

Piglet Survival

Fact Sheet 1. Stillbirth



SRUC

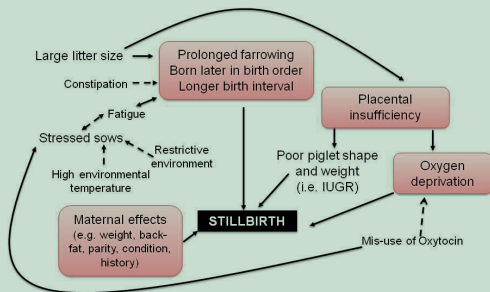
The Challenge

Piglet mortality continues to be a major economic and welfare concern, with 16-20% of the litter dying between birth and weaning. Stillbirth accounts for 8% of this total mortality. Improving survival at birth requires coordinated genetic, nutritional, management and stockperson interventions.



Pre-disposing risk factors of stillborn mortality

There are two types of stillborn mortality; type I (so called “mummies”) are usually the result of intrauterine infection; type II occur around the period of birth (farrowing) and there are a number of interactive risk factors that pre-dispose this type of stillbirth.



Pre-disposing risk factors of stillbirth

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Piglet Survival

Top Tips to reduce stillbirth

Improve farrowing progression

If sows are stressed they take longer to farrow which can lead to oxygen deprivation for piglets during birth.

- Tip 1** Promote natural behaviour and decrease frustration by giving nest-building substrate. Even in crates you can provide hessian sacks affixed to the crate.
- Tip 2** Give extra fibre during late gestation and pre-farrowing and ensure high water intake. This prevents constipation and reduces stillbirth risk.
- Tip 3** Decrease heat stress. Keep farrowing house between 18-20°C. Outdoor: arcs and huts can be painted with reflective paint. Wallows are important to allow sows to cool down.
- Tip 4** Monitor farrowing progression (e.g. use AHDB Pork's farrowing disc), this allows all farm staff to make accurate decisions on intervention.

Caution Only give oxytocin as a last resort. Avoid giving to gilts. Use a longer acting oxytocin analogue if necessary to stop large surges in uterine pressure. Ask your vet.



Hessian sack affixed to crate to provide outlet for nesting



Farrowing disc from AHDB Pork

Select for optimum shape and weight

- Tip 5** Stillborn piglets can be born disproportionately long and thin. Select for optimum weight, shape and reduced within litter variation and increased placental efficiency. Optimum nutrition during gestation is also an important management factor.

Good records, replacement strategy and herd health

- Tip 6** Keep good sow history records and have them with farrowing sows. Sows can be "repeat offenders" for stillbirth, they should be monitored carefully.
- Tip 7** Older sows can produce more stillbirths. Maintain high health and welfare and have a pool of replacement gilts ready to replace stock over 6th parity.