Nov 1	Feb 24	Dec 1	Mar 26
4	27	3	26	4	28	4	27	3	26	3	28
6	29	5	28	6	30	6	29	5	28	5	30
8	31	7	30	8	Jan 1	8	31	7	Mar 2	7	Apr 1
10	Nov 2	9	Dec 2	10	3	10	Feb 2	9	4	9	3
12	4	11	4	12	5	12	4	11	6	11	5
14	6	13	6	14	7	14	6	13	8	13	7
16	8	15	8	16	9	16	8	15	10	15	9
18	10	17	10	18	11	18	10	17	12	17	11
20	12	19	12	20	13	20	12	19	14	19	13
22	14	21	14	22	15	22	14	21	16	21	15
24	16	23	16	24	17	24	16	23	18	23	17
26	18	25	18	26	19	26	18	25	20	25	19
28	20	27	20	28	21	28	20	27	22	27	21
30	22	29	22	30	23	30	22	29	24	29	23
		31	24							31	25

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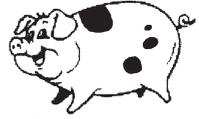
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Gloucestershire Old Spots Pigs

All young stock are birth notified and eligible for registration.

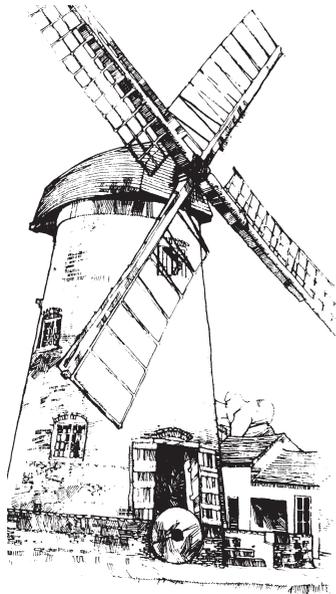
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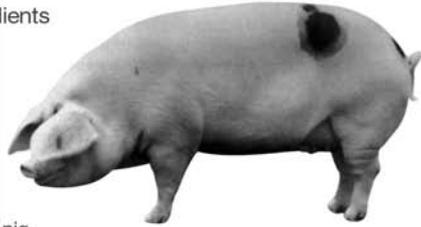
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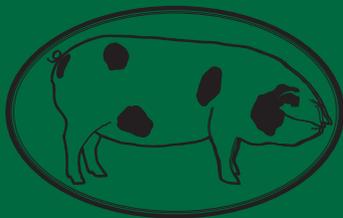
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Rare Breed Pig Keeping

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Rare Breed Pig Keeping



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