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THE BABY PIG

Managing and Feeding for Its Survival

Fred Gilbert, Extension livestock specialist

Increasing baby pig survival is one of the best ways to improve reproduction efficiency of swine.

The average death loss from farrowing to weaning ranges from 20 to 25 percent, or about two pigs per litter. This loss occurs with no major, acute disease outbreak, such as transmissible gastroenteritis (TGE). Approximately 55 to 60 percent of

the losses occur during the first week, and of this amount, about 70 to 75 percent occur the first 2 or 3 days.

Detailed studies have shown that, based on live pigs farrowed (not including stillborns), nearly 20 percent of the death loss is caused by starvation. Another 20 to 22 percent are lost from crushing or injury, which could be starvation-related.

CARE OF BABY PIGS

Before Farrowing

A few precautions will help save pigs. Farrowing quarters should be dry, well-ventilated with no drafts and should have a temperature around 55 to 65 degrees F.

Heat lamps are necessary because the thermo-regulator mechanism of baby pigs does not function properly until the pigs are about 3 days old. Place one lamp 12 inches behind the sow. Place another one 12 inches out from the udder in one corner and approximately 24 inches above the bedding.

After the first day, move the lamps so one is over the creep feeder and one is alongside the sow. This will encourage early feed consumption.

Farrowing crates for gilts should be 20 inches wide and 6 to 7 feet long; for sows they should be 24 inches wide and 7 to 8 feet long. Space between the floor and the bottom board or rail should be 8 to 12 inches for a distance of 18 inches on each side of the farrowing crate.

Use bedding as needed.

At Farrowing

At farrowing, wipe mucous off pigs with a dry, clean rag and put pigs under the heat lamp. This prevents chilling and asphyxiation due to mucous plug. When possible, the size of the litter should be adjusted to the number of functional teats or nursing ability of the sow. Transferring pigs from sow to sow should be done as early as possible, usually not later than three to four days.

Clip needle teeth with clean, disinfected clippers. Smaller pigs in a litter have a better chance if needle teeth are not clipped. The same is true of pigs transferred from one sow to another.

Tie and clip navel cord 1 to 1½ inch from belly.

Disinfect gums and navel with a solution of ½ iodine and ½ glycerine, or a commercial disinfectant.

Notch ears and disinfect.

Allow pigs to nurse immediately after farrowing, then return them to heat lamp.

Remove and destroy afterbirth and cover damp area with clean litter.

After Farrowing

After farrowing, swing heat lamp from behind sow and aim toward back corner of pig guard.

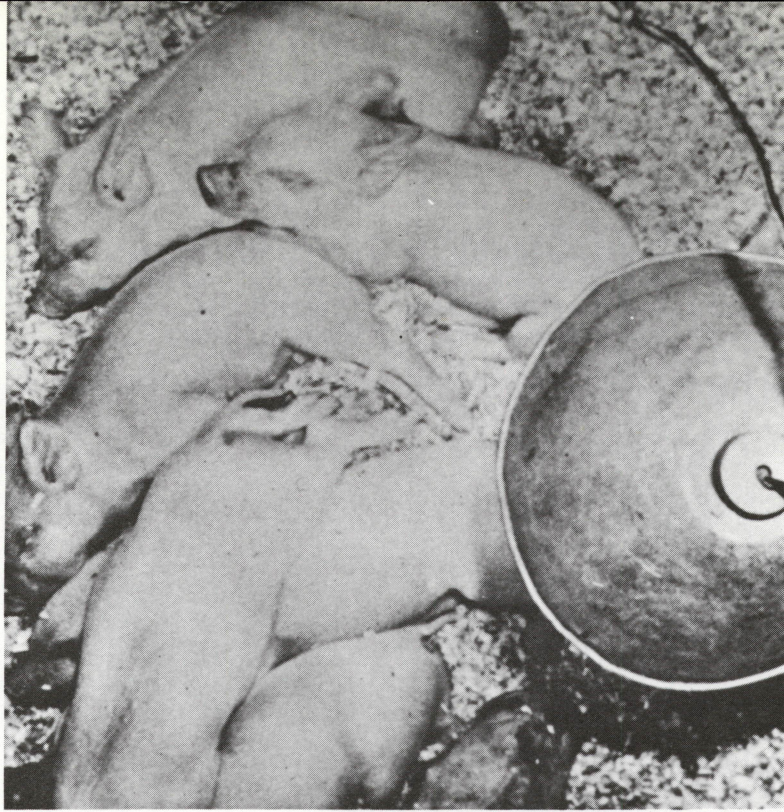
The day after farrowing, wash and disinfect baby pig waterers. Do this every day.

Control temperature, litter and drafts for pig comfort.

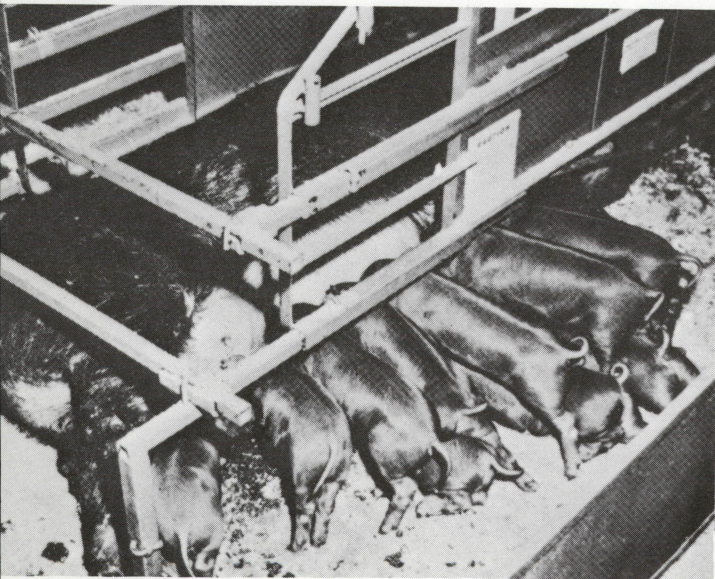
When pigs are 2 to 4 days old, inject them with iron to prevent anemia. A pig has just enough iron in its system at birth to last a few days and anemia sometimes kills up to 25 to 30 percent of a litter. Give a second injection in 2 weeks, or use an oral iron supplement. This can be fed two times each week up to 3 weeks of age.

Sanitation and good management are the best prevention for flies and scour problems.

Worm pigs just before weaning.



Heat lamp keeps baby pigs from chilling.



Farrowing crates protect baby pigs from being crushed.



Clip needle teeth with disinfected clippers.

FEEDING BABY PIGS

The stomach of a 1-week-old pig measures 2¼ by 1¼ inches. The small amount of dry feed it takes to fill this little tank must be the right kind of feed. It must be a feed that the pig can utilize completely, which means it must be low in bulk or roughages. The straight feeding of cereal grains, such as barley, which has 15 to 20 percent roughage, will not provide a diet the baby pig can fully utilize.

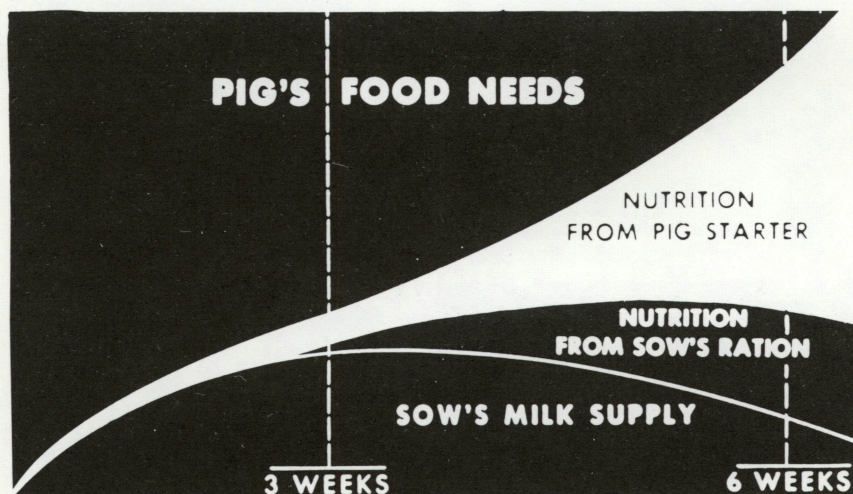
Starter Feed

The baby pig feed should be: 20 percent protein; balanced for vitamins and minerals; and high in sugar as a quick source of energy for the pig. If you

have a good, thorough mixer, there are pre-mixes available that can be added to your basic feed stuffs, such as cereal grains, that will satisfy the baby pigs' needs. If you do not have the mixing facilities, you can use a baby pig starter and early weaning ration.

These starter feeds can be put in front of the pig immediately. The pig will play around with the feed and usually will be eating it in about a week.

Figure I shows why it can pay to creep feed baby pigs. Just when the pig's nutritional needs begin to multiply rapidly, the sow's milk supply begins to drop off.



Weaning Time

Time to wean depends on the management system and how well the pigs are eating. The earlier the pigs are weaned, the sooner the sow can be bred back. Some hogmen wean at 3 weeks and some carry the litter to 5 or 6 weeks of age. The proper nutritional program will help the producer wean earlier.

Feeding Underweight Pigs

A high percentage of the death loss occurs in pigs that weigh less than 2 pounds at birth. Survival rate is related to birth weight, as shown in Table I.

Some hogmen feel that pigs weighing less than 1½ pounds at birth should be disposed of. However, research has shown that there is a 95 percent survival of all nursing pigs when the environment is improved and the small and weak nursing pigs are individually given supplemental feeding.

Oral doses of a ration containing 1 quart of milk, ½ pint of half-and-half and a raw egg, or a commercial milk substitute, at the rate of 15 to 20 ml once or twice a day has improved survival rate as shown in Table II.

The practice of providing supplementary nutrition to small birthweight pigs has not been adopted as a general management practice primarily because of the labor involved. A few hogmen are trying 24-hour weaning, going on a supplemental feeding program with the entire litter. Under this management system, it could be practical.

TABLE I

Relationship Between Birthweight and Survival

Wt. Range (lbs.)	No. Pigs	Wt. Distribution of Population (%)	Survival (%)
Under 2	1,035	6	42
2 to 4	2,367	13	68
2.5 to 2.9	4,197	24	75
3 to 3.4	5,012	28	82
4 and over	1,734	10	88
Total	17,613	100	77

TABLE II

Survival of Nursing Pigs Dosed with Milk Replacer

	No Milk Replacer	Fed Milk Replacer
No. Pigs	69	69
No. Surviving	34	51
% Surviving	49	74

IN SUMMARY

- Be there at farrowing
- Use good management and sanitation procedures
- Start the pigs properly on their feeding program