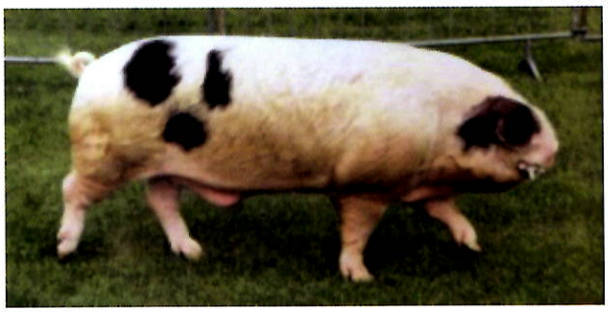
Piggy Planning

This last week (November 2020) the Club has received four enquiries for help in sourcing boars for gilts and sows now ready to be served either by hire, B&B service or purchase. No doubt people realising 3mths, 3wks and 3 days takes us into March and Spring the peak time for selling weaners. Given the uncertain times we find ourselves in due to the ongoing pandemic and heightened bio-security with Bird Flu here in the UK and the ever present danger from the possibility of African Swine Fever landing on our shores it is understandable that breeders are reluctant to hire out their boars or to bring unknown stock onto their premises. It has also meant that many breeders have not kept back stock to grow on for breeding this year so there appears to be a shortfall in the number of boars available.



With this in mind we can only remind that those of you buying young stock or indeed in-pig sows to set a reminder in your dairies or on your calendar to start your search for a suitable boar at least 2 months if not 3 moths before you actually need to use one.

A good guide is that GOS gilts can usually be estimated to be sufficiently mature and large enough to be served at around 9-10months of age therefore you should start looking for a boar when they are around 7mths old, this way you can have a better choice of boar, take time studying pedigrees and compatibility and make suitable arrangements for keeping a boar on your premises. Otherwise you end up in such a rush it gets to such a desperate state of affairs that any old GOS boar will have to do!

If you have bought a sow in-pig hopefully you have a rough idea of her farrowing date and thus her weaning date so again you can start to search for a boar the soon as she farrows especially if you want to put her straight back in pig.

Farrowing management is all a steep learning curve, a little extra planning goes a long way in helping you manage your sows, your time, your farrowing facilities and your herd progress. You can read more about managing your herd on the website http://www.gospbc.co.uk/so-you-want-to-keep-pigs-part-5/ and http://www.gospbc.co.uk/so-you-want-to-keep-pigs-part-6/ . There is also the article on boars in Spot Press Summer 2020 which you can find on the website by logging in. Email mail@gospbc.co.uk if you need a log in. Opposite is a farrowing date guide which will hopefully help with your planning.

Mandy Garbutt

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