

Pig Farrowing Crate Discussion

Tuesday 12 January 2021

0700 – 0807

Date:	Tuesday 12 January 2021
Time:	0700am – 0807am
Location	Teams Meeting

Members:	NAWAC Subcommittee (Chair Included)
Attendees:	MPI Representatives
Invited Speakers:	Norwegian University of Life Sciences Representatives (NMBU)
Apologies:	NAWAC Subcommittee Member

Meeting Summary Points:

On January 12 a meeting was held between the NAWAC Subcommittee, MPI representatives, and the NMBU representatives. Discussions were had around trials and studies which incorporated alternative farrowing systems, the use of nesting material, litter sizes, weaning ages, and farm management. The following points were noted:

- The design of the pen is important. It is recommended to look at the design of the pen before the size of it as the design will dictate the size.
- Sows loose in a pen system that is less than 6m² resulted in a lot of crushing at the beginning of the transition period. A pen width of no less than 2.4m is recommended. Pens (8-9m²) where the piglets can grow until they are 30kg showed great success.
- It is also important to choose a system that the farmers are comfortable with.
- The farmer should create a predictable environment and always enter pen in same place i.e. 'activity area' and allow the sow to have control over the nesting area to reduce stress in the sow.
- The first few hours after birth are very crucial so farmer management effort should be concentrated for up to two days post farrow.
- Straw bedding was shown to be most successful nesting material leading to shorter farrowing period and fewer still born piglets. Placing the straw in a rack allows the sow an opportunity to use the material, and limits contamination.
- Litter sizes, on average, reduce after three parities. Sow characteristics for carefulness and communication have shown to be most important traits.
- Study figures show that loose housed sows establish a gradual weaning process, naturally reducing milking's herself. 28-33 days is the average weaning age; Norwegian regulation states 28 days; due to 'batch' farrowing, weaning age varies from 28-33 days.

- It is recommended to have 2-3 more functional teats than piglets. It is not recommended to go over current large litter sizes for the following reasons:
 1. Metabolic load on the sow becomes too high.
 2. A consequence of selecting for more teats is bigger, larger, and longer sows. This leads to the sow having more problems with legs, shoulder lesions, and longevity.
 3. When teat numbers increase, not all are accessible to piglets – sows can lay on teats preventing piglets from suckling. This is especially important during the colostrum period, where the piglets are not strong enough to massage the teats out.