

Welfare Issues in Meat Pigs

Physical wellbeing

Welfare Issue	Problem	Solution
Close confinement	Low space allowance, only allows for sternal lying	Follow the space requirements according to the allometric curve and activity requirements
Facial damage to piglets	Competition between new born piglets for sufficient milk supply and functioning teats	Breed sows for sustainable litter sizes and good sow condition. Ensure good sow nutrition and provide supplementary feed for piglets. Manually introduce new-born piglets to teats during suckling. Provide sows space for movement to increase milk production
Tail bitten	Lesions and infection in tail, spine, internal organs; leads to mortality	Provide complex, edible, destructible substrates to occupy pigs for 15 to 20% of their time; assess and resolve multi-factorial risk factors. Use breeds which are less inclined to tail-bite
Lameness - typical rates of 20% lame	Poor flooring, especially fully slatted; wet and slippery floors	Provide straw bedding (or similar) for lying areas and rubber matting for standing areas; ensure good drainage
Physical comfort	No bedding material; low space allowance	Provide suitable bedding and adequate space
Thermal comfort	Heat/cold stress indoors, ammonia Sunburn if kept outdoors	Provide adequate ventilation & temperature control Provide shelter, shade and wallows outdoors for pigs to cool and protect their skin. Use breeds adapted to their environment
Selection for high growth rate	Lameness, cardio vascular problems	Include welfare traits in selection programme or use breeds with better health / welfare performance
Health monitoring	All health and disease issues – if they're not measured they can't be improved or split into	Develop a herd health plan to monitor disease and welfare performance; set targets and plan action to reduce incidence rates

Mental wellbeing

Welfare Issue	Problem	Solution
Barren environments	Boredom, aggression, tail and ear biting	Provide complex, edible, destructible substrates, and a varied environment to occupy the pigs throughout life
Fear	Lower ranked individuals in social dominance hierarchy are afraid of joining the group Flighty behaviour due to fear of humans	Provide barriers or areas of refuge, where pigs can escape aggressors Ensure positive human-animal interactions—use pig boards/ flags for handling, do not use electric goads, act in a calm, predictable way
Mutilations - cause pain & stress	Teeth-clipping, tail docking, and castration shortly after birth	Avoid mutilations by providing an environment which suits the animal's needs. Slaughter pre-puberty; detect boar taint via electronic nose; or eliminate boar taint via vaccination to delay puberty.

Natural behaviour

Welfare Issue	Problem	Solution
Abnormal behaviours	Tail and ear biting; biting fixtures & fittings	Provide complex, edible, destructible substrates, and a varied environment to occupy the pigs throughout life
Aggression	Skin lesions and lameness	Provide plenty of space if mixing groups, with soft bedding, and barriers to hide from aggressive pigs. Preferably keep pigs in stable groups (avoid mixing)
Mounting behaviour	Lesions and stress	Segregate males and females. Use vaccination to delay puberty and reduce sexual behaviour
Restriction of species-specific behavioural expression	Lack of foraging material to keep piglets occupied Lack of space for development of functional areas indoors Nursing and suckling behaviour restricted in farrowing crates	Provide complex, edible, destructible substrates, and a varied environment to occupy the pigs throughout life Calculate space allowance using the allometric curve. Provide separate functional areas for eating, dunging, rest and activity Use free-farrowing systems