

Pig Facts for Teachers

Oathall Farm keeps two contrasting breeds:

Large Whites

White pigs with a long lean body with erect or 'prick up' ears. These pigs and their crosses produce most of our pork these days with a lean carcass.

British Saddlebacks

Black pigs with a white ring or saddle behind the neck. These are a rare breed of pigs, whose numbers have declined because they produce meat with a covering of fat so disapproved of by most. They have flop down ears and a pear-shaped body.

- Piglets weigh just over 1kg at birth
- They grow rapidly achieving a target weight of over 60kg by 15 weeks of age
- Pigs are not greedy animals - our young pigs are fed ad-lib (as much as they can eat) on a cereal based diet and they do not over consume
- Pigs are not dirty animals, they like to soil a lower area of their pen away from their feeding and sleeping areas
- Pigs do not have sweat glands and white pigs burn easily, hence their need to roll in mud to cover their skin and to keep themselves cool
- A female pig or sow is pregnant for 115 days or 3 months, 3 weeks and 3 days
- A young female pig is called a gilt, she becomes a sow upon the birth of her second litter
- Breeding females are normally chosen having a minimum of fourteen well placed teats so that they can suckle 14 piglets
- One breeding male or boar is usually kept with 17 - 20 females or sows
- Piglets remain with their mothers for 6 weeks at Oathall. This means that each sow should produce 2 litters of 9/10 piglets each year
- Piglets are offered solid or creep food away from the sow from 3 weeks of age
- A sow eats about 1 tonne of solid food each year
- A pork pig will eat up to 3 times its own weight in food
- Pigs have breeding cycle which is continuous and does not depend upon the seasons
- Piglets are born anaemic and require a booster iron injection within days of birth
- Piglets have 8 sharp tusk or eye teeth which feel like a row of needles.

Breeds of Pigs

Large White
British Saddleback
Landrace
Gloucester
Old Spot
Duroc
Berkshire
Pietrain

Large Black
Hampshire
Tamworth
Welsh
Middle White
Kune Kune
British Lop
Oxford Sandy and Black.

Giving Birth

Sows give birth mostly at night. A few hours beforehand the sow lies down and becomes restless. Milk may appear in the teats at this time. Just before each birth she swishes her tail and may kick and lift her leg to help force a piglet out, followed by a few drops of blood.

The newborn piglet can walk soon after birth and it makes its way instinctively round to the sows udder looking for a teat to suck to obtain milk. The udder is warm and piglets huddle there. Sometimes if the sow is clumsy this can be dangerous for the piglets and we hang up infra-red heat lamps to encourage the piglets to lie in safety away from mum. Farrowing crates are used to try to prevent sows from lying on or treading on piglets in their first few days of life.

Stock Tasks on Piglets

At birth we treat each piglets navel with iodine to prevent germs from entering the body, we weigh the piglets at birth for our records. The sharp eye teeth on each piglet are trimmed to prevent them from damaging the sows teats at suckling times.

3-4 days

Each piglet receives 1ml of an iron compound into its back leg by intra muscular injection to prevent anaemia.

Weaning

The weaner piglets aged approximately 6 weeks are given worming powders mixed with their solid food to kill any internal worms.