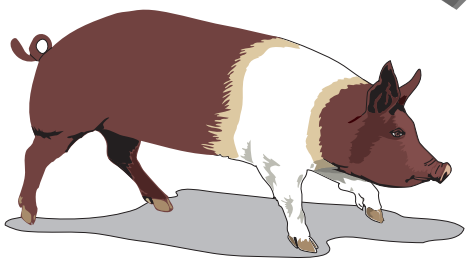
Farming with pigs



Origin

The pigs used by the farmer today are descendants of the wild pig (Sus scrofa).

Breeds

- *The best known indigenous breed is the Colebrook which apparently came to South Africa from Europe.*
- *Another indigenous breed, the Windsnyer, is more common in the northern parts of the country.*
- *Common modern pure breeds include the Large White and the Landrace.*
- *The Duroc is generally used as the paternal line in crossings. In some cases the Hampshire is also used as paternal line.*
- *Mother lines frequently used in commercial herds are crosses between the Large White and the Landrace.*

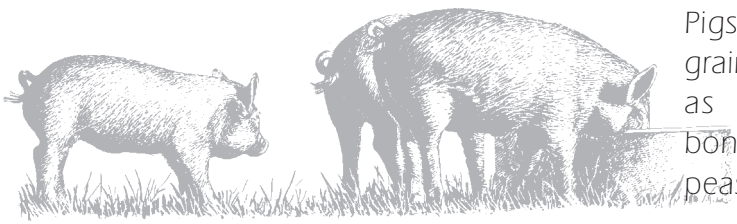
Reproduction

Pregnancy in the sow lasts for about 116 days (3 months, 3 weeks and 3 days). Eight to ten piglets are usually born. The piglets are weaned at 35 days (in modern piggeries even at 21 days).

The sow comes on heat about 4 to 6 days after weaning and must then be served by a boar at least twice over a 12-to-24-hour period for effective reproduction. If the sow has not conceived during that time, she must again be served after 21 days. Oestrus is promoted by bringing her into contact with the boar. Young sows are usually served for the first time at about 7 to 8 months (about 100 kg and at the time of the second oestrus cycle). Boars are also used for the first time at this age. One boar is used for 12 sows. It is important that the boar should be fertile and skilled at mating.

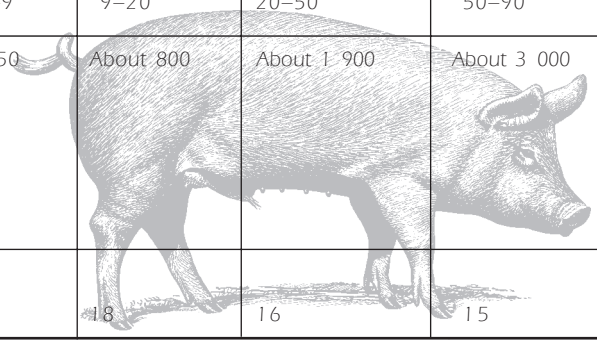
Feeding

The nutritional needs of pigs vary at the different phases of life. The following table is a general guideline for the quantity and quality of feed that must be provided during the different phases.

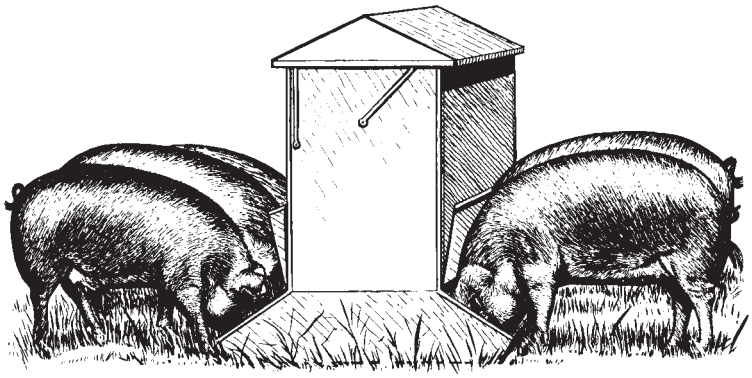


Pigs are omnivorous. The diet can include grain (eg maize, wheat, barley, and triticale) as well as protein such as fishmeal, bonemeal, milk products, lupins, beans and peas. Diets used in commercial units and

Stage	Pigs before weaning	Weaners	Large pigs	Finishing pigs	Dry sows and boars	Lactating sows
Age (days)	0–35	35–56	56–110	110–160	285 days/year	80 days/year
Mass (kg)	1,5–9	9–20	20–50	50–90	140–200	140–200
Intake (g/day)	50–250	About 800	About 1 900	About 3 000	About 4 kg/ sow/day from weaning to breeding. Generally 2 kg/ sow/day for the term of the pregnancy.	2 kg plus 0,4 kg/ piglet to 8 kg/ day
Protein-content (%)	21	18	16	15	13–14	16



which give good results include grains, bran and protein sources such as fishmeal and soya-bean oilcake. For effective production pigs must receive a balanced diet with enough energy and protein. Sufficient clean drinking water must be available at all times. Lactating sows, in particular, need large quantities of water.



Productivity

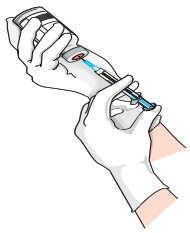
Under normal circumstances, each sow can rear 2,2 litters per year. This represents about 20 piglets per sow per year. If all the piglets are reared to a mass of 90 kg, one sow can therefore produce 1 800 kg live mass or 1 400 kg of meat per year. The feed intake per sow is about 1,2 t per year and each pig can take in up to 270 kg of feed to reach a mass of 90 kg.

Selection

- Breeding sows are selected at 5 to 6 months of age or 100 kg live mass.
- Each sow must have six well-formed, well-placed teats on each side.
- The legs must be straight.
- A long body and well-formed trotters are important.
- A quarter of the sows and half the boars in a herd should be replaced every year.
- A sow is usually sold after she has produced 6 to 8 litters.
- Unproductive sows are usually culled at an earlier stage.

General care

- *Fifty per cent of all mortalities in pigs occur before weaning, especially during the first 2 days after birth.*
- *It is important to design the farrowing pen in such a way that the sow cannot lie on top of the piglets. The farrowing pen must be disinfected well before the sow is placed in it (one week before birth).*



- *The piglets must then receive special attention.*
  - *The tips of the teeth must be clipped at about 3 days.*
  - *Iron injections can also be given (intensive production units).*
  - *Diarrhoea is one of the main causes of production losses in small piglets. Prevent this by providing clean, disinfected farrowing pens and straw. In cases of severe diarrhoea the necessary medication must be given. Be on the look out for mastitis and milk problems in the case of sows.*
- *A complete vaccination programme has to be followed for the preventive protection of animals against diseases (such as mange, E. coli which causes diarrhoea in piglets, leptospirosis, diamond skin disease and parvo virus). Sows should be dosed against internal parasites 3 to 4 weeks before farrowing.*

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